ROMANCE: THE EMULATION OF EMPIRE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .................................................................................................. iii

Abstract .................................................................................................................... iv

Acknowledgement ................................................................................................... vi

Chapter 1  
Romance as the Desire for Empire: An Introduction ............................................. 1

Chapter 2  
*The Tempest*, a Romance for a New World of Empire ........................................ 58

Chapter 3  
Remembering to Forget: Desire, Emulation, and Romance in  
J.F. Cooper’s *The Pioneers* ................................................................................. 113

Chapter 4  
Benito Cereno’s Black Letter Text: The Unread Story of Empire .......................... 159

Chapter 5  
The Happy Resolution and the Solace of Amnesia ........................................... 204

Epilogue  
The Don of a Pervious Age ................................................................................ 227

Bibliography ............................................................................................................ 251
ABSTRACT

Martha E. Bonilla

Romance: The Emulation of Empire

This dissertation offers a symptomatic reading of romance and explores the ideological force of the genre’s chiastic structure. The trajectory of this project follows the temporal and spatial migration of romance from the colonial context of early seventeenth England, beginning with William Shakespeare’s The Tempest, then enters the American post-revolutionary context of the early and late nineteenth century with James Fennimore Cooper’s The Pioneers, Herman Melville’s “Benito Cereno,” and ends with Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s The Squatter and the Don. This study examines the contradictory narrative desires within romance. While the genre is identified with foundational narratives that bespeak a desire for national unification, it is also associated with a desire for conquest and empire. I argue this paradoxical genre constructs an equally paradoxical heroic national identity that forgets its tragic beginnings by imperialistically asserting its right to rule (its authority) in emulation of those whose rights it would usurp.

The heroic figure, after tragically losing his authority and identity to a rival, begins as a desiring subject whose quest for fulfillment and recognition initiates the romance plot. The hero finds recognition by emulating the actions of the rival who originally usurped his identity. Through the pathos of emulation, the hero is able to forgive and share the bonds of national kinship with his rival. By imitating the
actions of his rival, the hero is translated into a representation of his rival. The hero’s earlier tragic identity is foreclosed and projected onto another who is foreign to the hero’s struggles. This “foreign” other becomes a representation of the hero who is himself a representation of the rival. Hence, the apparent threatening other is transformed into a representation of a representation, the rhetorical condition of the genre itself. The dark intent projected onto the foreign other in these romance narratives indeed originates with the hero, but the hero’s dark design is in fact an emulation of the antagonist or rival’s action. The imperialistic quality of the genre is a result of its repetitive and crossed structure that calls into being more imperial subjects, but the inclusion promised by national romances is dependent on the tragic exclusion of objectified others.
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CHAPTER 1

Romance as the Desire for Empire: An Introduction

“America [...] the largest empire that ever existed...we cannot but anticipate the period, as not far distant, when the American Empire will comprehend millions of souls, west of the Mississippi”
– Jedidiah Morris, American Geography, 1789.

As I held my daughter for the first time, in August of 1990, images of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait flashed across the television screen along with the news of Operation Desert Shield and the deployment of American troops, sent to secure the sovereignty of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I worried about the future my daughter would inherit but did not consider how many in her generation would lose their lives to protect the United States’ (U.S.) interests abroad. This lack of foresight reflected the luxury of denial many Americans afforded themselves in the later part of the twentieth century concerning their relationship to empire. Moreover, the rhetoric associated with the “police action” allowed Americans to perceive themselves as reluctant imperialists involved in a military action to protect the liberty and sovereignty of a foreign state while they also, almost by happenstance, secured their own economic interests so dependent on foreign oil. Imperialism, after all, does not require the direct occupation associated with colonialism that older forms of European empires utilized to enlarge their economies. Yet, the relationship of dependency at stake in Operation Desert Shield skewed the traditional definition of
imperialism predicated on the social and economic “relations of dependency and control” of a foreign state that are ensured through the transnational mechanisms of “finance-capitalism.”2 This first Gulf War did not represent the expansion of U.S. national sovereignty so much as it represented the economic inter-dependence of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and the privileged position the U.S. occupies in the new form of empire that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri see as a “new inscription of authority:”3 a unitary power that overdetermines and resolves conflicts between competing imperialist powers through a restructuring of norms by way of a new “legal instrument of coercion.”4 While Hardt and Negri contend this new form of empire recalls the structure of the Roman Empire, it is nonetheless associated with “the expansive tendency of the democratic republic” of the United States.5 It is conceived as a universal republic, a network of powers and counterpowers structured in a boundless and inclusive architecture. This imperial expansion has nothing to do with imperialism, nor with those state organisms designed for conquest, pillage, genocide, colonization, and slavery. Against imperialisms, Empire extends and consolidates the model of network power.6 But, for all the expansiveness and openness of this new empire, globally there remain lines of demarcation that continue to forcefully exclude others—as witnessed today in places like Hungary—and that continue to defensively define the sovereignty of nation-states.7 Older forms of imperialism continually test the verity of the newer form of empire, as evidenced along the Russian border with Ukraine. Moreover, this
newer form of empire is plagued by the same paradoxical impulses that characterize
the democratic project in the U.S. that continues to exhibit the expansive tendencies
of the English Empire from which it originated.

Indeed, as I will contend, the democratic project within the U.S. was
compromised early on by new nation’s cultural emulation of England’s desire for
empire, translated as a national romance. As historian Richard W. Van Alstyne
argues, in *The Rising American Empire* (1960), the expansionist impulse of the
English Empire also characterized the new nation of the United States. He remarks
that before the Seven Years War the meaning of the term “British Empire” was
circumscribed by the Latin word *imperium*, meaning both power and sovereignty.
While imperialism in our modern sense of the word was unknown in the eighteenth
century, after 1760 the meaning of empire was enlarged to include a sense of
territorial expansion and sovereignty over the people who lived within that territory.
He points out that American colonists, who took part in the Seven Years War,
founded it easy to replace the term ‘English Empire’ with ‘American Empire.’
Indeed, Van Alstyne opens his book by quoting George Washington who saw, in
1783, the new nation as a “‘rising empire.’”8 Historian Walter LaFeber, in *The New
Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898* (1963), argues that
while U.S. imperialism was confined to the North American continent until after the
Civil War, the new American Empire nonetheless took root “by undermining,
economically and ideologically, British, French, Spanish, Mexican, and Indian
control.”9 Despite the lack of overseas territories, this economic and ideological
subversion of older empires marked the United States’ entry into transnational competition. More recently, economic historian Sophus A. Reinert has argued in Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy (2011) that transnational competition in the eighteenth century should be understood as “a more broadly conceived process of *translatio imperii* [which also] drove the early modern world economy.”¹⁰ He argues that in the Enlightenment period, the “study of *imperium*” or power also included the notion of political economy, the “knowledge of how to become and remain rich in competitive contexts,”¹¹ as a means of securing empire during a time in which “there were many competing imperialisms, conversing with and emulating each other.”¹² Reinert not only conceives of empire as translated from one local context to another, but also contends emulation facilitated the “relationship between *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, knowledge and power.”¹³ Hence, during the period of European colonization and empire building, the meaning of *imperium* began to reflect the competition for territory and economic domination or imperialism in both the older and newer senses of the word. In its desire to extend its national sovereignty across the continent, the U.S. signaled its entry into the tradition of *translatio imperii*, competing both economically and ideologically with European empires as well as emulating these older forms of empire. Scholars before me have argued that a fundamental relationship exists between and the practice of imperialism in the U.S. (both in its older form of colonization and its later form of economic domination) and its literary culture.¹⁴ Some of these literary critics also contend that the literary genre of romance in
particular bespeaks the new nation’s impulse for empire, an argument I will extend in what is to follow. In this project I argue the literary tradition of romance in the U. S., and the pathos of emulation that operates through the genre, insinuates the excellence of an ideal located in the past made present, which helped to reconcile the new nation’s post-revolutionary political and cultural traditions with the colonial cultural practices of its rival, Britain, enabling American literary culture to emulate Britain’s desire for empire as well as its “civilizing” cultural mission.

Given the wealth of scholarship that has brought together the two fields of inquiry concerning empire and romance, it may be fair to ask, “Why romance; why now?” and “Why empire; why now?” Additionally, my theoretical bent in this project may also appear to some as relatively belated, inasmuch as my use of Jacques Lacan, Rene Girard, Joel Fineman, and Fredric Jameson harkens back to the psychoanalytic and linguistic concerns of the 1970s and 1980s and my use of John McClure, Eric Cheyfitz, Amy Kaplan, as well as John Carlos Rowe recall the spirited debates surrounding post-colonialism, nationalism and empire of the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, the belated nature of my methodology and object of study—a symptomatic reading of the rhetorical and narrative structures of romance—also speaks to present sense of belatedness (melancholy?) or crisis in the humanities.

Following in the wake of the economic devastation wrought by the 2008 collapse in the housing market made worse by the banking failure and the soaring federal debt incurred by the United States’ imperialist adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, many publically funded colleges and universities across the U.S. saw
their budgets cut. In turn, many of these institutions attempted to balance their budgets with deep funding cuts in academic programs for the humanities. Literature and language programs languished and in some cases were shuttered. This state of affairs, which existed before economic crisis of the last decade and has also extended beyond it, reflects the shifting priorities of the American Empire willing to invest in science and technology, particularly with regard to program funding in our public colleges and universities, but not in the humanities that are seen as merely instrumental to economic stability and growth (the needs of business) as well as to national security.

In 2006, Marjorie Perloff, during her presidential address to the Modern Language Association (MLA), reported some administrators had begun questioning the necessity of literary studies. She suggests that after the heady days of theory in the 1970’s and 1980’s, which expanded the field of study in the humanities and allowed for interdisciplinary collaborations, the pendulum had swung again, causing some to suspect that literary scholars “have no definable expertise”:

[A]dmnistrators are beginning to argue, perhaps English departments should concentrate on the study of composition and rhetoric, disciplines that really do teach students things they need to know, and the foreign literature departments should focus on language learning, so important in business, professional life, and especially government service.
With whole areas of study in the humanities under threat, a number of scholars began to examine the crisis in the humanities as a symptom of the corporatization of education. Still others, provoked by the same pervasive sense of literature’s erstwhile influence within the humanities (as expressed in Perloff’s MLA address) began a process of self-examination, investigating the practices within the field, questioning its methodologies as well as its objects of study. In some cases, these disciplinary self-assessments seem to function, in tone and content, as justifications for the persistence of the field of study in the new economy of empire. Cathy N. Davidson in “Humanities 2.0: Promise, Perils, Predictions” (2008) concludes that a conversation across the disciplines concerning “the benefits and costs of disciplinary change” is necessary, adding “in a time of paradigm shifts, moral and political treachery, historical amnesia, and psychic and spiritual turmoil, humanistic issues are central.” As the humanities are arguably cost effective and may even help to subsidize programs in science and technology, the diminishing influence of the humanities may well be reflective of a restructuring of norms within the new empire with its new measures of juridical and economic value. Nonetheless, the specific concern over the waning influence of literary studies seems to signify the possibility of a post-literary period in the academy, but this is not the only response to the crisis.

Although only three years separate Amy Kaplan’s presidential address to the American Studies Association in 2003 and Marjorie Perloff’s presidential address to the MLA, there exists a radical difference in tone and content between the two plenary addresses. Kaplan’s address ends with a call to enlarge the field’s
methodology to include critical work on translation as a problematic site for empire, while Perloff calls for a pragmatic return to the literary text and concludes with practical pedagogical advice. Another example of the disparate responses to the crisis in the humanities is seen in Russ Castronovo and Susan Gillman’s “Introduction: The Study of American Problems” in States of Emergency: The Object of American Studies (2009) and Stephen Best and Stephanie Marcus’s “Surface Reading: An Introduction,” in the fall 2009 special issue of Representations, entitled How We Read Now. The essays gathered in both collections include a multiplicity of methodologies but, while the latter eschews the “hermeneutics of suspicion” associated with the practice of reading as ideological critique and calls for a renewed reading strategy “that attend[s] to the surface of texts rather than plumb[s] their depths,” 24 Castronovo and Gillman demonstrate a willingness in American Studies for self-examination in an on-going effort to inhabit their sense of “disciplinary consciousness;” nor do they apologize for their engagement with history or their critical methodology that does not “affect an innocence about the political implications of methodological choices.” 25 In an era of shifting priorities in public education, dependent on state and federal funding, self-examination is essential and political insofar as the humanities must confront its own conflicted history as ostensibly politically transcendent while engaged in the inherently political project of translatio studii, facilitating the transfer of democratic sensibilities at home and aboard.

Such self-examination is absent in Best and Marcus’ introduction that argues for the primacy of the literary text they contend has been unnecessarily complicated
by the theoretical approaches of psychoanalysis and historical materialism. Best and Marcus effectively concur with Perloff’s assessment as to the cause for the sense of belatedness within literary studies, suggesting that “after the linguistic turn of the 1970’s” which saw the exportation of the interpretative practices of literary criticism into the fields of anthropology, political theory, history and the sciences, literary scholars, whose project it is to assign “meaning to a text,” also felt free to broaden their study beyond the literary text. However, Best and Marcus do not attribute the expansion of our notion of the text to Derridean Deconstruction (perhaps because there is a specter of Derrida haunting their notion of history), instead, they contend the “[o]ne factor enabling exchanges between disciplines in the 1970’s and 1980’s was the acceptance of psychoanalysis and Marxism as metalanguages” and the interpretative strategy that is associated with these critical approaches that “went by the name of ‘symptomatic reading.’” Best and Marcus understand surface reading as “what insists on being looked at” rather than being seen through. It is a practice that attends to the materiality of the text and its “intricate verbal structure of literary language” while looking for the “literal meaning” and embracing the sensual immediacy of the work of art as a “location of patterns that exists within and across the text” that may be critically described, as “[d]escription sees no need to translate the text into a theoretical or historical metalanguage” in an effort to make it meaningful.

As an example of critical description, Best and Marcus offer Joel Fineman’s *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye: The Intervention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets*
(1986) which they claim argues “the traditional questions for criticism of the sonnets are already in the sonnets themselves; [hence,] there is no need for a critical metalanguage to explain the sonnets” because the sonnets describe “their own operation.”

However, this example undermines their claim that an interpretation of a literary text requires no theoretical framework insofar as Fineman utilizes the linguistic theory of both Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson as well as the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan to explicate how the literary and thematic features of Shakespeare’s sonnets “give off a subjectivity effect” that is historically new and influential. While Fineman outlines the structure or organizing pattern of Shakespeare’s sonnets, his larger argument, that Shakespeare anticipates a modern subjectivity as formulated in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, would in fact complicate Best and Marcus’s characterization of his book and their own contention “that texts can reveal their own truth because texts mediate themselves” without the need for theory.

As Fineman argues, Shakespeare “characterizes language as something corruptingly linguistic rather than something ideally specular” with the result that the sonnets are “duplicitously verbal” and produce a poetics “of double tongue rather than a poetics of a unified and unifying eye, a language of suspicious word rather than a language of true vision;” Shakespeare’s duplicitous language calls into existence “a genuinely new poetic subjectivity […] the subject of a ‘perju’d eye’ (sonnet 152)” (SPE 15, emphasis added). As Fineman explains, Shakespeare’s sonnets “speak against a strong tradition, not only poetic, of linguistic idealization for which words in some sense are the things of which they speak” (SPE 15). The project of surface
reading seems in part to recall this same idealizing tradition. But, as Fineman reminds his readers, one cannot simply choose between visualized language or linguistic language as they are dialectically intertwined: ‘for language is itself, as Shakespeare develops it, at once a version of the vision it denounces at the same time that it is a perversion of the vision with which it is compared. This is how language ‘lies ‘against’ ‘sight’” (SPE 16). Hence, a reading that looks for the truth in the visualized language of the text will find that the surface belies the truth it would speak. Not only is the dialectic between visualized language and linguistic language missed in Best and Marcus’s argument, but, as Carolyn Lesjak points out in her article “Reading Dialectically” (2013), in their “dismissals of ideological critique,” they also occlude the dialectic that allows for the metaphor of surface and depth:

the impulse to be affirmative, to talk about what texts do rather than what they don’t do, occludes the negation upon which such affirmation is based… but unlike a dialectical reading, offers no way of actually registering or thinking the occlusion that structures the surfaces being privileged. 

Because “Surface Reading” occludes the dialectic essential to ideological readings, its methodology and its critiques of symptomatic reading, as Lesjak contends in her article, have “no real capacity to understand themselves as symptoms even though they are.”

In keeping with Paul Ricoeur’s concept of the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” in Book I of Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation (1970), Best and
Marcus take issue with the methodological persistence of both historical materialism and psychoanalysis in literary analysis, focusing their critique on Fredric Jameson’s 1981 text *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. While they discuss Althusser in relation to Jameson’s concept of history as an absent cause, little is said about Slavoj Žižek, who is also indebted to Althusser’s Lacanian inflected re-reading of Marx and whose 1989 text, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, helped to clarify the homology between Marx and Freud’s interpretative practices.

As Žižek (and Althusser) make clear, symptomatic reading does not presume that meaning is hidden behind or concealed in the depths of a dream text, a commodity form, or an ideological practice; rather, its is

decidedly more ‘on the surface’, consisting entirely of the signifier’s mechanisms […] This then is the basic paradox of the dream; the unconscious desire, that which is supposedly its most hidden kernel, articulates itself precisely through the dissimulation work of the ‘kernel’ of a dream, its latent thought.

What might this mean for a literary critic who looks at texts, as Marjorie Perloff suggests with some reproof, as “symptoms of cultural desire, drives, anxieties or prejudices” of a particular historical moment?

First, we must understand the dialectic at play between the effect of depth and what appears to be merely surface, as one does not exist without the other. Second, to understand a text, how it teaches, delights and moves (docere, delecture, movere) its readers—hence, to apprehend its ideological force both to reflect and affect our
world—we must understand how the textualized desire to teach, delight or move
others articulates the form it takes (semiotic, syntactic, generic, and so forth), but this
is not an ideologically neutral practice, and, as Ellen Rooney observes, there is a
strange silence in Best and Marcus’s article “concerning standard critiques of the
‘neutrality’ of observation, critiques that are not all assimilable to a hermeneutics of
relentless textual suspicion and attack.” The critical distance scholars take is not
outside or beyond the reach of capital or ideology to some critically resistant or
neutral territory of the text. Indeed the work of reading, whether it claims a
theoretical position or not, is often contestatory and ideologically charged, not in an
effort to “assign meaning,” as Best and Marcus contend, but to discover how meaning
is made within the text as it retroactively creates a past tradition. Moreover, because
the force of capital is inescapable, particularly within the academy, “a Marxist
critique is more necessary now than ever,” but not as an invocation of theory as
praxis, nor as a master code that can narratively unify all humankind, for as Žižek
explains, in both Marxism and psychoanalysis “the relationship between theory and
practice is properly dialectical,” co-existing in “an irreducible tension,” and even “at
its most radical, theory is the theory of a failed practice.” However, in the rush to
affirm itself and its practices, surfacing reading sidesteps self-examination, a
necessary aspect of dialectical reading, and produces an ideological critique of
symptomatic reading that disavows “the inevitable link to those [the same] failings”
of which it speaks.
At stake in the methodological debates between surface reading and symptomatic reading is nothing less than the role of history within an interpretive strategy, and Jameson’s strategy in particular with its insistence to “always historicize.” While the dictum is ironically self-defeating (illustrative of the tension between theory and practice, as there is always a disjunction in any reckoning of the past, hence the need to always historicize), the activity is nonetheless foundational to a field of inquiry that frequently examines the persistence of and resistance to the tradition of representation in the West. In a later article, entitled “On Failing to Make the Past Present” (2012) Best contends historical materialism, which he identifies as a form of redemptive criticism, “is unable to reckon with the true alterity of the past, an apt reckoning with historical experience ought to require a failure or short-circuiting of the redemptive function.” However, because any account of the past is already disjointed and fragmentary, Jameson’s methodology does not “require a failure or short-circuiting” between an historical reckoning and the impulse of redemption; his dictum inherently presumes it. Nonetheless, Best identifies critics, such as Jameson, as melancholic, inasmuch as they align themselves with Walter Benjamin’s idea of historical materialism or take up the role of the historian as redeemer so as to “wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower” it in the present era. For Best, the work of “melancholic” literary critics, who are “resigned to the category of loss” and write in this “redemptive vein,” conceive of modernity as “postlaspsrian.” Best argues for the “nonrelationality between the past and the present,” where we are abandoned, “baffled, cut-off, foreclosed” from the
unredeemable alterity of the past.⁵² Best characterizes being historical as resisting “the impulse to redeem the past and instead rest content with the fact that our orientation toward it remains forever perverse, queer, askew.”⁵³ In the final moments of his essay, Best concludes that the “historical present” is not informed by the constellation of terms that come together from the past-present, present-present, nor certainly the future-present; instead, he contends, we exist in “a world of ‘no protection but…difference’” or alterity.⁵⁴ In asserting the alterity of the past, Best hopes to affirm the alterity of the present, but such an affirmation requires an understanding of history and a reading practice Best opposes.⁵⁵

This debate concerning the objects and methods of literary study developed in response to a crisis in the humanities brought on by the new economic and political priorities of the not particularly “exceptional” American Empire. The disavowal of ideological critiques comes at a time when such disavowals could be read as symptomatic of the desire to escape the loss this moment in history signifies for the democratic political project that began the U.S. (with all its fraught and contradictory claims of freedom, equality and citizenship). The symptomatic cultural consequence of the U.S. no longer being in denial of its heritage as an Empire can be seen in the surface reader’s sense of the past’s radical alterity and in the reader’s desire “to freeze time, to stay in the present in its appeal to the commonsensical, to a thing’s face value.”⁵⁶ This debate also reminds us of the inherently political nature of romance that attempts to recreate a tradition by reconciling past divisions (such as surface / depth; formalist / historicist) which nonetheless recalls the hierarchizing forms that
characterized the divisive traditions of the past. As Northrop Frye reminds us, in *The Secular Scripture: The Study of the Structure of Romance* (1976), romance, because of its ability to absorb and reflect narratives belonging to older traditions, “marks the political and social ascendancy of a society with a central mythology [as, for example, manifest destiny in the United States], as it takes over other areas, and this [narrative] imperialism is possible because of the structural similarities among all forms of story.”57 Insofar as it breaks the rule of genre forms, romance stands as the axiomatic proof of the similarity among narrative forms whether they be political, historical, or literary. Genres, as Fredric Jameson informs us, are “essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact,”58 but romance articulates the institution of genres by using the structures of both tragedy, a tale of loss, and comedy, the happy swerve away from loss, to narrativize the fall of one cultural tradition and its reinvention in the cultural tradition of a new community. Moreover, as it imperialistically absorbs traditions of the past, romance appears on occasion to rewrite the social contract, signifying changes in the history of this persistent genre form. Effectively, romance narratives, written in the post-revolutionary context within the U.S., absorbed (or colonized) Britain’s colonial discourse, allowing the genre to actualize American imperialist intentions that aimed at continental conquest.

As suggested in the work of Frye, because romance brings together the implied cultural authority of myth and the imaginative invention of folklore, it is often the chosen genre of writers who are struggling to create a new literary tradition,
spurring the process of a culture’s re-invention not simply by envisioning a new tradition within the future of a community but by narrativizing a past “that never existed.” Jameson, summarizing Frye, explains that the happy resolutions within the genre are a consequence of romance as “wish-fulfillment or Utopian fantasy which [temporally] aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday life” either by nostalgically evoking an Edenic restoration of former conditions or expectantly gesturing toward an idyllic future. This inventive quality also has allowed literary critics to read romance as foundational to the discourses of both nation building, associated with fictions that utilize the domestic sphere of women as a space in which to repair national divisions, as well as empire building, typified by narratives that focus on the chivalric or expansive actions of men engaged in the world. The former is exemplified in Doris Sommer’s *Foundational Fictions: National Romances of Latin America* (1991), where she associates domestic romances with the ideological work of nation building in Latin America. Their “erotics of politics” draw together public concerns and private desire in service of a higher national good. Sommer contends these narratives provided a cultural space in which to imagine an ideal community that compensates for lack of national traditions or history and that reconciles national internecine rivalries by “recognizing former enemies as allies.” The latter is exemplified in John McClure’s *Late Imperial Romance* (1994), where, citing Martin Green, McClure contends the cultural production of romance helped to fuel a British and later an American national desire for empire despite the rationalizing effects of conquest on the unmapped spaces that romances require for
their narrative construction. As McClure argues, while the narrative desire in imperial romances relies on the practice of exploration, the historical depletion of uncharted territories only seems to produce a narrative desire to go a-questing once again.62 Paradoxically, the satisfaction of this narrative desire for empire within romance finds its closure, and necessary re-invention, in the practice of empire; thus, the resolution of these romances reproduces the same narrative desire that begins them. Although the apparent circular structure of imperial romances recalls the earlier form of the genre, in the chanson de geste, in these romances the repetition of the narrative desire is turned against itself, giving it more in common with the rhetorical figure of the chiasmus that moves beyond the syntactical level of the trope and the cross-coupling of paired oppositional elements within a phrase (as in the arrangement ABBA—“fairing the foul” and fouling the fair) to inform the structure of romance.63 In the crossed structure of the chiasmus (originating from the Greek letter X or Chi), the first term becomes last, in its second iteration, and the last term becomes first, providing both rhetorically and structurally for the revolutionary quality Frye notes as occurring “near the end of a romantic story” when the narrative polarization “between two worlds, one desirable and the other hateful,” is resolved.64 But, rather than the desiring subject in search of libidinal fulfillment that Frye finds in quest-romances, these imperial romances allegorically narrativize an expansive national desire, the fulfillment of which is projected both spatially and temporally into a utopic future. More recently, literary scholars, such as John Carlos Rowe and Amy Kaplan, have explored this expansive national desire within romance.
Both John Carlos Rowe and Amy Kaplan have read nineteenth-century American romances as a response to the simultaneous advent of U.S. nationalism and imperialism. Kaplan, in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (2002), brings together the seemingly mutually exclusive ideological spheres of domesticity and manifest destiny, under the paradoxical rubric of “imperial domesticity,” to argue American imperialist expansion and its national incorporation of “foreign people” both threatened and defined the U.S.’s national sovereignty and identity which maintained (and continues to maintain) a domestic relationship with dependent foreign possessions and their people. The paradoxical condition was achieved by “[i]nverting the role of colonizer and colonized” with the result that American imperialism appears as a defensive response to the threat of “foreign colonization” at home.65 John Carlos Rowe points out, in “Nineteenth-Century United States Literary Culture and Transnationality” (2003), that the United States’ national project can be understood as an extension of British colonialism, insofar as the formations of the nation depended crucially on the transformation of British colonialism into national institutions and practices in a rapid, defensive manner […] Well before it was declared a national purpose, manifest destiny begins in the social psychology of such defensive nationalism, so that the expansion of the national border functions as one means of controlling threats within an unstable, new and contrived nation […], the borderlands of the United
States are narratively imagined as requiring national incorporation for their realization as civilized or even natural.66

I am particularly interested in how the cultural institution of romance, so central to the invention of an American literary tradition, helped to transform British colonialism into a “defensive nationalism” within the U.S. Rather than American literary culture developing in opposition to its colonial past, the chiastic structure of romance reconciles former enemies through emulation, paradoxically inverting the relationship between colonizers and colonized and thereby authorizing the U.S. to engage in the colonial practices against which it revolted. Hence, in American literature as in English literature the project of empire walks hand-in-hand with the project of nation building. Romance, with its ability to absorb and transform cultural traditions from the past, becomes the means by which the present narrativizes the re-invention of a past “that never existed.”67 As Geraldine Heng in her book, *Empire of Magic* (2003) contends, the ideological work necessary for the invention of an English nation occurs simultaneously with the invention of an English Empire, a pattern later emulated by the U.S.

Heng utilizes Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Briatanniae* to argue that historical romances work “toward a particular productive end—to imagine a nationlike community across divisions or offer a vocabulary suited to conceiving the nation; to enact cultural rescue or furnish cultural authority for empire formation.”68 Not only do Middle English romances help to imagine a national community in
England, they also supply the “ideological support for empire formation,” as Heng illustrates in her reading of the Arthurian romance:

Arthur’s empire is inaugurated soon after […] twelve years of peace, during which Arthur establishes an Arthurian culture of such supreme romance courtliness that its codes of dress and arms inspire international emulation and win a peerless reputation for Arthur’s knights. Because of that peerless reputation the romance logic of the *Historia* reasons, kings of kingdoms across the sea begin to fear Arthurian invasion, thus prompting Arthur to consider conquering all Europe (“totam Europam” [Wright, 1:107]). The campaign of imperial conquest immediately begins, and soon Arthur is the virtual master of Europe. Seamlessly, […] the courtly moment of Arthurian romance has opened into the military moment of Arthurian imperial invasion, the logic of the former driving the momentum of the latter […]

Of note for my work in the following chapters, is the sketch within this quote of how Arthurian cultural imperialism precedes and portends Arthur’s imperial invasion with the “logic of the former driving the momentum of the later.” The cultural emulation of Arthurian courtly dress and conduct in the kingdoms beyond Arthur’s court elicits a fear in the nobles of these far-flung kingdoms that Arthur’s knights, who possess a “peerless reputation” (in emulation of Arthur’s conduct), will invade their lands. To Heng’s assertion that the ideological work performed by Arthur’s magisterial
romance served to “support the First Crusade and the empire of the crusader states of the Levant,”72 I would add the ideological work that continues to operate in this romance (as with all forms of romance), is achieved through translatio studii and imitation, both of which are dependent upon a desire structured by epideictic rhetoric that utilizes mimesis and metaphor to bespeak a cultural excellence. The narrative desire that initiates romance, even in this early Middle English example, which imagines a unified national community, is built on similitude through the medium of cultural emulation and only finds its satisfaction or its necessary re-invention in the practice of empire. Hence, cultural emulation paves the way for imperial subjugation inasmuch as one locality (in the ostensible periphery) identifies with another locality’s heroic deeds of conquest and conduct that is culturally transmitted or re-narrativized in translation. Imitating the deeds and traditions of another culture, the periphery identifies with and establishes itself as the legitimate heir to another’s tradition that has been passed on through the conquest of cultural translation. This last phrase is meant to suggest two simultaneous and competing ideas: first, translation understood as an expression of cultural imperialism that signifies the conquest of one local culture by another local culture foreign to it; second, a local poet’s triumph over a past model, derived from a foreign culture, through the eloquence of her/his translation.73 Although translatio (as translation) illuminates the power of the tradition that it imitates, it can also obscure the chiastic exchange of power affected by the emulation. Under the influence of cultural emulation, Arthur’s conquest (translatio imperii) is a fait accompli, an after effect of what has already
been accomplished through imitation (*mimesis*), and the metaphoric transference of culture (*translatio studii*), by which one culture is “put in the place of another.” The chiastic effect of emulation arouses fear in those who would imitate the cultural traditions of Arthur’s court inasmuch as his cultural conquest precedes and forewarns of his imperial conquest. Moreover, rather than affirming Arthur’s influence and authority as a good king, his imperialist desire is a mimetic expression or emulation of exactly what the foreign kings fear: annexation and subjugation. That is, Arthur is represented as a romantic hero, a warrior-king with a magnificent kingdom whom others fear; because others fear this representation, Arthur re-presents himself as a warrior king who desires to extend the magnificence of his court into foreign lands. Paradoxically, the violence of Arthur’s conquests becomes a necessary expression of the “good” king’s chivalric image and idealized martial prowess transmitted through culture. But, in acting his part as warrior king, he lays waste to the cultural affects of his court abroad and at home. Arthur’s end reads like a Shakespearian tragedy rather than a romance. In his attempt to fulfill the idealized representation of his identity, Arthur loses his identity and with it his life. Although Arthur’s romance ends tragically in the *Historia*, it exemplifies the logic of imperialism within romance that depends on the figural might of metaphor and mimesis (as imitation) artfully conjoined in the rhetoric of praise and blame or *Epideixis* (*πίδεικνύναι*), to create its pathos of emulation (*zēlos*). By bringing together mimesis and metaphor, the rhetoric of praise and blame offers “vivid pictures of that which it presents.” However, the emulation that insinuates the transmission of a cultural authority from
the past and provides for the happy resolution to any combative rivalry has a chiastic
effect, a troping of tropes, such that the new expression of a past authority in the
present retroactively recreates the past in its own image, usurping the authority it
claims to represent.\textsuperscript{78}

As suggested by Heng’s reading of the Arthurian cycle, romance re-imagines
the nation as a space in which individuals are imperialistically absorbed through the
mechanism of cultural similitude produced by \textit{translatio studii}, that chiastically
inverts the two opposed worlds that compose romance, which Frye reads as “hateful”
and “desirable.” This inversion enables the reader to see complementary
relationships between elements that “would be normally incompatible (such as inside
/ outside, before / after, death / life, fiction / reality, silence / sound, [good / evil]).”\textsuperscript{79}
Hence, romance achieves its resolution, for those included within its narrative regime,
by translating cultural difference into cultural similitude. The oppositional terms with
which a romance narrative begins, the most basic of which Jameson identifies with
the binary of good and evil, are seemingly dissolved.\textsuperscript{80} For Jameson this point of
resolution offers the potential “of sensing” a Utopian transformation in the narrative’s
everyday world, opening a place of freedom and narrative heterogeneity unrestricted
by oppressive traditions of the past: “Frye is surely not wrong to assimilate the
salvational perspective of romance to a reexpression of Utopian longings, a renewed
mediation on the Utopian community, a reconquest (but at what price?) of some
feeling for a salvational future.”\textsuperscript{81} My project attempts to calculate the price of the
utopian longings within romance that, by absorbing past traditions, represents a re-
conquest “of some feeling” for an ideal future which differs from the past only because of a fundamental misrecognition.

To explore how “some feeling” of sympathetic correspondence is achieved in romance, my analysis focuses on the characterization of the binary in the form of hero / villain, while nonetheless remaining in agreement with Jameson’s sense of “the literary ‘character’ [as] no more substantive than the Lacanian ego, and that it is to be seen rather as an ‘effect of system’ than as a full representational identity in its own right.”82 The “system” Jameson refers to here involves the interplay of The Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic Orders as articulated in Lacan’s depiction of the mirror stage that inaugurates the formation of the ego, as in a gestalt, from a visualized I-ideal. By virtue of its formation within the dialectic between perception and language, the ego can never be a “full representational identity;”83 nor can it, as a representation, be fully present to itself. Indeed, this deficiency in representation is at the heart of Fineman’s argument concerning the melancholic “pathos of representation” found in Shakespeare’s sonnets, which takes part in and alters the traditional “poetics of visionary presentation” associated with the idealizing language of epideictic rhetoric (SPE 297). I chose to begin my examination of romance, as a form of cultural emulation that translates a desire for empire from a European, specifically English, context into a U.S. context, with The Tempest. The play, written during a period in which England was making its first forays into the “New World,” demonstrates both Shakespeare’s intervention in the Western tradition of representation and the relationship of that intervention to the discourse of colonialism.
As Eric Cheyfitz argues in *The Poetics of Imperialism* (1991), Prospero’s imperial logos is “articulated eloquently” in Ariel’s mimetic language and action.\(^8^4\)

In my second chapter, I examine how the chiastic structure of romance informs the logic of Prospero’s imperial identity, the authority of which is re-authorized when he becomes the hero of his own romance narrative that allows him to forget his tragic beginnings and reclaim his identity as “Absolute Milan” in emulation of his brother, Antonio. The amnesia that allows for the fiction of an absolute identity in emulation of a former enemy is foundational to romance as it develops within the U.S. Nonetheless, I recognize my focus on the anthropomorphic characterization of good and evil as hero and villain appears to run counter to Jameson’s claim for “[t]he centrality of worldness in romance” that complicates the identification of the hero as the primary agent for change or good, “making the ‘hero’ over into something like a registering apparatus for transformed states of being.”\(^8^5\)

While the hero may be a “registering apparatus” in romance narratives generally, in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Prospero’s position as both the hero in and orchestrator of the play’s world of romance complicates his function as solely an actant for good or evil within the play. That is, Prospero as the author of his own romance both substantiates and complicates Jameson’s claim concerning the dissolution of the anthropomorphized characterization of the binary.

In his effort to historicize Frye’s analysis of romance and to assert the “centrality of worldness,” Jameson reexamines “the binary opposition itself, as a form without content which nonetheless confers signification on the various types of
content […] that it organizes.” He reinterprets the binary under the auspices of a
Nietzschean concept of ethics where the solution to the binary is to transcend (or
discredit) the opposition of good-hero and evil-other. Romance, he argues,
in its original strong form may then be understood as an imaginary
‘solution’ to this real contradiction, a symbolic answer to the
perplexing question of how my enemy can be thought of as being evil
(that is, as other than myself and marked by some absolute difference),
when what is responsible for his being so characterized is quite simply
the identity of his own conduct with mine, which—points of honor,
challenges, tests of strength—he reflects as in a mirror image.87

The dissolution of the binary, which for Jameson distinguishes the romance narrative
from the repetitive circularity (resembling death) of the chanson de geste, occurs
when the antagonist is incorporated into the habits of the hero’s social class and
ceases to be radically unfamiliar or different. The conduct that formerly defined the
antagonist as evil is recognized as the same conduct that defined the hero as good;
hence, what is evil in the hero’s conquered rival is also present in the hero’s own
identity.88 The narrativized sympathetic recognition between the antagonist and
protagonist is facilitated by the correspondence of their conduct that allows the hero
to identify with and forgive his rival. However, Jameson adds, this moment of
recognition that dissolves the oppositional difference between “good” hero and “evil”
other produces “a new kind of narrative, the ‘story’ of something like a semic
evaporation” by which the romance achieves closure.89 But the resolution of the
binary creates yet another problem for the development of the genre insofar as evil is no longer permanently attached to a specific human agent and can no longer be used to define the social relations between the protagonists. By extension, the position of unassailable or absolute good is also unfixed. Rather than the emulation of conduct producing a happy resolution, this mimetic reflection between the two characters, as Rene Girard reminds us, threatens to re-introduce the emotions of jealousy or envy and re-ignite the rivals’ competition over a “mimetic desire,” producing a tragic end instead of a romance. However, rather than evil being foreclosed from the intra- and interpersonal relationship of the protagonists, as Jameson contends, it is absolute good that is expelled or foreclosed from the hero’s “inner-worldly relations,” and thus is “reconstituted” as a projection or optical illusion of evil within the “realm” of sorcery and magical forces which constitutes the semic organization of the ‘world’ of romance. Whereas for Frye the dynamics set in motion by the binary structure produce the magical element of romance, for Jameson, its resolution produces the magical effect of evil as free floating. Bringing Frye and Jameson together, we find the final fantastic effect of the binary within romance accompanies its resolution in the form of a magical amnesia, made possible by the chiastic mechanism of projection, whereby a rejected or foreclosed internal perception returns in inverted form as an external perception. Thus, the hero forgets or does not recognize (perceive) the difference between his identity before and after his encounter with his antagonist. The narrative’s happy resolution does not rationalize away the difference that once characterized the hero and his rival; rather, what once defined the
hero’s character as good is foreclosed from the narrative insofar as the hero’s actions emulate the “evil” antagonist (the dark knight, rival brother, economic competitor, and so forth) that originally appeared to threaten his identity. Thus, the hero is translated into a representation of his rival. In his act of forgiveness and reconciliation the hero omits any recognition of how his past identity differed from his fallen rival and forms a new community by mimetically reflecting or emulating the same actions as his rival. Similarly, in the epilogue to The Tempest, Prospero’s happy ending, which is to inhabit his identity as “Absolute Milan,” is dependent on the audience’s recognition and sympathetic correspondence with Prospero’s forgiveness of his brother. But he fails to recognize that he is guilty of the exact same crimes Antonio committed. Hence, the reconciliation between good and evil in this romance is narrativized as the hero’s ability to forgive his rival’s difference, once understood as absolute evil, in a world constructed by the unforgivable difference that is foreclosed and projected from the hero’s own identity, once understood as absolute good. This mirroring of the same, however, threatens the signifying system of the genre, the stability of which had been fixed by the hierarchized metaphorical difference of good and evil. With the dissolution of the binary, the meaningful difference in the relationship between the protagonist and his world unravels, making any narrative closure impossible, and could just as well result in the reintroduction of the mimetic rivalry associated with tragedy. But what is foreclosed from the narrative’s symbolic order symptomatically returns in an inverted or chiastic form in the landscapes at the borders of the newly imagined national community.94 No longer
attached to a human figure, both foreclosed from and, at the same moment, structurally fundamental to romance, the seeming absolute good that once characterized the hero, projected into the world of romance, is “reconstituted” as an optical illusion of absolute evil, “henceforth determin[ing] the provisional investment of its anthropomorphic bearers and its landscapes alike.”  

Evil (qua radical difference) is not repressed or disavowed and displaced into a newly identified world or other; rather, the foreclosure of ‘good’ from the protagonist’s identity is reconstructed as the evil lurking in the narrative world of romance typically in the form of its anthropomorphized objects now translated by the process of projection as evil. 

With the symptomatic return of an externalized evil, the aggression that would typify the mirrored relationship or mimetic rivalry between the hero and the antagonist is redirected at the “free floating” radical difference phantasmatically projected into the “new world” that may be anthropomorphically invested but is not necessarily recognized as fully human.  

Hence, the chiastic reversal that allows for the emulative reconciliation of the protagonists within national and imperial romances also brings with it a discourse of race that is particularly aggressive and unforgiving, and generate racialized stereotypes that Homi Bhabha associates with colonial discourse, sans the ambivalence that is more characteristic of the relationship between the protagonists.  

Moreover, the narrative closure made impossible by the incessant slippage of metaphor is symptomatically fastened or fixed by a racially impure other, threateningly located at the periphery of the community.  

The hero’s superiority and
racial purity, typically central to his national identity in romance, endows him with the authority and tradition of the past; however, the dark intent projected onto the “exotic” others in these narratives originates with the repudiation of the hero’s own past.99 The hero’s identity is translated by his emulation of his rival’s actions that are assumed to be a representation of his own action. Thus, while romance re-imagines the nation as a space that can imperialistically absorb others by translating cultural difference into cultural similitude, some differences resist translation and remain an unassimilated part of the national romance. These excluded “others,” held apart from the nation as domestic foreigners, sustain the binary by which the nation defines itself and recreates or re-narrativizes its past.100 If the hero in romance is a mimetic representation of his rival, the “exotic” other becomes the representation of a representation, the rhetorical condition of both the genre itself and ideology.101 Hence, in the chapters that follow, I argue, while romance may provide a more inclusive vision of a nation, it also supplies, at the same moment, the ideological ground-work for empire building but only by destroying the very source that drives it, leaving in its wake the conquered monstrous others it creates.102 Thus, the desire that structures romance is paradoxically resolved by its effects which only calls forth a desire for yet more romance and finds an inexhaustible reserve of source material in its re-imagined creations or projections not of more Cyruces but more Calibans, Chingachgooks, Babos, and even Natty Bumpos.103

In chapter three, I utilize Rene Girard’s concept of “mimetic desire,” from his book *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), and his discussion of the violence inherent
within this desire to examine the emulation of and the competition for empire
between rival nations represented in James Fenimore Cooper’s first two novels of the
Leatherstocking series, The Pioneers (1823) and The Last of the Mohicans (1826).
But the focus of my argument, concerning the bifurcated and competing logic of
emulation in the post-revolutionary period within the U.S., centers on The Pioneers,
the novel that first introduces us the uniquely American character of Natty Bumppo.
In Cooper’s novels, the romance of the American West offers a space to forget the
transgression against and loss of a former British national identity, in part because the
rejected identity is continually rediscovered at the frontier. However, in The
Pioneers, neither the frontier nor the revolution are depicted as the defining national
experience for Americans; rather, it is their relationship to the law that determines
their national identity. In the novel, the law mediates and contains the violence
between the competing territorial interests of the U.S. and Britain, figured by Judge
Marmaduke Temple and Oliver Edwards respectively, as well as the ongoing
revolutionary violence of American citizens in pursuit of the contradictory ideals of
liberty and equality. The romance between Oliver Edwards and Elizabeth Temple
allows American readers to forgive and forget the new republic’s mimetic rivalry
with Britain for empire in North America by allegorically resolving the competition
between former enemies with the expansion of the national family through marriage.
While the marriage contract resolves the legal problem of England’s territorial claims,
usurped as a consequence of the American Revolution, it does not ameliorate the new
nation’s emulation of England’s imperial conquest of territory belonging to the
indigenous people of North America. To resolve the issue of the usurpation of native territorial rights, the legal language found in the Supreme Court case of *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), which “necessarily diminished” native sovereignty in the U.S., is actualized in the figure of Chingachgook, the last of the Mohicans, whose life and title to his tribal lands is “extinguished” at the end of the novel.\(^{104}\) In *Johnson v. McIntosh*, Supreme Court Chief Judge John Marshall found precedent for his written opinion that diminished native rights to mere occupants of their lands in the principle of discovery derived from the Papal bull of 1493 that “gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, [the discovery] was made, against all other European governments.”\(^{105}\) Moreover, Chief Judge Marshall wrote, the lands once held by England were ceded to the U.S. in accordance with the Paris treaty of 1783 that ended the Revolutionary War, “subject only to the Indian right of occupancy,” while the U.S. government held “the exclusive power to *extinguish* that right” (*Johnson v. McIntosh*, emphasis added). Rather than the contested space of the frontier as the formative location of the American identity, the novel depicts the civic space of the court—where law is king—as the location in which the reader discovers the true American identity that can peaceably emulate its British rival’s imperial desire for empire. It is also the location where the culturally hybridized and eminently more rebellious identities found in the west, represented by the characters Chingachgook and Natty Bumppo, are “necessarily diminished.” Hence, Cooper uses romance to reclaim and redefine the nation’s lost cultural identity, by resolving any competition between the two nations through law which officiates the legal state
of marriage between former enemies and contains the violence of the revolution by sacrificing to the past any radically alternative formation of the national family that might have recognized native rights. Insofar as the redemption of the past in *The Pioneers* brings with it the violence of empire that forcibly occludes alternate possibilities of the nation in the present, the necessity for a symptomatic reading is paramount.

In the fourth chapter of this project, I address the need for symptomatic readings as I examine Herman Melville’s novella “Benito Cereno” which speaks to the desire to ‘put the past behind us’ as irretrievably lost, and to live in the alterity of the present, something that is only possible if we forego the fraught work of interpretation. Indeed, Melville cautions his reader both in the opening of his novella and in his essay “Hawthorne and His Mosses” that to understand the art of telling the truth (i.e., truth in fiction) the reader must employ a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” as deception is the means by which truth in art is represented. Melville’s novella reminds us that recognizing difference in and of itself does not prevent and can instead assist the onward movement of the hierarchizing structures on which narratives depend, particularly those narratives concerned with empire and the legitimation of sovereignty. Delano’s willingness to accept Babo’s fiction as truth is determined by his blind acceptance or surface reading of a social order structured by racialized notions of difference. As I argue in chapter four, one of the dangers in forgetting the dialectic between truth and fiction in art is that we confuse representation for presentation, that is, for what is unquestionably real. Thus,
Melville’s allegory of competing empires stands as a warning to the then rising empire of the United States to interpret the lesson of history so as not to emulate (with a difference) the past, either by falling victim to its repetition or retreating from the possibilities of the future while mourning a loss that never was. But Melville’s cautionary tale might also be heeded by present day proponents of surface reading who similarly hope to remain in the “historical present,” cut off from the absolute alterity of the past so as to affirm the plurality of difference.

That a nineteenth century sea romance should speak to present-day arguments concerning surface reading and the alterity of the past is demonstrative of the persistence within our literary history of the desire to transcend the metaphor of surface and depth and to read representation as presentation. The persistence of this desire may also explain why the tradition reemerges both in the introduction Best wrote with Marcus for *The Way We Read Now* and in his article, “On Failing to Make the Past Present,” not only in his description of the ideal visual immediacy of the text’s surface that does not require mediation, but also in the rhetoric of romance which appears in his critiques of Jameson’s interpretive practices. Indeed, as Jennifer Fleissner observes, those who critique symptomatic reading frequently characterize the practice as “a form of romance.”

Symptomatic readers (and Jameson in particular) who practice ideological critique are described as engaged in a “strenuous” quest to unveil “truths from the hidden depths of resisting texts;” through the “heroic” efforts of their readings, they hope to redeem from the past a lost possibility of freedom which can only be mourned in the present since its moment has passed.
To be clear, the rhetoric of romance borrowed from *The Political Unconscious* that appears in Best’s essay and in his jointly written introduction, “Surface Reading,” is used to negatively characterize the role of the literary critic as a symptomatic reader; the language of romance, seen as participating in the genre’s impulse to redeem the past, is read as a symptom of Jameson’s reading strategy. However, Best and Marcus’ parodic reading of Jameson’s rhetoric also recalls the structure of romance in their own desire to escape the necessity of historicizing so as to wrest the text free from the effect of depth with its lost interpretative cause—which is (so the surface reading argument goes) to redeem a “lost wholeness” of language, subjectivity and so on—and to read what is apparent on the surface of the text. However, the practice of surface reading appears to emulate the same desire it identifies with symptomatic readings. In their work, the “strenuous” quest to redeem “wholeness” is associated in with the surface reader’s object of study, the readily apparent surface and its unproblematic relationship to history in the present. Moreover, while this debate may blur the line between various forms of writing, literary criticism is not literature; hence, the suggestion that a critic (or a national leader) is utilizing the rhetoric of romance to describe her/his own project is to recognize the ideological and inherently political force of this narrative form. But this recognition also participates in a symptomatic reading or ideological critique.

The final scene of Melville’s 1855 “Benito Cereno” reminds us that romance is only possible for those who reject the “hermeneutics of suspicion” and either mournfully recount their loss after their redemption (Captain Cereno) or blindly
accept the appearance of things as they are (Captain Delano). Hence, the novella operates as a romance for Captain Delano insofar as he refuses to allegorically read Captain Cereno’s black lettered text. To allegorize Captain Cereno’s condition would require Captain Delano to interpret Babo’s actions and authority as a performance and to understand its implications concerning his own presumed right to emulate the function of authority on the San Dominick. In refusing to moralize the story of empire played out on the ship of state, Delano repeats the violence he eschews as he piratically usurps the authority of others.

In my Epilogue, I examine Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s conflicted romance The Squatter and the Don, which walks the line between domestic and historical romance. The novel functions as a critique of U.S. imperialism inflected by monopoly capitalism, which has a corrupting effect on the law and those it governs. To counter the deleterious effects of U.S. imperialism, the narrative advocates for an older form of empire, which problematizes the emulous identification of the protagonist with antagonist that structures the reconciliation within romance. In addition, the narrative encourages the reader to identify and sympathize with the displaced Californios who, despite having the same racial identity as many Americans who possess European ancestry, are only partially incorporated within the nation and remain, in the eyes of the law, “foreign in the domestic sense.” As Jesse Alemán argues, in “Historical Amnesia and the Vanishing Mestiza” (2002), the novel constructs “a complex geopolitical alliance between Californios, sympathetic Northerners, Southerners, and squatters that solves the problem of Californio racial
identity by situating it with a larger discourse of violated rights of collective white citizens” (72). Thus, the narrative creates a sympathetic correspondence between characters representing the dispossessed or alienated “white” citizens within the new American Empire and all people of reason, whose aristocratic sensibilities associates them with Europe’s colonial past. The narrative stresses the emulation of pathos or shared feelings among all people of reason rather than the pathos of emulation or an emotional affect produce by the imitation of deeds. The former would allow Californios to share their hacienda romance with the newly arriving Americans while maintaining their position of economic domination and control with regard to California’s mestizo and indigenous populations. The success or failure of Ruiz de Burton’s novel as a romance in part depends on its utopic moment of closure in which the hero forgives his rival and recognizes him as part of the national family. Typically, in romance this closure is produced by the hero’s emulation of the rival’s action. In Squatter and the Don, despite the redemption of the dispossessed children of Don Mariano and Josefa Alamar, who married into the national family, the end of the romance remains conflicted. In last scene of the narrative, Doña Josefa, the figure of California’s past, lingers mournfully at on the edge of tragedy as she stares out the window observing the representative of the new form of empire who is rejoicing unpunished while “the innocent suffer ruin and desolation.”111

The loss each romance invokes at its beginning and disavows with its happy conclusion is associated—particularly in imperial romances—with the fall of the previous empire. The disavowal of the ebb and flow of empires in these imperial
romances, accomplished through emulation and affected in keeping with the tradition of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, reflects a desire to forestall any awareness of the inevitable demise of all such projects. As Hart and Negri observe, the “concept of Empire,” ironically both its older and newer form, offers itself “as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity.”

The disavowal characteristic of the competition between rival imperialisms depends on the foreclosure of the difference between the history of a nation-state and the illusion of an a-historical empire existing in an uninterrupted present. The romance narrative constructed around this foreclosure (or absent cause) symptomatically ignores the violence inherent in the project of empire building. While the mechanism of projection facilitates the reconciliation of rival imperial powers, the violence of empire is typically re-narrativized as lessons in civility.

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1 See Lavina Lee Rajaendram in *U.S. Hegemony and International legitimacy: Norms, Power and Followership in the wars on Iraq* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 169 n. 84.

2 See Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge. 2015.), 27.


4 Ibid. The passage into the new form of Empire alters established legal and economic norms. Hardt and Negri contend there is a shift in the measures of
juridical and economic value that “will be determined [in the future] only by humanity’s own continuous innovation and creation” (356).

5 Ibid., 166. Arguably, the association with democratic republicanism in Operation Desert Shield was merely rhetorical.

6 Ibid., 166-167.

7 The migration of Syrian war refugees has incited a return to a defensive nationalism within political discourse both internationally and in the U.S. See Anthony Faiola, “Hungry’s Prime Minister becomes Europe’s Donald Trump” in “Europe,” Washingtonpost.com. The Washington Post, 4 Sept. 2015. Later in this chapter I discuss the issue of defensive nationalism in relation to the empire and U.S.; also see n. 66 below.


11 Ibid., 1.

12 Ibid., 3.

13 Ibid., 4.

14 To name but a few of the texts that informed my thinking in this project: Edward Said in Culture and Imperialism (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); Eric


Effectively, in the new form of Empire, there is a return of the former relationship between *translatio studii et imperii* with the humanities functioning as the means by which the power of knowledge is transferred so as to legitimizes the transfer of political power at home and abroad. Cultural imperialism sustains
the continuity of political power. See Marjorie Perloff, “Presidential Address 2006: It Must Change” in *PMLA* 122.3 (May, 2007): 652-662. Perloff reminds her audience, in her presidential address to the MLA in 2006, “the current [Bush] administration in Washington has made a great push to strengthen the role of the ‘less frequently taught’ languages—Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, and so on—in the curriculum” (656). While administrators of our public universities may debate the economic viability of literary and cultural studies, translation has “been key to the workings of empire” (656). But, as Amy Kaplan points out, “empire fears translation; […] It cannot brook the necessity of mistranslation (Amy Kaplan, “Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 17, 2003.” *American Quarterly* 56.1 (2004): 15). Whether Empires fear translation or not, as Kirsten Silva Gruesz points out in *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002), “[t]ranslated language follows, if not precedes, the accomplishment of *traslatio* [sic] *imperii*, the movement of empire. And the voice of power now speaks in English” (2).

19 Perloff, “Presidential Address,” 655.

20 Ibid., 656, emphasis added.

21 For an assessment of the state of crisis as well as a defense of the humanities see Stanley Fish, “The Crisis of the Humanities.” Also see Christopher Newfield in “Ending the Budget Wars: Funding the humanities during a crisis in higher education” in *Profession* 2009.1 (2009): 270-284, and Colleen Lye, Christopher Newfield and James Vernon, “Humanists and the Public University” in *Representations* 116.1 (Fall 2011): 1-18. At the risk of being hyperbolic, the shifting priorities of the American Empire might be described as, balanced budgets before *Beowulf*, but bullets before bread.

22 See Cathy N. Davidson in “Humanities 2.0: Promise, Perils, Predictions” *PMLA* 123.3 (May, 2008): 715.

23 The cost analysis offered by Colleen Lye, Christopher Newfield and James Vernon, in “Humanists and the Public University,” asserts the humanities are not an economic drain on public universities and actually help to subsidize costs of more expensive programs in science and engineering: “[t]he humanities
are not actually flunking the test of market forces; they are being subjected to market failure” (7).


26 Best and Marcus, “Surface Reading,” 1. As Carolyn Lesjak observes, Marcus, however, qualifies her approach in as much as she “recognizes that interpretation is inevitable: even when attending to the givens of a text, we are always only—or just—constructing a meaning.’ Nor is it ‘to make an inevitably disingenuous claim to transparently reproduce a text's unitary meaning,’ nor to ‘dismiss symptomatic reading,’ since surface reading itself inevitably relies on the absences of other theories of the novel, such as Jameson’s” (Marcus qtd. in Carolyn Lesjak, “Reading Dialectically” in *Criticism* 55.2 (2013): 246, emphasis added). Lesjak is quoting from Marcus chapter "Just Reading: Female Friendship and the Marriage Plot," in *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), 75-76. What the difference is between “assigning meaning” and “constructing a meaning” remains unclear. As Marcus’ comments indicate, both practices require the interpretative intervention of a metalanguage.

27 See later in this chapter, pp. 14-15 and n. 54.

28 Best and Marcus, “Surface Reading,” 1.

29 Ibid., 9.

30 Ibid., 10. Italicized in Best and Marcus’ article.

31 Ibid., 12, 11. Italicized in Best and Marcus’ article.
32 Ibid., 11. The second quote in this sentence, which appears in Best and Marcus’ article, is taken from Aaron Kunin’s essay “Shakespeare’s Preservation Fantasy,” in *PMLA* 124 (January 2009): 95.

33 See Fineman in *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye: The Invention Of Poetic Subjectivity In The Sonnets* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1986), 315, n.31. Hereafter cited parenthetically in text as *SPE*.

34 Best and Marcus, “Surface Reading,” 11.

35 Such linguistic idealization might lead one to believe “that texts can reveal their own truth because texts mediate themselves” (Best and Marcus, “Surface Reading,” 11).

36 Visualized language is “the recursive structure of epideictic” display that takes part in Crytylitic idealism in that it duplicates whatever it presents because whatever is presented is itself already an image of its own representation” (*SPE* 103).

37 Lesjak, 247.

38 Ibid.


42 Perloff, “Presidential Address,” 654.

43 Ibid., 654.


45 Lesjak, 238. Lesjak contends the confusion of theory as praxis in “Surface Reading” is a reflection of the crisis within the humanities and its retreat from theory. She also cites Vincent Leitch who suggests, “the so called passing of theory equally reflects wider fears about the role or place of critical thinking within an increasingly corporatized university” (238).

46 See Slavoj Žižek in *Defense of Lost Causes* (New York: Verso, 2008) 3. Lesjak also notes Žižek’s remarks on the relationship between theory and practice and she adds that Jameson’s work is similarly possessed of “a self-imposed ‘failure imperative’” (Helming qtd. in Lesjak, 249, and 270 in n. 76).


Best in “On Failing,” 465. For Best, these critics, who “discern structural inequalities repeated in the present,” reduce the present to “mere repetition” of past in which they melancholically linger over a lost possibility for the future (463).

Ibid., 472.

Ibid., 456.

Ibid., 474. Best’s response to the “melancholic” literary critics reads much like Derrida’s notion of “time out of joint” or disjointed time, albeit stood on its head. Instead of the future-to-come as heterogeneous, the past is now (pun intended) to be understood as an alterity we cannot know. See Jacques Derrida in Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International, trans. P. Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 24-26, 228 n.2.

See Jennifer Fleissner, 699-717. Jennifer Fleissner observes, for Best, the notion of a present repeating the past was made possible by transference, in the psychoanalytic sense….an insistence on transference enables a rejection not only of what Best critiques in Benjaminian history…but, crucially, Best’s own alternative as well: that is,…[the] ‘radical alterity’” of the past (707).

Lesjak, 246. For a full discussion of the United States as an Empire see Amy Kaplan in “Violent Belongings” (2004). A recent addition to the list of scholars Kaplan cites in her essay is Robert Kaplan. In his article “In Defense of Empire” in The Atlantic (April 2014), Kaplan makes “a case for a tempered American imperialism” that should only militarily intervene when “a overwhelming national interest is threatened.” What constitutes and overwhelming national interest is left undefined. He also contends the empires of the past “were great precisely because they gave significant parts of the world a modicum of imperial order that they would not otherwise have enjoyed” (emphasis add).
Northrop Frye in *The Secular Scripture: The Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976), 13. Jameson, in *Political Unconscious*, also contends that the presence of “contradictory or heterogeneous elements, [of] generic patterns and discourses” within a text suggests “a conflict between the older deep-structural form and the contemporary materials and generic systems in which it seeks to inscribe and to reassert itself. Beyond this, it would seem to follow that, properly used, genre theory must always in one way or another project a model of the coexistence or tension between several generic modes or strands” (141).

Ibid., 106.

Alluding to the work of Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973), Frye, in *Secular Scripture*, suggests that poets invent (or reinvent) literary traditions through a process by which they misunderstand “earlier ages that never existed” then supersede them (163). Rather than a radically new tradition, this process of invention reflects a narrative re-expression of a past that never existed which is projected into the future. Slavoj Žižek’s description of symptom formation bares a remarkable similarity to Frye’s description of the inventive quality of romance. Žižek notes, “because the symptom as a ‘return of the repressed’ is precisely such an effect which precedes its cause (its hidden kernel, its meaning), and in working through the symptom we are precisely ‘bringing about the past’—we are producing the symbolic reality of past, long-forgotten traumatic events” (S.O. 56-57). Effectively, to overcome the symptom we narratively invent its cause.

Jameson, 110.

For the political erotics of romance see Doris Sommer in *Foundational Fictions: National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1991) 6, 12. For a discussion of the thematic erotics associated with the rhetorical forms within different genres see Joel Fineman’s Epilogue in *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye*, 297-307.

See John McClure in *Late Imperial Romance* who cites the work of Martin Green *Dreams of Adventure* and Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* as two earlier studies of nineteenth century popular literature (adventure and travel narratives among them) that celebrated imperialism, as these tales depended on
the “raw materials” British imperialism provided, specifically “a world divided into zones of order and disorder; adventures caught up in projects of exploration, conquest and conversion; and legitimizing discourses[…]” (2). Green and Brantlinger clearly establish a link between romance and British imperialism while McClure extends the politics of this genre form to include American twentieth century texts and contexts. However, as David Beers Quinn’s essay “New Geographical Horizons: Literature” in First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old, ed., Fred Chiappelli, Michael Allen and Robert Benson. Vol. II. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press. 1976. 635-658), suggests early modern travel narratives had a same capacity as later imperial romances to arouse a desire for exploration. He examines Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci’s use and incorporation of Mandeville’s Travels in their accounts of the “New World.” Hence, Mandeville’s Travels not only elicited the desire for exploration but also provided the lens through which these explorers saw the New World.

63 See Shakespeare’s sonnet 127. Paul de Mann in Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979) discusses the chiasmus as a “determining figure of Rilke’s poetry” that inverts the order of figure and poetic structure (38): “This reversal of the figural order, itself the figure of chiasmus that crosses the attributes of inside and outside and leads to the annihilation of the conscious subject, bends the themes and the rhetoric from their apparently traditional mode towards a specifically Rilkean one” (37). I am suggesting that the larger structuring effect of this figure is not specific to Rilke nor, as Fineman argues, specifically Shakespearian. Rather the chiasmus is characteristic of the genre of romance generally albeit after Shakespeare’s reinvention of romance for the stage. See Cyrus Mulready in Romance on the Early Modern Stage: English Expansion Before and After Shakespeare (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2013). Also see William F. Leigh, “Augustine’s Confessions as a Circular Journey” in Thought 60.1 (1985): 73-88. Leigh discusses the chiasmus as a rhetorical pattern employed by Augustine in his Confessions. The rhetorical figure also structures his “chiastic journey” of “fall and return,” a narrative pattern that is similarly associated with the tragic beginnings and happy endings of romance (75). For the connection between love and the “self-enclosed” pattern of chiasmus that introduces the danger of desire as “both self-perpetuating and self-consuming” see Lee Edelman in Transmembrent of Song: Hart Crane's Anatomies of Rhetoric and Desire (Stanford: Stanford U.P. 1987), 128. Edelman defines the figure of chiasmus as implying a “convergence and intersection, while aspiring to a position of stability and totality: a position, as it were, of ‘indestructibility.’” Its mirror-like qualities of reversal and exchange claim the comprehensiveness of an emblem and the autonomy of a structure built on inwardly bending extremes” (129).
64 Frye, *Secular Scripture*, 163. This binary, foundational to the genre, links romance to the epideictic rhetoric of praise and blame.

65 See Amy Kaplan in *Anarchy of Empire*, 7. Kaplan reads Justice White’s decision in the court case of *Downes v. Bidwell* that asserted Puerto Rico “was foreign to the United States in the domestic sense” to exemplify the paradoxical formation of a U.S. identity which maintains a domestic relationship with dependent foreign possessions. In *Downes v. Bidwell*, White argues the full incorporation of Puerto Rico by juridical decision would threaten the sovereignty of the U.S. government. More recently, the issue of immigration, both in the U.S. and Europe, has become a similar point of defensive nationalism. For many Western countries the focus on border security also operates as a disavowal of the colonial and imperialist practices that have lead to the forced migration of large populations. See Evan Osnos “The Fearful and the Frustrated” in *newyorker.com*. The New Yorker, 31 Aug. 2015. In addition, see Nick Robins-Earl, “How the Refugee Crisis Is Fueling the Rise of Europe’s Right” in *Huffingtonpost.com*. The Huffington Post, 28 Oct. 2015.


69 Sharon Kinoshita, in *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), understands the thirteenth century as a “moment of epistemic rupture, in which several key twelfth-century institutions, practices and mentalities were, in relatively short order reorganized, challenged, or abolished” (2). Kinoshita cites other medievalists, Heng among them, who have observed the effect of this epistemic shift as an acute awareness of racial difference. She points out that for
Heng, this increasing reliance on a racialized discourse posits physiognomy and religious differences as signs of national otherness. Hence, racial differences delimit inclusion within the early formations of national communities. While this argument lends support to Andy Doolen’s contention, in *Fugitive Empire*, that “racial domination was a primary characteristic of early American imperialism,” it does not set “it apart from models of imperialism” derived from European expansion (xv).

70 Heng, 49.

71 Arthur’s conquests imaginatively unify England and Scotland while the conquest of Ireland and Iceland extend his empire and reputation beyond the British isle:

He then summoned all who were most distinguished from kingdoms far and wide and began to enlarge his household and to have such elegance in his court that he stirred *emulation* in people far away. [....] As his magnanimity and valor became celebrated throughout the world, extreme dread filled the rulers of kingdoms overseas that, if they were crushed by an invasion of Arthur’s, they might lose the nations they governed. (Bk. IX, ch. XI, emphasis added)


72 Heng, 67.

See Cicero *De Oratore Book III*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Loeb-Harvard UP, 1942), 123: “A metaphor is a brief similitude contracted into a single word; which word being put in the place of another, as if it were in its own place, conveys if the resemblance be acknowledged, delight; if there is no resemblance, it is condemned” (III.XXXVIII.156-XXXIX.157, emphasis added).

Mordred is the guilty remainder of the once great chivalric court. Like Prospero’s brother Antonio, in *The Tempest*, Mordred was left to rule in the absence of the head of state, and his usurpation of the crown, always read as an act of betrayal, ends Arthur’s imperial quest midstride. Arthur’s return to Britain marks the beginning of a bloody civil war and the end of the Arthurian Empire.

"epideictic | epideiktic," meaning to “show-off” or "display." See *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford U.P, June 2014. *OED Online*). Aristotle defines emulation (zēlos) as an emotion, the positive complement to the negative emotion of envy (and contempt) both of which stem from a sense of rivalry. While emulation is associated with a form of mimesis, zēlos also refers to the vigor with which an imitation or epideictic oratory is performed, but it does not guarantee that the power of the original conceit will be transmitted. The eloquence of one’s performance relies on the appropriate application of figural language and is typically determined by the one’s audience (particularly in oratory). Epideictic rhetoric is particularly suited to elicit emulation in an audience, as those who are emulated have acquired good things through their actions causing “praises and encomia [to be] spoken by poets and writers [logographoi]” (see *Aristotle On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. R. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991) 2.11.7, 162. In his editorial comments for Book 2 Chapter 11, Robert Kennedy notes that Aristotle counters envy’s negative emotions with the positive emotions of emulation: “Both are feelings that may result from a sense of rivalry with those a person regards as in some sense equal. In Hellenistic and later rhetoric, zelos becomes an important aspect of literary imitation; for it refers to the zeal on the part of the writer to equal the quality of the greater writers of the past” (Kennedy’s note 161).

Ibid. Also see Fineman’s discussion in *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye* of epideictic poetry as the conjoined affect of metaphor and mimesis in the creation of figural language, the most powerful of which is metaphor, “by means of which, [as] Aristotle said of metaphor, “poets see the same” (to homoion therein estin)” (12). To create its greatest effects, epideictic rhetoric uses metaphor and mimesis.
to illuminate what it mirrors and please while it instructs achieving eloquence by means of “bringing-before-the-eyes [pro ommaton poiein, or visualization],” actualizing a desired action through language (see Aristotle in *Rhetoric* 3.10.6., 245).

78 This is in keeping with Frye’s notion of narrativizing a past “that never exited” (163). While metaphor, mimesis, and emulation (zēlos) all play a part in the transference of culture, to this list of tropes I would also add the movement of metonymy that allows for the unfolding of meaning through time, a point I discuss in relation to Melville’s “Benito Cereno” in Chapter four. Nonetheless, the figure of the chiasmus disrupts the telos of any diachronic development of tradition.

79 de Mann, 40.

80 In his analysis of romance, Jameson utilizes A. J. Greimas’s semiotic square that is “organized around binary oppositions rather dialectical ones,” which he argues “can be re-appropriated for a historicizing and dialectical criticism by designating it as the very locus and model of ideological closure” (Jameson, 47).

81 Ibid., 104-105.

82 Ibid., 243.

83 Ibid.

84 See Eric Cheyfitz, 27.

85 Jameson, 112. While basic binary of good and evil composes the world of romance, “[t]he centrality of worldness in romance will lead us to question the primacy Frye attributes to traditional categories of character—in particular, the role of the hero and the villain—in romance.” Jameson suggest the world in romance is itself a character that is alive and “absorbs many of the act-and event-producing functions normally reserved for narrative ‘characters’; to use Kenneth
Burke’s dramatistic terminology, we might say that in romance the category of Scene tends to capture and to appropriate the attributes of Agency and Act, making the ‘hero’ over into something like a registering apparatus for transformed states of being, sudden alternations of temperature, mysterious heightenings, local intensities, sudden drops in quality [...]” in short the whole range of transformative possibilities (or scenes) in Romance where “higher and lower worlds struggle to overcome each other” (112).

86 Ibid., 113-114.

87 Ibid., 118.

88 My use of the pronoun “he” and possessive pronoun “his” is not simply to maintain Jameson’s use of the referent but a recognition that these overtly imperialist “questing” romances narrativize a patriarchal world in which masculinity is tested and reassured of its place of power. While many national romances, both historical and sentimental, are often no less patriarchal, they also include the domestic sphere of women.

89 See Jameson, 118. A. J. Greimas’s “project of a fundamental semantics” or theory of meaning finds its most elementary structure in “the logical development of a binary seme category [...] whose terms are in relation of contrariety and that can also, each one, project a new term that would be its contradictory.” Greimas qtd. by Clint Burnham in *The Jamesonian Unconscious: The Aesthetics of Marxist Theory* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 121. The story affected by an apparent “seme evaporation” might suggest the peaceful resolution of the binary, but, it may also make possible other narrative resolutions, as I later suggest.


91 Jameson, 119: “[evil] must find itself expelled from the realm of interpersonal or inner-worldly relations in a kind of Lacanian forclusion and thereby be projectively reconstituted into a free-floating and disembodied element, a baleful optical illusion, in its own right: that ‘realm’ of sorcery and
magical forces which constitute the semic organization of the ‘world’ of romance […]"

92 Ibid., 119.

93 See Sigmund Freud, “On the Mechanism of Paranoia” in Three Case Histories (New York: Touchstone / Simon & Schuster, 1963): “The most striking characteristic of symptom-formation in paranoia is the process which deserves the name of projection. An internal perception is suppressed, and, instead, its content, after undergoing a certain degree of distortion, enters consciousness in the form of an external perception. […] what should have be felt internally as love is perceived externally as hate” (142).

94 See Slavoj Žižek in Sublime Object for a fuller discussion of Lacan’s concept of foreclosure which was introduced in the fifties to designate “the exclusion of a certain key-signifier (point de caption, Name-of-the-Father) from the symbolic order, triggering the psychotic process; […but] what is foreclosed from the Symbolic returns in the Real—in the form of hallucinatory phenomena” (78). Žižek goes on to note that Lacan in his later years “gave universal range to this function of foreclosure: there is a certain foreclosure proper to the order of signifier as such; whenever we have a symbolic structure it is structured around a certain void” (78).

95 Jameson, 119.

96 A difference that is foreclosed does not have the pinioning effect or fixity associated the fetishistic disavowal that presumes the repression of Name-of-the-Father but continues to allow for meaning within signification. For a discussion of the fetishistic disavowal associated with racial difference, see Homi Bhabha in “The Other Question…: Homi Bhabha Reconsiders Stereotypes in Colonial Discourse,” Screen 24.6 (1983): 18-36. The Lacanian concept of foreclosure is a complete repudiation and lack of inclusion of the Name-of-the-Father, a world constructed without signifying limits. Hence, rather than the perverse world of the fetish that recognizes the presence of but nonetheless disavows difference, the hero’s relationship to his/her magical world, and the objects within it, has more in common with the structure of psychosis that profoundly negates the difference, as seen the relationship between the hero and the rival.
Lacanian clinician and scholar, Gillian Straker, “Unsettling Whiteness,” in *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive: Towards a Transformative Psychosocial Praxis*, eds., Garth Stevens, Norman Duncan, and Derek Hook (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 83-108) notes foreclosure often characterizes the “discourses of white superiority…[and] preclude[s] the experience of an unsettled whiteness as it allows an unambiguous certainty and belief in the delusion of white phallic fullness without limit or castration” (99). Straker focuses in her essay on clinical narratives that exhibit “the defense of disavowal and its relationship to the fetish” because it frequently appears in her patients’ narratives “but also because it holds more hope for the future than, for instance, foreclosure, which characterizes discourses of white superiority” (99).

Moreover, the “fixity, as a sign of cultural/ historical/ racial difference in colonial discourse” is a “paradoxical mode of representation” that “connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated…as if” it is essential knowledge that goes without saying but can never be proved with an absolute certainty (see H. Bhabha “The Other Question,” 18). Hence, the “fixity” of the racial impurity and / or inferiority of the radical other, who is seen as less than human or an element of nature, secures the generic structure of the romance.

See See Slavoj Žižek in *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) who cites Jacques-Alain Miller discussion of the “hatred of enjoyment of the Other.” The question is located “on the level of tolerance or intolerance toward the enjoyment of the Other, the Other as he who essentially steals my enjoyment. […] The problem is apparently unsolvable as the Other is the Other in my interior. The root of racism is thus hatred of my own enjoyment” (Miller qtd in Žižek 203). Žižek comments that “[w]hat we conceal by imputing to the Other the theft of enjoyment is the traumatic fact that we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us: the lack (‘castration’) is originary, enjoyment constitutes itself as ‘stolen’” (204).

My use of this term is drawn from Amy Kaplan’s *Anarchy of Empire* and her discussion of the Supreme Court case of *Downes v. Bidwell* (1901). She cites Justice Edward Douglass White’s assenting opinion in the case and his
reference to Porto Rico, as “foreign to the United States in a domestic sense,” because it remains an unincorporated possession of the United States (2).

101 See Louis Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” who defines ideology as representing “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (109). He explains that ideology may constitute an illusion that must be interpreted, but it nonetheless alludes to reality (110). In Žižek’s clarification of Althusser’s first thesis, he writes,  

[i]deology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support of our ‘reality itself’ an ‘illusion’ which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real impossible kernel. (S.O., 45)

Similarly, Fineman suggests that “Shakespearean romance is the drama of the representation of representation” a conceit that introduces the idea of art’s capacity to change nature, and in changing it, “art itself is Nature” (SPE 306).

102 Similarly, the same desire that inaugurates the U.S.’s democratic national project also initiates the impulse toward Empire building.

103 See Sir Philip Sidney in “The Defense of Poesy (1583),” An Apologie for Poetrie, ed. Edward Arber (London: Alex Murray & Sons, 1858). Sidney argues that the poet’s work honors “the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature; which in nothing he sheweth so much as in poetry.” The mimetic power of poetry not only allows the poet “to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done; but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses; if they will learn aright, why, and how, that maker made him.” The work of translatio studii requires one to assume perspective of the “maker” or poet and identify with his/her heroic creations while leaving unquestioned the villainy against which the hero battles.


105 Ibid.
See Best in “On Failing,” 465. This accusation is not new to readings that function as ideological critique, or nor to the work of Fredrick Jameson. Hayden White in *The Content and the Form*, to whom many practitioners of surfacing reading either explicitly or implicitly refer, self-consciously employs a similar characterization of Jameson’s arguments concerning history. Although for White, Jameson was not being historical enough.

Ibid.


Hart and Negri, xiv.
CHAPTER 2

*The Tempest*, a Romance for a New World of Empire

“But by repetition of what thou hast marred;
That will I make before I let thee go.
[....]
The sorrow that I have by right is yours,
And all the pleasure you usurp are mine.”

—Queen Margaret, *Richard III* (1.3.164-65, 168-169)

Shakespeare’s late plays have helped to define the genre of romance in the West which some literary critics have argued represents an ideological response to certain historical conditions. Critics, such as Doris Sommer, have argued that the happy resolution of romance, brought about by the legitimized union of heterosexual lovers and the hero’s conquest over his antagonist “through mutual interest, or ‘love,’ rather than coercion,”¹ allegorically represents the peaceful consolidation of an historically divided nation. Yet, Shakespeare’s romances appear to defy this historical and ideological parameter with which the genre is associated inasmuch as the internal national divisions and external conflicts that arguably helped to define and energize England’s national identity under the Tudor monarchs did not exist during the era in which Shakespeare wrote all his late romances. With the uncontested succession of the Stuarts to the English throne in 1603, and the negotiated peace with Spain officiated by the new king, James I, in 1604 (who cultivated the image of peacemaker),² England enjoyed a period of national stability
as Shakespeare penned his last romance, *The Tempest*, first performed at court in 1611.

In addition to indicating a desire for national unification, the genre of romance, as Martin Green contends in his book *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979), is also an energizing source for English imperialism, motivating its desire to “go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule.” Specifically, Green notes, “Shakespeare can reasonably be called a literary spokesman for that imperialism.” However, Green does not begin his exploration of adventure romance with *The Tempest*, written when England was in the infancy of its colonial ventures aboard. Instead, Green opens his study with Defoe and the official rebirth of England as Great Britain, effected by Parliament’s Act of Union 1707. Yet a century before the Act of Union united the empire, King James I of England (who remained James VI of Scotland) was frustratingly embroiled in an internal contest of empire with the English Parliament and, despite the limits of England’s colonial investment in the “New World” during this period, the issue of empire was a topic of national concern. Belying the relative stability of England’s Jacobean period, a contest over monarchical power and empire existed within England, suggesting that the project of empire and the rebirth of a nation are part and parcel of the same narrative logic at least with regard to Shakespeare’s romances, and *The Tempest* in particular, the play most often associated with England’s early colonial ventures.

Among its other colonial holdings of Wales and Ireland and as far back as King Edward I, England had actively pursued the conquest and incorporation of
Scotland, a goal the Scotts had just as actively resisted. Interestingly, at the turn of the seventeenth century, the English Parliament, who distrusted their new Scottish King, now resisted any attempt to unify the two kingdoms. In his accession speech to Parliament 19 March 1603 [1604], King James utilized the rhetoric of romance to make his case for the unification of England and Scotland, characterizing himself as both the officiator and the product of a marriage between the two kingdoms, united by their similarities met in him. The king claimed to embody the peaceful resolution to all of Britain’s historic political conflicts. In his person, he announced, God had sent England a double blessing: the union between the “two Houses of LANCASTER and YORKE” as well as “the vnion of two ancient and famous Kingdomes,” England and Scotland. Their unification, he affirmed, was ordained by territorial proximity and cultural similitude, both attesting the need to legitimized the marriage between the two countries: “Hath not God first vnited these two Kingdomes, both in Language, Religion and similitude of manners? [...] What God has conjoynd then, let no man separate” (“Address to Parliament 1603” 135-16).

While the new king’s desire for a unified Britain emulated the desire of former English kings, for many in Parliament, this similarity did not necessarily ensure the extension of English hegemony and instead was seen as the guise by which King James planned to overthrow the traditions of the past. The English Parliament remained unconvinced of their cultural similarity with a king whose ideas of monarchy, expressed in his treatise *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), had more cultural affinity with the absolutist traditions of the French monarchy than the
monarchical traditions of England circumscribed by the common law.\(^9\) After the King’s accession speech, Parliament wrote by committee a *Form of Apology and Satisfaction* that reminded the king of the rights and duties English history as well as English common law assigned Members of Parliament in their role as counsel to the king.\(^{10}\) While a small minority wrote the *Apology*, many feared that the unification of England and Scotland, under King James I, would mean the end of English common law and the parliamentary system as practiced in England, particularly after King James flouted Parliament’s role in the process of unification by univocally claiming for himself the title of King of Great Britain, France and Ireland.\(^{11}\) In short, because the new king believed in his absolute right to rule unchecked by Parliament’s counsel, many feared the union between north and south could just as easily result in England losing its position of priority over Scotland and effectively becoming indistinguishable from its once envisaged colony.\(^{12}\)

The king’s final address to his first parliament, on the 21\(^{st}\) of March, 1609 [1610], did little to quell those concerns. “Kings,” James I announced, “are iustly called Gods, for they exercise a manner or resemblance of Divine power on earth [...].”\(^{13}\) Despite his assurances that “neuer King was in all his time more carefull to haue his Lawes duly obserued, and himself to gouerne thereafter, than I,” King James also asserted that even if the king should be a mad tyrant, “no Christian man ought to allow rebellion of people against their Prince” as kings were answerable only to God.\(^{14}\)
This drama between the king and his parliament over monarchial power, empire, and the character of the English nation unfolded in the period just before Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*. Inasmuch as these issues were national topics of debate and “in many other people's mouths as well within as without the Parliament,” Shakespeare arguably utilized the perceived crossed intentions of emulation at the heart of the national crisis over unification—the concern that James I imitated English traditions so as to usurp them—to inform his writing. Prospero’s imperial identity that has given critics pause, requiring them to reconcile their readings of Prospero as the artful-magician with his distemper directed in force at the rebellious figure of Caliban whose eloquence has evoked sympathy in audiences, can be read as a figure for the absolute monarch that King James wished to be in England. While it is tempting to read *The Tempest* as an allegory for the contest between James I and his parliament, I wish to argue that Shakespeare is quite consciously exploring the paradoxical subject position of an absolute ruler as well as the complicating affect of cultural emulation in determining the relative positions of colonizer and colonized, both at the periphery and at the core. The fulfillment of Prospero’s romance, his return to Milan as duke, requires the usurped duke to emulate not just the native on whom he depends for his survival but his brother whose sovereignty over Milan he would usurp. My contention in this chapter is that Shakespeare, in *The Tempest*, utilizes the chiastic structure of the romance, which he explicitly links to the project of empire building within Jacobean England, to explore the crossed relationship of the usurper and the usurped which depends on the emulation of past tradition. In
keeping with the generic precepts of the romance, *The Tempest* allows for a re-
imagining of the nation as a happy marriage between the two kingdoms, north and
south; with the advent of Ferdinand and Miranda’s marriage, the southern Kingdom
of Naples is to be united with the northern Dukedom of Milan. The practice of
cultural emulation, ostensibly motivated by love and forgiveness, remakes the nation
from a place of fractious rivalry into a place of similitude, seemingly capable of
imperialistically absorbing others into the national romance. My principle claim in
this chapter is that the chiastic structure of the romance genre informs the logic of
Prospero’s imperial identity, the authority of which is re-authorized when he becomes
the hero of his own romance narrative and asserts his right to rule by identifying with
those who would “usurp” that right through the process of emulation thereby erasing
any memory of his original identity and displacing that difference elsewhere.

Cultural materialist readings of *The Tempest* have commented on the domestic
imperialism discussed here and its relation to the discourse of colonialism within the
play, as have those who responded to their readings. Paul Brown, who reads the play
as a “radically ambivalent text which exemplifies […] a moment of historical
crisis,”\(^\text{16}\) notes this internal imperialism that he terms, in reference to Immanuel
Wallerstein’s World Systems Theory, “colonialism of the core” (209). But rather
than this form of colonialism simply referring to Jacobean England’s involvement in
Ireland or Wales as Brown suggests, the play also represents the extension and
reinforcement of royal hegemony throughout the whole of the British Isle, including
within England. Still, the “rhetoric of romance” in *The Tempest*, as Brown maintains,
borrows from and represents the rhetoric of colonialism, its “gift of freedom” and education as well as its management of desire (223). Deborah Willis, who challenges Brown’s use of Wallerstein’s theory as well as his suggestion that Shakespeare struggled and failed “to produce a coherent discourse adequate to the complex requirements of British colonialism in its initial phase,” also recognizes this internal imperialism operating within *The Tempest* (Brown 206). But Willis argues that Shakespeare’s treatment of “‘colonialism of the core’” and “‘colonialism of the periphery’” differs, with the first often played against the latter:

> [The Tempest] should be understood as an extremely successful endorsement of the core’s political order. At the same time, the play registers anxiety about the legitimacy of peripheral colonial ventures and their ability to further core interests. Brown, then, is right when he suggests that the play shares with many masques the intention to celebrate an ideal ruler. He is also right to suggest that the play’s celebration of an ideal ruler depends, in part at least, upon the disclosure of a threatening “other.” (Willis 261)

The play, she continues, is “engaged in arousing the desire for, and displaying the power of, a ruler at the core who can contain a tendency toward oligarchy and division” and to whom “colonization of the periphery” is secondary, “given up when its has served its purpose” (Willis 261). But the claim that romance, like the masque, unproblematically celebrates an “ideal ruler” does not take into consideration the paradoxical structure of the genre that similarly structures the ambivalent relationship
between any absolute identity and those “others” who threaten that identity within the
genre’s regime of representation. This last point is suggested by Willis’s
identification of Antonio as the real threatening “other” in Prospero’s romance, a
position that informs my own argument. But Willis’ contention that colonialism at
the core differs from colonialism at the periphery must be qualified, as colonialism at
the periphery only appears different insofar as it remains unincorporated and apart
from the core. With any expansion of the core (such as James I was proposing in
England), the periphery must shift or the identity and power of the core is threatened
(as Parliament’s fears concerning the union between England and Scotland make
clear). That is, colonization at the periphery can be “given up” as long as the
concerns of the periphery seem to be radically different from the interests of the core.
By asserting a necessary difference in the political order within the two localities,
Willis finds herself in agreement with Brown’s assessment of the play as a
celebration of an idealized sovereign identity, such as typically performed in a
masque.\(^\text{19}\) However, despite Prospero’s display of power within the play, exhibited
by his epideictic rhetoric of praise and blame within his account of his lost dukedom
of Milan, he is not “a ruler at the core” (Willis 261). For the play to operate as a
romance in “celebration” of Prospero as an ideal ruler, he must first recuperate his
lost identity while paradoxically representing it to be absolute.\(^\text{20}\) It would seem that
both Prospero’s ideal identity and romance share the same paradoxical structure.

The structure of Shakespeare’s romances that begin where his tragedies leave
off and end with the comedies of his beginnings allows the playwright to rehearse a
comic resolution to the tragic loss of an ideal or ideal identity, a casualty to the logic of representation and the duplicity of language in epideictic rhetoric or praise poetry, as others have argued. But Shakespeare’s romances seem to offer an “apparent exception to the pathos of representation,” not by ignoring the emotion associated with the loss of a self-sufficient identity promised in language but by structurally repeating the loss first as tragedy, then as comedy (SPE 303). The emotions associated with loss are, as it were, parenthetically held in check, qualifying any celebration of the recuperated ideal-identity:

If Shakespearean comedy is a drama of presentation, true to its genre because it swerves away from loss, if Shakespearean tragedy is a drama of representation, true to its genre because its representation presents the loss of presence, then Shakespearean romance is the drama of the representation of representation, and it therefore displays, and wants to present as its generic intention, the loss of loss. [...] It introduces the idea—central to and explicit in Shakespearean romance—that there “is an art / Which does mend Nature—change it rather; but / The art itself is Nature.” (The Winter’s Tale qtd in SPE 306)

Through the chiastic structure of his romances, Shakespeare attempts to artfully repair or remake his protagonists’ emptied subjectivity by crossing the crossed nature of the subjectivity, which Joel Fineman argues, Shakespeare invented in his sonnets. The crossed repetition of tragedy and comedy within his romances gives them their
allegorical effect as “the genre of the twice told tale” in which the repetition “makes up for or redeems original loss” (SPE 306). Typically, the hero’s loss occurs in the first half of the play and continues to echo throughout the second half until the narrative desire is sated when the hero forgets his original loss; the narrative ending is made possible when the tragic memory that begins the play is forgotten (SPE 307). *The Tempest* is singular among Shakespeare’s romances in that the first tragic iteration of the hero’s story is not performed; rather, the protagonist narrativizes his loss. Nonetheless, the initiating desire for a self-sufficient identity is performed in the opening scene that allegorically recalls the loss of Prospero’s ideal identity while indicting all those who played a part in his downfall.

In the first scene of *The Tempest*, Prospero’s tragic loss is performed through the extended metaphor of the ship of state tossed on a stormy sea. Helen Cooper points out that there is a doubling of ships in *The Tempest*; the first ship, in which Prospero and Miranda are set adrift, “the rotten carcass of a butt, not rigged, / Nor tackled, sail nor mast,” is replicated in the particulars of the second vessel’s shipwreck. In addition to recalling Prospero’s tragic abandonment at sea, the disorder of the hierarchical social relationships onboard ship also metaphorically recalls the inversion of authority that led to Prospero’s usurpation. On the ship, King Alonso interposes himself between the ship’s master and his orders to the boatswain; the boatswain (a commoner) shouts commands at nobles; finally, the king’s brother, Sebastian, threatens to abandon his king (1.1.59). The exchange between the
boatswain and Gonzalo exemplifies the crossed nature of authority that precedes the wreck of the ship of state:\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Boatswain:}…What cares these roarers for the name of king? To cabin! Silence; trouble us not.

\textbf{Gonzalo:} Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard.

\textbf{Boatswain:} None that I more love than myself. You are a councilor; if you can command these elements to silence and work peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your Authority […] (1.1.15-21)

In this exchange, the boatswain forcefully reminds the king and his noblemen of the distance between who the noblemen represent themselves to be and who they are, or rather, the gap between the figure of authority (representation) and the exercise of authority (presentation). In their demand for recognition, the nobles presume a correspondence between their authority and that of the king’s earthly representation of the ideal authority, God. But the king’s command is unable to manifest the power represented by his title, and the boatswain indelicately reminds the noblemen of the limits of their power that stands in weak imitation to the power of nature. Even the metaphoric correspondence between God’s command of nature and the king’s command over his subjects (objects of nature) is disrupted, as the captain is “Master” of the ship of state. Hence, the “insolent” Boatswain in fact maintains the ship’s decorum while the men of court exceed the bounds of decorum at sea.\textsuperscript{25} The name of king at sea is without meaning, an emptied signifier unable to mirror the force of
nature that ultimately dictates the sailors’ labor. Thus the king’s nobles, insofar as they identify with the figure of the king, become no more than an ornamentation that amplifies the empty figure of power. For the king’s brother, Sebastian, the boatswain’s insolence is “blasphemous” inasmuch as it reminds the courtiers of what they lack, an absolute correspondence between what they represent themselves to be, figures of ideal noble authority, and what they are, figures without an object, without referent, and a disruption in the chain of authority (1.1.37). The nobles “assist the storm” by repeating the stormy disorder in nature in their attempt to use the boatswain as a screen to reflect their assertion of authority and, thus, insert themselves between the figure of the captain’s authority on deck—the boatswain—and his command of the sailors (1.1.13). The nobles’ attempted usurpation of authority on the ship of state allegorically prefigures Prospero’s story, told in scene two. While the teleology of the play is to set aright the storm-tossed nature of authority, the first scene provocatively provides the audience with a more utopian vision of authority in the contrary figure of the boatswain.

Unlike the nobles, the boatswain’s commands are literalized in the actions performed by the sailors. Despite the disruption of the nobles in the metaphoric chain of command, the mimetic principle of identification continues to operate between the boatswain, who commands, and the sailors, who labor, in large part because the relationship between boatswain and the sailors is not dependent on the boatswain’s position of authority; rather, the sailors’ identification with the boatswain is based on desire to maintain their own lives, an expression of self love. The boatswain does not
metaphorically translate the sailors’ actions as a reflection or imitation (a mimesis) of his own desire for life or recognition. Rather, all who labor on deck do so out of a similar concern; each sailor labors to save his own life. The sympathetic correspondence between the sailors, the boatswain and the captain’s identities, mirrored in their activity to save the ship, appears to be constructed on the hierarchical relations of metaphor but has far more to do with the metonymic relations of connectivity or kinship. The boatswain’s self-love recalls all those at sea who, when threatened by the power of nature, act to maintain life. While a metaphoric structure subsumes or assimilates difference in service to the interests of a singular organizing principle or authority, much like the figure of a king or captain, a metonymic structure maintains the fundamental difference between members or elements of the same system or community whose interests are nonetheless similar. The boatswain’s commands, even as he follows the captain’s orders, have little to do with the captain as a unifying or idealized identity authorizing his actions, but rather with the boatswain’s desire to save his own life. While the ship’s master authorizes the boatswain to speak to the men, he does not tell him what to speak. Both the captain’s orders and the boatswain’s commands are dictated by and in response to the power of the storm. In other words, the boatswain does not ennoble his labor or the labor of the sailors by identifying it with the heroic rescue of a king or a captain; rather, he does his work in deference to and out of love for himself, a mimetic reflection of the same love each individual sailor feels for himself. Effectively, the boatswain’s response runs counter to the tradition of courtly manners inherent in
romance that depends on the identification with and emulation of an idealized or heroic figure. By refusing to identify with an idealized image of nobility, the boatswain inverts the expectation of political decorum and demands that the courtiers work along with the sailors: “Work you, then” (1.1.39). With his demand of labor from the nobles while they are on deck, the boatswain chiastically crosses the crossed nature of authority onboard the ship, ironically maintaining the decorum of authority at sea. However, the apparent breakdown of hierarchical relationships onboard the ship of state belies the allegorical character of the tempest, crafted by Prospero, that depends on the extension in time of metaphor’s hierarchically arranged set of differences. Even before the audience is acquainted with the tale of his lost authority, the storm that begins the play is a demonstration of Prospero’s recuperated sovereign identity that of course begs the question of how he lost and recuperated his authority.

Because Prospero recounts his own tragic fall from power, some critics contend that he understands or has learned from his past error. But, as he narrates his tale to his daughter, Miranda, the audience—rather than the protagonist—discovers Prospero’s downfall is precipitated by his blind faith in his right to maintain his title as duke or, rather, his belief in his identity as “Absolute Milan” despite withdrawing from the tasks associated with the exercise of power as the head of state, a plot that is frequently repeated within the panoply of Shakespeare’s work. The tedious familiarity of Prospero’s story moves him to demand Miranda’s (along with the audience’s) attention even on the first hearing of her family history:
Prospero: […]

And Prospero the prime duke—being so reputed
In dignity, and for the liberal arts
Without parallel—those being all my study,
The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies. Thy false uncle—

Dost thou attend me?

Miranda: [gap] Sir, most heedfully.

Prospero: Being once perfected how to grant suits,
How to deny them, who t’advance and who
To trash for over-topping, new created

The creatures that were mine, I say—or changed ‘em
Or else new formed ‘em; having both the key
Of officer and office, set all hearts I’th’state

To what tune pleased his ear,

(1.2.71-78)

In Prospero’s panegyric narrative, he condemns the duplicity of his brother while he eulogizes his own virtues as duke and scholar, but his indignation here as well as later in the play at his brother’s usurpation appears misplaced. Despite his assertion that Antonio, whom he burdened with the everyday concerns “[o]f temporal royalties”, thought Prospero “incapable” of governing, he self-admits his
“library/Was dukedom large enough” (1.2.109-111). But this is not an admission or recognition that his neglect of his dukedom “helped the conspiracy that took his throne.”

Indeed, he suggests through the trope of *translatio studii et imperii*, the translation and transference of culture and political authority from ancient empires, that his knowledge of the “liberal arts” (or the seven pillars of wisdom composed of the quadrivium—geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music—and the trivium—grammar, logic and rhetoric) enhanced the reputed dignity of his sovereignty.

Prospero’s lack of recognition of the part he played in his own downfall is demonstrative of the magical amnesia (particularly as concerns the protagonist’s loss) at work in romance. With both the invention of the storm and the disclosure of his narrative, Prospero’s past ideal identity is made present, constructed by his knowledge of the liberal arts and expressed through the idealizing language of praise. Both his narrative as well as the opening spectacle of the tempest exemplify Prospero’s eloquent command of epideictic praise and signify the recuperation of his ideal identity as a ruler.

As Eric Cheyfitz contends, “Shakespeare conceives of Prospero’s power in *The Tempest* as the magical literacy of eloquence,” signified in the play by importance of Prospero’s books to both himself and later Caliban (Cheyfitz 26). The potent magic of eloquence, as describe by Cicero, in Book III of *De Oratore*, has the power to “impel” (*impellere*) others to follow wherever the speaker may “incline its force”:
[…] since eloquence is one of the most eminent virtues; and though all the virtues are in their nature equal and alike, yet one species is more beautiful and noble than another; as is this power, which, comprehending a knowledge of things, expresses the thoughts and purposes of the mind in such a manner, that it can impel the audience whithersoever it inclines its force; and, the greater is its influence, the more necessary it is that it should be united with probity and eminent judgment; for if we bestow the faculty of eloquence upon persons destitute of these virtues, we shall not make them orators, but give arms to madmen.

This faculty, I say, of thinking and speaking, this power of eloquence, the ancient Greeks denominated wisdom.\textsuperscript{36}

Although the power of eloquence uninformed by wisdom of moral judgment can “give arms to madmen” or empower tyrants, Cicero nonetheless equivocates the hierarchy of virtues, giving eloquence preeminence because of the beauty with which it can express the “knowledge of things” and because it can bend the audience to the orator’s will. The orator’s thoughts can be bought before eyes of the audience with such force that the speaker’s will is translated into the actions of his listeners. As Aristotle argues, eloquence, particularly in epideictic oratory, is achieved through the conjoined power of metaphor and mimesis that illuminates what it mirrors and pleases while it instructs, achieving eloquence precisely by means of “bringing-before-the-eyes \textit{pro ommaton poiein}, or visualization; for things should be seen as
being done” or actualized.\textsuperscript{37} While metaphor can illuminate by unifying the senses of vision and hearing through language, Cicero goes on to warn that it can also be used to obscure by creating ambiguities. Metaphor must create similitude or resemblances and, without this, “it is condemned.”\textsuperscript{38} To produce similitude, metaphor must be coupled with mimesis which refers to a likeness, thereby taming the difference within metaphor, making it “not strange” and allowing it to achieve “urbanity” (coming from \textit{asteia} in Greek, often read as wit or elegance in speech).\textsuperscript{39} In the second scene of the play, Prospero demonstrates his knowledge of this ideal in language.

The power of Prospero’s narrative and his ability to “bring-before-the-eyes” that of which he speaks, as when he impels Miranda to sleep and Ariel to labor, stands in stark contrast to King Alonso, in the first scene, as an empty figure of language, unable to command the boatswain.\textsuperscript{40} Ariel, an “airy spirit” of the island, whom Prospero has enslaved, is the instrument of Prospero’s visual logos or magical power and is forced to produce the mimesis of a tempest. Ariel instantiates his master’s magical power for the audience by faithfully re-presenting the commands of his master, “to th’ syllable” (1.2.502), in his epideictic speeches, which are “intended to flatter Prospero” (Cheyfitz 25).\textsuperscript{41} As Cheyfitz argues, “Ariel is Prospero’s air articulated eloquently, transformed into the literally spellbinding orations that hold the figures on the island entranced so that Prospero can restore the political order that was disrupted by his usurpation in Milan” (Cheyfitz 27). Ariel, the obedient slave, becomes an “iconic imitation that offers vivid pictures of that which it presents” (\textit{SPE} 12); that is, Ariel’s language and actions are a reflection of Prospero’s logos; his
actions are the externalization of Prospero’s thought by way of instruction (giving
Prospero his oft-noted similarly to the playwright). Prospero’s new found
eloquence has the force of Adamic language, and the existence and actions of all his
subjects, who serve only to reflect his identity as lord, are meaningless without his
commands that “[endow their] purposes/ With words that made them known”
(1.2.360-361). Interestingly, Ariel exemplifies a form of mimesis that Prospero was
not able to achieve with Antonio, his brother, whom he believed he could
metaphorically translate (translatio) into a creature of his making, a representation of
and for himself as the right Duke of Milan. Because Prospero misrecognized his
identity to be absolute, modeled on the feudalistic idealization of sovereignty as self-
sufficient, he could not bring about the figuration of mimesis in his brother; instead,
he inserted him within the same structure of metaphor on which Prospero’s identity as
duke depended.

Eric Cheyfitz sees this desire for the “ideal of self-identity” as one definition
for metaphor that is constructed by a hierarchical ordering of our perception of
likeness and difference “in which similarity, understood as a function of contingency,
is subordinate to difference grounded, as it is, in an idea of essence, or the absolute”
(108). That is, while metaphor conjoined with mimesis may create similarities
between two distinct elements, we never lose sight of the difference between the
terms; indeed, the difference of the second term affirms the identity of the first. The
construction of identity depends on the same metaphoric perception of likeness and
difference and requires the presence of an “other” which makes identity and
alienation correlative terms. For Cheyfitz, metaphor is the driving force of both language and imperialism, particularly in regards to its translating function, as “translation was, and still is the central act of European colonization and imperialism in the Americas” (104). Within the colonial context of this play, “the gift” of colonial education (or the work of cultural emulation) and the civilizing lessons of *translatio studii*, the transfer of knowledge from one location to another, also depend on the function of metaphor. *Translatio*, as both translation and metaphor, suggests the movement (*epiphora*) “of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy.” Utilizing Roland Barthes’ definition of metaphor that assumes the existence of two languages, Cheyfitz argues translation and metaphor are defined by the movement of a name properly applied to something else that is transferred to a new place; effectively, “the figurative becomes the foreign, or strange” (*glotta*) while the proper (*kyrion*) “becomes the national or normal.” In the movement of *translatio*, a language proper to one nation is transported elsewhere and becomes “foreign to itself” (Cheyfitz 36). Thus, metaphor seeks to create similitude among different elements or languages by reinventing the proper as something new or foreign.

The movement of the proper into the foreign reintroduces radical difference into the project of *translatio studii*, with its civilizing gifts, specifically at the site of instruction, often overlooked as the place of cross-cultural convergence where lessons
travel in two directions. Such a cross-convergence of cultures is evident in *The Tempest* in Caliban’s description of his first encounter with Prospero:

Caliban: When thou cam’st first,

Thou stok’st me and made much of me, wouldst give me

Water with berries in ‘t, and teach me how

To name the bigger light, and how the less

That burn by day and night. And I loved thee

And showed thee all the qualities o’ th’ isle

The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.

Cursed be I that did so! All the charms

Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats light on you!

For I am all the subjects that you have,

Which first was mine own king;

(1.2.335-345)

While Prospero shared the “gift” of his language, Caliban shared his knowledge of the island out of trust born of love. But the gift of language as cultural instruction or *translatio studii* also carries a curse with it insofar as the gift of knowledge cannot be returned. While Caliban translated the secrets of his island for Prospero, the hierarchical structure of Prospero’s language once learned by Caliban could not be unlearned. Even in Caliban’s resistance to Prospero’s language, we still find traces of the hierarchizing effect of metaphor (*translatio*). Although Caliban refuses to name the sun and the moon, he nonetheless structurally replicates their metaphoric
relationship to each other; the greater light of the sun is reflected in the lesser light of
the moon. The difference between the two orbs also metaphorically refers to the
enforced social and cultural relationship between Caliban and Prospero. While
Caliban dutifully reflects his master’s language, Prospero refuses to recognize
Caliban’s language—the broken syntax of which is present in his resistance. Still
more troubling is the hierarchizing effect of metaphor on Caliban’s relationship to his
island home. His claim to sole possession of the island, with himself as king, comes
only after his instruction in Prospero’s language and, rather then a sign of his
resistance, is a mark of his enslavement. However, his enslavement is not to Prospero
but to the power of Prospero’s language and the ideological hail of its hierarchizing
structure, the apparent effects of which result in a desire for an absolute identity.
Caliban’s desire to be king is evidence of his enslavement within Prospero’s
language, where he finds himself deposed by Prospero’s translation of him as a
subject, just as Prospero found himself similarly usurped and confined by his
brother’s edicts. The similitude achieved in Caliban’s cultural emulation of Prospero
can be found in their shared and competing desire for an absolute identity, as lord of
the island. Thus the translating work of metaphor has the same effect in regards to
colonialism at the periphery as it does at the core, insofar as Caliban, like Prospero,
structures his desire for an absolute identity in emulation of another; the structure of
Prospero’s desire for an absolute identity is ironically in emulation of his brother,
Antonio.
Although Prospero demonstrates his eloquent mastery over others in the opening of the play, his early experiment in the art of eloquently compelling others to do his will went amiss when he attempted to re-make Antonio in imitation of himself. In Prospero’s early misstep with his brother, he misrecognized the function of metaphor in the creation of his identity, as duke, this misrecognition in turn resulted in a misapplication of mimesis. Prospero’s misapplication of mimesis involved what Socrates describes in Book III of Plato’s *Republic* as the “fractioning of human faculty,” the divide that exists between action and imitation that makes one incapable of actually doing what one imitates. Guardians of civic liberty in particular need to be mindful of this form of mimesis:

[…] our guardians, released from all other crafts, [395c] are to be expert craftsmen of civic liberty, and pursue nothing else that does not conduce to this, it would not be fitting for these to do nor yet to imitate anything else. But if they imitate they should from childhood up imitate what is appropriate to them—men, that is, who are brave, sober, pious, free and all things of that kind; but things unbecoming the free man they should neither do nor be clever at imitating, nor yet any other shameful thing, lest from the imitation [395d] they imbibe the reality. Or have you not observed that imitations, if continued from youth far into life, settle down into habits and (second) nature in the body, the speech, and the thought?48
The form of mimesis described here assumes a psychological assimilation that Socrates first attributed to poets or writers and their characterization of others that is later broadened to include the “concept of mimesis as behavioral emulation and imitation through Socrates’ suggestion that repeated indulgence in imaginative enactment of behavior (i.e., in mimetic role playing) shapes the disposition of the agent.” The mimetic emulation of an action involves “a deep identification on the part of the imitator with the object of his imitation, whereas [artistic] mimesis [described in Book X] involves the notion of a counterfeit copy.” For Plato, in Book X of the Republic, the artist is no more than “some magician or sleight-of-hand man and imitator,” deceiving those who believe themselves wise and beyond deception.

The problem arises when one imitates representations found in art that are only a mimesis of a mimesis, “far removed from truth […] a [mere] phantom.” Moreover, Socrates suggests, in the above quote, imitating representations “unbecoming [a] free man” could not only negatively shape one’s character but could result in the loss of one’s freedom. While these two forms of mimesis may appear different, the guardian in the quote above, who shapes not only his own character but also the character of the citizens of whom he is a guardian, is likened to the craftsman discussed in Book X. Further, the imitation of an action or a representation of an action, for Socrates, is not the same as actually performing the action, as they are different species of activity. Nonetheless, the guardian’s actions should operate as the model of civil liberty that others should emulate.
While Prospero performed the activities of a student, he could not operate as an ideal guardian to the Milanese people. Instead, Prospero, “rapt in secret studies,” became a stranger to his own identity, when he transformed himself from “prime duke” into a student of the Liberal Arts who did not understand the difference between mimesis in the work of a craftsmen concerned with civic life and mimesis in the work of an artist (1.2.77). Rather than taking on the role of a student, Prospero would have had to continue to act his part as a duke for Antonio’s mimetic emulation of civic authority to operate in good effect. Prospero deceived himself, believing he had metaphorically re-created his brother as a reflection or mimetic representation for his state authority. Prospero’s action did not prove him to be an “expert craftsmen of civic liberty” worthy of emulation. Had Prospero succeeded in new creating his brother, and Antonio had not seized the duchy, Milan would be ruled by a phantom sovereign. Although engaged in the study by which the authority of the past is metaphorically transferred into the present, *translatio studii and imperii*, the transference of Prospero’s state authority to his brother went untamed by influence of mimesis as an imitation of an action.

While Plato contends representational mimesis is morally suspect, Aristotle’s assessment of mimesis in his *Poetics* is far more morally ambiguous, as it is conceived of as a technique of representation rather than a method of knowledge, or *episteme*. Similarly, in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, mimesis is understood as one orator or writer imitating the form of another, a technique by which a writer or orator may influence her/his audience. In his *Rhetoric*, he emphasizes instead the difference
between emulation and envy in regards to imitation. Both emotions belong to the ambitious and arise out of the distress the envious or the emulator feels concerning the possession of a desired good (such as fame, fortune, honor, wisdom, or civic power) by a peer who is equal in nature and position. While both emotions may lead to rivalry, for Aristotle, the emulator is a person willing to exert effort to “attain good things for himself” while the envious “tries to prevent his neighbor from having them.” Emulation is seen as a positive emotion and “characteristic of good people, while envy is bad and characteristic of the bad.” Insofar as the emulator mimetically identifies with whom s/he wishes to emulate and acts to reform her/himself so as to resemble whomever is admired, the mimetic principle of identification operates presumably to good effect. Accordingly, had Prospero performed his state function as duke, encouraging his brother’s emulation, Antonio might have instantiated the harmonious coming together of metaphor and mimesis by bringing before Prospero’s eyes his own likeness; and Antonio, whose emulation might have demonstrated his praise of the good Duke of Milan, could have been the sort of person “capable of accomplishing noble deeds.” Thus Prospero’s power and authority as a “good” duke might have been re-presented in Antonio’s epideictic performance of imitation, as praise “makes clear the greatness of virtue of the subject praised.” In the performance of his emulation, Antonio would not merely be a mimetic figuration or a metaphoric imitation—the figural language of epideictic praise found in oratory or poetry—but a literalized metaphor or actualized sign of Prospero as a figure of authority. However, rather than Prospero’s good actions
eliciting the desire for emulation in his brother, he neglected his duties and flattered himself by augmenting his identity as a student with the title of Duke, the duties of which he no longer performed. Still worse, while retaining the name of duke, like an indulgent guardian, he handed over all his authority as duke, “both the key/ Of officer and office” (1.2.76-77), to Antonio, and in so doing, Prospero, rather than Antonio, became no more than a figure of mimesis, a phantom identity without substance in imitation of an identity that Antonio now enacted. Prospero was duke in name only, no more than a product of mimetic artifice. He learned too late the power of mimesis in conjunction with translatio to reshape reality when he discovered that his identity, as duke, was little more than an imitation of an imitation and far from absolute.

His belief in the ideological fantasy of an absolute identity overlooks the metaphoric transference of sovereignty figured by the title and the crown that newly inscribes each new person who wears the coronet in Milan with state authority. Even in the performance of his duties as head of state, as the person who defines all others within a social network, Prospero is no longer merely Prospero; instead, he is “new created” by the signifier “duke.” His identity as a subject is defined by another signifier, the title of “duke,” that is not self-defined or absolute insofar as the function of each new duke is a mimetic reflection of the last; the new duke “appears other but differs not at all.” Prospero, however, tragically misrecognized his relationship to the signifier of “duke” that represents and is represented by whomever assumes the title and takes on the activities associated with it. Thus Antonio, in managing the state
for his brother, re-presented the duke in a new form and, like Prospero before him, he “was indeed the Duke. Out o’th substitution./ And excuting th’ outward face of royalty/ With all prerogative, hence his ambition growing” (1.2.103-105).

Whereas Prospero’s self-flattering claim to his title only amplified the lack of correspondence between his activity and his avowed identity, Antonio, in the performance of his role as head of state, possessed a clear correspondence between his “outward face of royalty” and his actions (1.2.104). Indeed, rather than being associated with the identity of “Absolute Milan” (1.2.109), Prospero becomes a point of dissonance, an unnecessary difference, in the metaphoric correspondence between the title of duke and its representational state function, a difference that Antonio, in assuming and maintaining state authority, necessarily exorcised. Prospero’s misrecognition of his identity as absolute opened the door to Antonio’s use of the violence associated with the tautology of “the duke is the duke,” a violence that attempts to radically exclude all difference from itself.65 Ironically, only by removing Prospero as duke can Antonio hope to salvage the appearance of the duke as an absolute identity. As Cooper notes, rather than tainting the onset of his reign with fratricide or risking the lingering threat of his rival in exile, Antonio aligns his civic judgments with the greater authority of “providence divine,” leaving Prospero and Miranda to their fate at sea (1.2.159).66 The rule of law, like the identity of “Absolute Milan,” arrives chiastically with Antonio’s crime of usurpation, suggesting any absolute is chiastically structured and includes within it its own negation. Hence, the penalty for Prospero’s self-deception as both artist/magician and as the head of state
was the loss of his title and identity, as well as the near loss his life and the life of his daughter.

In claiming his actions of love and trust “[a]waked an evil nature” in Antonio, Prospero does not recognize that it was his inaction that newly created his ambitious brother (1.2.93). Nor does he recognize the “evil nature” of envy awakened within himself, made evident by his envious plot to prevent his brother from possessing the dukedom. In the retelling of his story, Prospero makes “a sinner of his memory/To credit his own lie” that there existed a “screen between the part [Antonio] played” and “him he played it for, [as Prospero] needs be/Absolute Milan” (1.2.101-102, 107-109). Antonio’s lie is also Prospero’s lie that he or anyone could occupy the impossible position of “Absolute Milan” without a screen between one’s being-in-itself and one’s identity, being-for-another or between the presentation of one’s identity and its representation as a signifier.67

However, Antonio’s actions within the play do not suggest that he believes in any absolutes. Although he usurped his brother, Antonio never truly achieves absolute authority, as his new identity is little different than his old identity, an administrator for the true lord, now associated with the King of Naples. Because King Alonso ultimately determines who rules Milan, Antonio deals with Alonso in much harsher terms than he does Prospero. To be the duke in-it-self, and not a duke-for-another, Antonio must kill the king, whose authority underwrites the signifier of duke and prevents Antonio from inhabiting its ideal form, the unification of his title and his identity.68 Just as his identity as duke equivocates the true nature of state
authority, he in turn is able to equivocate the difference between a sleeping king and a dead king who is “[n]o better than the earth he lies upon” (2.1.276). His equivocation is the tragic extension of Gonzalo’s paradoxical kingdom that does not admit the “name of magistrate” (2.1.149); thus, the latter part “of his commonwealth forgets its beginning” (2.1.158). Similarly, the king’s death would allow Antonio to forget his beginnings, but his attempt at regicide also exposes the structural effect on which the fetishistic social relations between a king and his subjects depends:

‘Being-a-king’ is an effect of the network of social relations between the ‘king’ and his ‘subjects’; but—and here is the fetishistic misrecognition—to the participants of this social bond, the relationship appears necessarily in an inverse form: they think they are subjects giving the king royal treatment because the king is already in himself, outside his relationship to his subjects, a king… (Žižek, S.O., 25)

Although Antonio seems to know that a self-sufficient autonomous sovereign identity is a fantasy, he would nonetheless claim the fantasmatic subject position for himself by attempting to kill the author of his identity. While Antonio mocks Gonzalo for his naïve use of this same logic—envisioning a utopic “new world” without sovereignty—because he does not seem to know what he is doing, Antonio cynically “knows very well what [he] is doing, but [he] is still doing it” (Žižek, S.O., 29). His actions also signal a fundamental alteration of the social structure within the state by establishing sovereignty as a set of equivalences determined by a process of exchange. That is, his identity as the Duke of Milan is the equivalent of the debt he
owes the king for his aid in the usurpation of old duke, a debt he can only pay in full, ironically, by aiding the king’s brother, Sebastian, in usurping the throne of Naples.\textsuperscript{71}

The particular nature of Antonio’s autonomous identity as duke represents an ideological shift in the fetishistic social relationships among people. Antonio nonetheless understands his identity is determined by a process of exchange whereby “the products of the human brain, [such as sovereignty or debt] appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the other human race.”\textsuperscript{72} This transformation, from relations between people to a “relation between things,”\textsuperscript{73} is the work of metaphor that translates the quality of being human into the language of value and bespeaks the condition of a commodity, the meaning of which “is contained in its value-relation with another commodity.”\textsuperscript{74} Insofar as Antonio’s debt determines the value of his sovereign identity (as well as Sebastian’s), his newly translated self-sufficient identity would paradoxically be constructed by his insufficiency or debt. Thus, in his effort to forget his own beginnings and reshape his identity, Antonio’s ambition exceeds all social bounds within a system constructed by fetishized social relations between people. He no longer recognizes himself as a subject of monarchical authority but, despite his desire, he is not an object (i.e., a representative) of absolute authority; rather, his character represents a monstrous new composite form of authority constructed by exchange value, a double-crossed chiasmus that negates the negation of sovereignty. In the first scene of the play the boatswain’s double-crossed relationship to authority also takes the form of the double chiasmus, but there authority works in concert with
and alongside those it would command. That is, despite his disregard for political
decorum, the boatswain nevertheless maintains the chain of command that reflects the
will and desire of the socius onboard the ship of state. Antonio, however, assumes an
authority that no longer depends on political decorum informed by social relations
within (or outside) the state; instead, he transforms state authority into an expression
of exchange;\(^7\) hence, with Antonio’s transformation of the duchy, Prospero too is
double-crossed. Through the magic of metaphor, his title is now endowed with a
monstrous new “life” in the form of a commodity. The happy conclusion to
Prospero’s romance, the reclamation of his former identity, requires him to recuperate
and maintain the misrecognition proper to the social relations among people. Thus,
despite his darker impulses for torture and revenge evinced in his treatment of
Caliban and the shipwrecked nobles, he prevents the cannibalization of royal
authority among the castaways, as it would only continue the metaphoric slippage
that allowed for the commodification of sovereignty. Moreover, in saving Alonso’s
life, he maintains his ultimate source of social recognition by the king of Naples, who
is also the true lord of Milan. But to re-assume his ideal identity, after his brother’s
transformation of the duchy, requires both the recognition of others as well as the
necessity of an exchange. While he does not purchase the dukedom with tribute, in
Act 5 scene 1, he equates its value with the life of the king’s son, Ferdinand, and the
“loss” of his daughter, an exchange to be officiated by a contract of marriage that will
guarantee his state position in Milan and in Naples.
The difference between Antonio’s and Prospero’s ideological fantasy underwriting their relationship to power and authority can also be seen in latter’s refusal to acknowledge any debt owed to others, either for the maintenance of his life or in the execution of his plot to usurp his brother, obliging all others to acknowledge the debt (real or imagined) they owe to him.76 This particular sleight-of-hand is again produced through the misrecognition proper to metaphor, applied in much the same way as was his past attempt to translate Antonio into a thing for his use. But this second iteration allows Prospero to redeem his perceived past error by no longer enacting the role of the “good parent” (1.2.94). Thus, in emulation of his brother, where Prospero meets with resistance, he utilizes the extra threat of violence to enslave others on the island as characters in the re-narrativization of his tragedy as a romance with his identity as lord of the island functioning as the organizing principle:

Prospero: Soft, sir! One word more.

[Aside] They are both in either’s powers. But this swift business I must uneasy make, lest too light winning

Make the prize light. [To Ferdinand] One word more. I charge thee That thou attend. Thou dost here usurp

The name thou ow’st not; and hast put thyself

Upon this island as a spy, to win it

From me the lord on’t

Ferdinand: No, as I am a man.
The metaphoric enslavement of Naples comes at the same moment Prospero annunciates his hard won lesson; he must make “winning” the metaphoric figuration of his power, now invested in Miranda, difficult, or risk the usurpation of his authority once again. Although his earlier attempts to eloquently transfer the expression of his power while maintaining his authority failed, Prospero now appears to understand how to translate others effectively into objects that mirror or mimetically reflect his authority, a “gift” he earlier attributed to his brother. To the magical substitutive power of metaphor he adds the threat of violence so as to prevent its continued slippage. Thus, all who enter his romance, a place where “no man [is] his own” (5.1.213), misrecognize Prospero as the “absolute Lord,” and under the threat of violence, are metaphorically translated into objects for his use or from him to trade. Their actions become his actions; their labor is his to enjoy. Although Ariel can create tempests and other wonders of the play that alternately amaze and terrify the castaways on the island, he remains enslaved to Prospero, paradoxically in payment for his liberation from a pine tree. While Ariel willingly labors to repay his debt, Prospero nonetheless threatens him “[o]nce in a month” with imprisonment in the much harder wood of an oak tree (1.2.263). Caliban, described by his master as a slave “not honored with /A human shape” (1.2. 284-85), resists his characterization as a monstrous thing and is verbally accosted and regularly tortured into submission, forced to “serve in offices / That profit” Prospero (1.2.315-316). Even Miranda, whose marriage to Ferdinand would secure Prospero’s title to an independent Milan and guarantee “his issue / Should become kings of Naples” is reminded of her relative
position to her father in one of his angry outbursts (5.1.205-206): “What, I say / My foot my tutor?” (1.2.472-473). Should she resist his will or act independently, she would be a traitor to her condition as his daughter, produced as a product for trade, and he would “hate” her (1.2.480). Ferdinando too is changed from a man into “a Caliban” (1.2.484). Prospero’s refusal to acknowledge the debts he owes others would seem to complicate his assumption of an identity that Antonio has transformed into a commodity, the value of which is defined by debt. But this refusal within structure of his romance is belied by his appeal directly to the audience at the play’s end:

    Unless I be relieved by prayer,
    Which pierces so that it assaults
    Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
    As you from crimes would pardoned be,
    Let your indulgence set me free.  (Epilogue 15-20)

Prospero would use his newfound power of eloquence not only to re-narrativize the outcome of his relationship with his brother and their rivalry over the mimetic desire of civic power but also to “impel the audience” to applaud, so as to release him from “all faults” or debt (by extension the audience would become complicit with his “crimes”).

    But to reclaim his identity and re-cast Antonio as his envious rival, Prospero paradoxically emulates his brother by the usurping the sitting duke so as to become “Absolute Milan.” In imitating his brother’s action, the ideal identity, Prospero
assumes, is an absolute contradiction. Nonetheless, his emulation allows him to find common ground with all those who are similarly invested in the fiction of authority as an absolute identity. While Prospero undercuts the legitimacy of his self-sufficient identity, the similitude created between the brothers permits Prospero, at the play’s end, to forgive the debt owed to him for past crimes, as he is guilty of similar crimes, and enables him to extend his forgiveness to all, save Caliban. Although Caliban in many ways is Prospero’s double, similarly robbed, through his naïve indulgence of trust and love, of what he did not realize he could lose (his home, his identity, his freedom and his humanity), he is cast in the role of villain. As Greenblatt suggests and Cheyfitz argues, Caliban is forced to reside in “the place of metaphor,” the place where similitude and difference are equally actualized, albeit in hierarchical relationship to one another (Cheyfitz 108). But, for metaphor to produce its magical effects, its onward slippage must be arrested. As Homi Bhabha points out,

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of the otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.81

In finding similitude with his brother and with his brother’s crime of usurpation, Prospero is able to realize his narrative transformation of himself as a romance hero, while Caliban remains unforgivably different despite his similarity to Prospero’s
tragic beginnings. Caliban is left tragically enslaved within the hierarchizing structure of metaphor and its binary ideology of likeness and difference. Hence, Caliban, as a mimesis of Prospero’s own tragic original loss, is foreclosed from the symbolic order of Prospero’s romance.

In the end, colonialism at the core only appears different from colonialism at the periphery. But, the perceived difference at the periphery is a projection of the core’s own dispossessed beginnings. Caliban is Prospero’s “thing of darkness,” a figure of his wrath and vengeance which, in the end, Prospero must acknowledge as his own (5.1.275). Whether Prospero as the colonist stays or not, Caliban, the colonized, is forever changed, translated as a subject (and object) within an ideological fantasy that reconstitutes identity as a debt and utilizes a perceived, and typically racialized, difference within the periphery to secure the core’s ideal national identity and authority, thus perpetuating through foreclosure and transference the cultural similitude of the core that is nonetheless different from itself within the new environment.

While The Tempest may be an allegory of colonialism at the core in Jacobean England, a re-imagining of King James I’s struggle for empire at home, it also has been read as a prologue to American literature, not simply because “Prospero’s island community prefigures Jefferson’s vision of an ideal Virginia, an imaginary land free both of European oppression and frontier savagery,” but also, as I argue in the following chapters, because American romance narratives, much like Prospero’s romance, construct a national identity that “forgets its beginning” and emulates those
it would supplant (2.1.158). But, of all the characters within *The Tempest*, the boatswain remains the most utopic figure, insofar as he refuses to emulate or even attend to the hierarchical relationships of power and insists instead on the contiguity of shared interests among all who work to sustain life. In many ways the boatswain prefigures the American democratic ideals as depicted by James F. Cooper in his character of Natty Bumppo. 

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1 See Doris Sommer in *Foundational Fictions*, 6. In *The Tempest*, the interplay between the erotic and the political is the pivotal to Prospero’s romance. However, while the union between Ferdinand and Miranda unifies Milan and Naples resolving the old enmity between Prospero and Alonso, it does not repair the division within Milan between Antonio and his brother. The new political union merely obstructs Antonio’s old political alliance that authorized his rule in Milan. Antonio’s silence at the play’s end suggests the old rivalry is merely suppressed and remains unresolved. Because *The Tempest* is a romance, the reconciliation between rival brothers allows for a re-imagining of the nation, the northern city-state Milan, coupled or united with the southern Kingdom of Naples through the advent of marriage; the nation is reimagined as a place of difference and fractious rivalry to a place of similitude capable of imperialistically absorbing others through the practice of cultural emulation ostensibly motivated by love and forgiveness.

2 Albeit the foiled Gunpowder plot in 1607 suggests that religious divisions persisted.

3 Green, 3.

4 Green, 5.
It is worth underscoring that the onset of British imperialism is often linked to the unification of the British national identity, which suggests that even beyond the generic considerations of romance the project of nation building and the project of empire building move together, at least for England. David Armitage asserts that the notion of Great Britain as an empire was “an invention of the unionist pamphleteers who wrote on behalf of Henry VIII and Protector Somerset. Those English writers conceived of a composite monarchy (and hence, an empire) that would include both England and Scotland.” See David Armitage in *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 42.

Beginning with Stephan Greenblatt’s essay “Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century.” in *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, eds. Fred Chiappelli, Michael Allen and Robert Benson, Vol. II. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press. 1976. 561-580), much of the scholarship concerning The Tempest produced in the United States and Britain during the 1980s and 1990s have created well-worn routes of inquiry, as exemplified in the work of Francis Baker, Peter Hulme and Paul Brown all of whom have connected this play with the nascent enterprise of the English colonialism in the “New World.” Their work has allowed for a fuller examination of Caliban’s perspective and the attendant contradictions of his forced enslavement. Their reexamination of Prospero and Caliban’s relationship owes much to the Negritude movement a generation earlier as well as to other writers and poets in the Caribbean, such as George Lamming in *Pleasures of Exile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1960); Aimé Césaire in *Une Tempête* (Paris: Seuil, 1969); Kamau Braithwaite’s poem “Caliban” in *Islands* (London: Oxford UP, 1969); Roberto Fernández Retamar, “Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America” in *Caliban: And Other Essays*, trans E. Baker (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971. 3-45), the last of whom identifies these writers and others as reappropriating and participating in a “Calibanesque” tradition that recuperates Caliban as the figure associated with the struggle of decolonization. Post-colonial interventions of the text, such as those found in Ania Loomba and Marin Orkin’s *Post-Colonial Shakespeares* (New York: Routledge. 1998), extend the reading of the play beyond “English involvement in the colonization of America” which some argue is a far too “restrictive view of the play” (Jerry Brotton, “This Tunis, sir, was Carthage” 24).

The source of a unified Britain originated, for pro-unionist English pamphleteers, with Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniæ*. In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*, the island of Albion is renamed Britain by the
one time Trojan soldier Brutus who is its first king. Its status as empire results from the division of Britain into a composite monarchy of three Kingdoms ruled by Brutus’s three sons, Locrine, Albanact, and Camber, after his death. The realms of Scotland and Wales, held by the younger brothers, were to pay homage to the eldest brother, Locrine, who ruled over England. Thus Geoffrey Historia “enshrined a vision of English dominance over Britain within his legendary history” (Armitage 37). While unionist pamphleteers in the 1500's argued for a British Empire, lead by the English monarch, on the Scottish side, pamphleteers, such as the cleric Robert Wedderburn, warned against unification with England, as it would leave the people of Scotland “‘sklavis in extreme servitude’ like the inhabitants of Ireland.” Wedderburn denounced the English use of the fabled scions of Brutus as an attempt “‘to prove that Scotand vas ane colone of ingland quhen it vas first inhabit’” (Complayant of Scotland qtd in Armitage 44-45, Armitage’s emphasis). In these Anglo-Scottish debates concerning unification of the 1540s we see “for the first time […] the Roman conception of a colony” associated with the concept of a British empire (Armitage 45). Some sixty years later the Venetian ambassador to the court of King James wrote that in the king’s efforts to affect Britain’s unification, through the redesign of the national symbols of the flag and the coin, he was fashioning himself “like that famous and ancient King Arthur to embrace under one name the whole circuit of the island.” In King James’ proclamation of October 24th 1604, he indeed pronounced himself King of Great Britain and Ireland. The Venetian ambassador is quoted by Alan Stewart in The Cradle King: A Life of James VI and I. (London: Random House, 2003), 213.

8 James I. “A Speach, As it was Delivered In The Vpper Houvse of The Parliament To The Lords Spiritvall and Temporall, and to the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses there assembled, On Mvnday the XIX. Day of March 1603. Being the First Day of The first Parliament.” King James VI and I: Political Writing, edited by J.P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 134-35. Hereafter cited in text as “Address to Parliament” with date of the speech. Despite the king’s assurances, on April 20-21 during a royal audience at St. James Gallery, that stressed the limited nature of his program of unification (for the most part restricted to the repeal of hostility laws and trade restrictions), the Commons resisted unification. At one point, during the period of this debate, King James I was denied the title, first proposed by Sir William Morrice on 31 March, of “Emperor of Great Britain” (rather then King of Great Britain) as “‘Empires’ embraced several kingdoms.” See Bruce Galloway in The Union of England and Scotland 1603-1625 (Edinburgh: John Donald Pub., 1989), 21.

9 The king’s speeches to his first parliament that met from 1604 to 1610 were characterized by the repeated themes of royal absolutism, English-Scottish
unification and the need for increased taxation to sustain the royal household. The thematic irony in this series of topics is hard to miss. Parliament’s view of the king as a profligate who repeatedly harangued them for increased financial support not only added to the list of his unforgivable differences but also offered them an occasion to demonstrate to the king his lack of absolute power. The Parliament’s early fears concerning the king’s reluctance to recognize their prerogatives under English common law were confirmed in 1616 when James denied judges (or any subject) the right “to discuss the royal prerogatives unless they first obtained the permission of the king or his Council” (J.P. Sommerville, Introduction, xxiii).

10 While the Apology was read in the House June, 20,1604, the historian G.R. Elton contends the king, in all likelihood, never read it and was perhaps informed by his Secretary of State, Lord Robert Cecil, of its existence and content. Elton also cautions those who would see the Apology as an early call for constitutional monarchy; “so far from being a constitutional programme finally triumphant in 1688, it represented a minority opinion rejected by the House as too extreme. The King almost certainly never saw the ‘lecture’ addressed to his inexperience.” See G.R. Elton in Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government: Volume II, Parliament Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974), 181.

11 In his proclamation of October 24th 1604, James I pronounce himself King of Great Britain and Ireland despite being denied the use of this title both by Parliament and the courts.

12 Sir Francis Bacon comments within Parliament in April 1604 spoke to this sense of lost priority, at least in regard to the proposed name for the union: “whereas now England, in the style, is placed before Scotland, in the name of Brittaine that degree of priority of precedence will be lost” (see Galloway, 28-29). While Parliament’s resistance to unification was also concerned with its impact on the English economy, many historians agree Parliament’s reluctance had more to do with “xenophobic English fears” concerning a Catholic conspiracy and the new king’s possible Catholic sympathies as well as the prevalent view of the Scots as primitive and undeserving of English culture and prosperity. See Ralph A. Houlbrooke, “James’s Reputation, 1625-2005” in James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government, ed. R.A. Houlbrooke. (Hampshire: Ashgate Pub, 2006), 186. For a further discussion of Scotland’s fears concerning the union also see Andrew D. Nicholis in The Jacobean Union: A Reconsideration of British Civil Policies Under The Early Stuarts. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999).
13 See James I, “A Speach, To The Lords and Commons Of The Parliament At White-Hall, On Wednesday the XXI. Of March Anno 1609,” (181).

14 Ibid., 184, 183, emphasis added.

15 Ibid., 180.


17 The failure to contain the historical crisis the play represents, to harmonize the contradictions of colonialism at home or overseas, is not Shakespeare’s failing, but a misplaced faith in the structure of romance. To hope that any romance will narratively contain the contradictions and social disorder with which its narrative engages runs contrary to the structure of the genre, as romance breaks the rule or law of genre that is that “‘genres are not to be mixed.’” Romance is an example of the impure “anomaly or monstrosity” that is “lodged within the heart of the law itself” and operates by “a law of impurity or a principle of contamination” in as much as it is constituted by two or more other generic forms. See Jacques Derrida in “The Law of Genre” Glyph 7 (1980): 204. This uncontained breach in the social contract between writer and reader in romance, as Fredric Jameson contends, is what allows for the eruption of the utopic longing for freedom within romance narratives.


19 The masque is a stylized performance incorporating elaborate set designs, music and dance in which members of the court, including the king and
queen, often took part. Brown cites Ben Johnson’s *Irish Masque at Court*, performed in Dec. 1613, and the transformative effects of the music on the character of the Irish aristocrat within the play as demonstrative of one “strategy by which sovereign power might at once be praised and effaced as power in colonialisr discourse” insofar as the music (the “harmonics of power”) was capable of altering the dress and habits of culture of Irish aristocrats. For Brown, the social and aesthetic order found in the masque parallels “Prospero’s investment in the power of narrative to maintain social control and with *The Tempest’s* production of the origins of colonialism through the rhetoric of romance” (223).

20 See Joel Fineman in *Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye* for a discussion of the long tradition of the desire for a unified identity within Renaissance poetry: “the poetic self of the orthodox Renaissance sonnet characteristically presents itself as a full self, present to itself, or potentially so, by virtue of the complementarity its discovers or hopes to discover, between objective and subjective pointing” in epideictic poetry. Thus, “what the poet sees outside himself will regularly be in fact, an image of himself, or that the poet’s praise of ‘thee’ will regularly turn out to be a praise of ‘me’” (9). Also see Ronald Levao’s discussion of Sidney as poet-maker in *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions: Cusanus, Sidney, Shakespeare*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985): “The separation of the Idea from a fixed ontology, moreover, makes poetry a special kind of exercise. In a fascinating article, A.E. Malloch argues that, for Sidney, it is only in poetry that reason finds an object properly proportioned to it capacities” (140). Levoa characterizes Malloch’s argument of “poetry’s golden world” as the only place that can “reveal a ‘fullness of being’” as the fallen world in which we live is deficient. By contrast, Levoa contends, “that the poetic object is best proportioned to our reason because that object is a projection of our reason. Jacopo Mazzoni made this very argument in Italy only a few years after the *Apology* was written. The object of poetic imitation is one that is consciously framed to fit the poets intellectual needs” (140).

21 Shakespeare’s early sonnets and comedies reflect and respond to a tradition of epideictic or praise poetry, associated with the rhetoric of courtly love that amplifies its object of praise. This duplicity of language on the part of the poetic figure occurs when the poet repeats the object of praise to make it present to him but with an amplifying linguistic difference that only underscores the loss of the idealized object to himself, thus, creating a divide between the poet’s ego (poetic subjectivity) and his ego-ideal (poetic objectivity) located in language. Fineman argues the poetics of loss is fully realized in Shakespeare’s tragic characters whose emptied subjectivity or belated self-presence incorporate the
“loss into their person” producing a “pathos of representation” often figured by the chiasmus (*SPE*, 303). Othello exemplifies the loss of his self-presence in language with the chiastic figuration of his last line: “That’s he that was Othello: here I am” (5.2.277). This belated and projected subjectivity appears even in Shakespeare’s poetics of presentation (*SPE*, 9). Fineman points out Shakespeare’s poetics of praise is regularly characterized by themes and motifs of vision, with the poet frequently figure as the speaking I/eye whose eloquence brings absent things before his eyes thereby creating “a space and time wherein poetic subjectivity can join poetic objectivity,” effectively unifying the poetic identity with his/her object of praise:

[...] this poetics is exemplified by the way it understands mimesis as an exercise of iconic imitation that offers vivid pictures of that which it presents, or by the way it understands figures as a generalizing and essentializing metaphoricity by means of which, as Aristotle said of metaphor, poets “see the same” (*to homoion theorein estin*) [...] an idealizing language [that] figures itself as specifically specular language because such a visual logos, in its visibility and it visuality, simulates the ideal such language speaks about.[...][and what] is admired will characterized the way in which it is admired [...]. (*SPE*, 12-13)

22 The implied resolution to the problematics of representation in Shakespeare’s plays seems then to be Cratylitic in nature, with the deferred meaning of language realized at the play’s end when all attempts at achieving presentation in art has ceased.

23 See William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in *William Shakespeare, The Tempest: A Case Study in Critical Controversy*, eds. Gerald Graff and James Phelan (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000), 1.2.146-47. Hereafter all citation for *The Tempest* will appear parenthetically in text. For a fuller discussion of the metaphor of the ship in *The Tempest* see Helen Cooper in *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs for Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*, (London: Oxford UP, 2004), 113. For classical examples of a ship used as a metaphor for a political state see M. T. Cicero in *De Inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell. (Cambridge, MA: Loeb-Harvard UP. 1949), I.II.4; also see M. F. Quintilian who quotes Horace’s *Odes* 1.14 in *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H.E. Butler in 4 vols. (New York: Loeb-Putnam & Sons, 1921-22), VIII.vi.44. It is important to note that within the play the replication of this meme can be seen in the labors performed by both the sailors and Ariel whose enact Prospero’s description of his ill equipped vessel, suggesting Prospero’s condition during his
journey to the island was no better than than the condition of a sailor before the mast or a slave.

24 For an allegorical reading of the crossed nature of authority on board the King’s ship see James Walter, “From Tempest to Epilogue: Augustine’s Allegory in Shakespeare’s Drama,” in PMLA, 98.1 (Jan. 1983): 61 -76. Walter notes Alonso interference on deck recalls his interference twelve years earlier in Milan but his “political cunning and power” is defeated by nature (61). Walter also links the desire for self-sufficiency in the crossed nature of authority on board the ship which allegorically refers to another scene elsewhere and earlier in time. However, Eric Cheyfitz compellingly argues that Alonso is not defeated by the power nature but the power of culture, specifically Prospero’s art and Ariel’s labor (Poetics of Imperialism, 26). Hereafter cited parenthetically in text.

25 Eric Cheyfitz defines decorum as “the power of speech: who can order whom to speak; that is, who is the source of language” (168).

26 As the king is reduced to an empty figure of language, the noblemen, who must reflect and defer to the king’s power, are also reduce to no more than ornaments of the king’s figure. Quintilian warns against the overuse of such “adornment to style” or excessive metaphoricity that “serves merely to obscure our language and weary our audience, […] our language will become allegorical and enigmatic” (see Quintilian in Institutio Oratoria, VII.vi.14). Also see George Puttenham, in The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition, eds. R. Whigham and W.A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007). In keeping with Quintilian, Puttenham discusses allegory, the use of an extended metaphor, and hyperbole, the “lying figure” that allows one to speak other then one thinks: “To be short, every speech wrested from his own natural signification to another not altogether so natural is a kind of dissimulation, because the words bear contrary countenance to the intent” (270-71). Alonso’s noblemen operate much like the misapplied form of epideictic praise that dissembles while it amplifies the absence of king’s sovereignty; hence, they are reduced to the image of false language that equivocates or obscures the nature of authority as an affection of power.

27 The Boatswain is accused of blasphemy despite the fact that he does not say anything blasphemous. Frye suggests it is possible that his blasphemy was improvised or cut from the folio (Secular Scripture, 175). Nonetheless, when the noblemen insists on the king’s right to intrude within the ship’s chain of command, they project a correspondence between the figure of the king and

28 James Walter reads the tempest allegorically as “[s]ymbolizing humanity’s corrupt striving for self-sufficient power against the heavens” (Walter, 61).

29 These terms are interchangeable in Hegel’s Lordship and Bondsman dialectic as “[i]n the sphere of Life, which is the object of Desire, […] [s]elf-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another”; that is in the recognition by and of another self-consciousness. See G.W.F. Hegel in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.B. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), 110.

30 See Joel Fineman’s discussion of Roman Jakobson’s “linguistic formula […] in which metaphor is understood as the synchronic system of differences [that] constitutes the order of language (langue), and metonymy as the diachronic principle of combination and connection by means of which structure is actualized” in “The Structure of Allegorical Desire,” The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition: Essays Toward the release of Shakespeare’s Will (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 7.

31 See the discussion of epideictic rhetoric in Chapter 1 n. 76 and Eric Chyfitz discussion of decorum, metaphor, and the power of language in The Poetics of Imperialism.

32 See “The Structure of Allegorical Desire,” 6-7. Also see n. 30 above.


The metaphoric transference of authority is more than a strict imitation of prior texts, it requires the poet’s/translator’s artful invention and elaboration of the past tradition. For a discussion of translation, tradition and invention see Corinne Lhermitte, “Adaptation as Rewriting: Evolution of a Concept,” in Rewriting (I), Revue/Lisa E-Journal 2.5 (2004): 26-44. Web. 26 Aug. 2014. The poet’s/translator’s “invention translates, transfers the past to the present” (Douglas Kelly qtd. in Lhermitte).

36 See Cicero De Oratore III.XIV.55-XIV.56, emphasis added.

37 See Aristotle in Rhetoric 3.10.6; the English translation cited here is from On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse, trans. George Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford UP. 1991), 245. Hereafter refer to as Rhetoric. In this section, Aristotle discusses the use of metaphor “to bring about learning” that is pleasurable, achieved by way of urbanity of expression in one’s rhetorical argumentation (enthymema) or word choice and style (lexis) “if they have metaphor—and metaphor that is not strange (for that would be difficult to perceive) nor superficial (for that causes nothing to be experienced). Furthermore, [urbanity is achieved] by means of bringing-before-the-eyes [pro ommaton poiein, or visualization]; for things should be seen as being done rather than as in the future” (3.10.2, 3.10.6). For a discussion of epideictic poetry as the conjoined affect of metaphor and mimesis in the creation of figural language, see Fineman in Shakespeare’s Perjured Eye, 10-12.

38 See Cicero’s discussion of metaphor as a similitude in De Oratore III.XXXIX.157-58: “A metaphor is a brief similitude contracted into a single word; which word being put in the place of another, as its own place, conveys, if the resemblance be acknowledged, delight; if there is no resemblance, it is condemned” (Oratory and Orators, 376-377). For metaphor as an obscuring or “lying” figure also see Quintilian and Puttenham above in n. 25.

39 Aristotle, Rhetoric, 3.10.6.

40 Prospero’s “knowledge of the ideal is the ideal, an identity that, applied to language, produces a discourse whose referential truth is tautologically or autologically confirmed because such language is the things of which it speaks” (SPE, 13).
As Eric Cheyfitz points out that Ariel’s account of his actions also provides the audience with the particulars of the storm they could not see. Moreover, if Caliban is the metaphor of metaphor, the translation of translation, as Cheyfitz argues, then Ariel is the figuration of mimesis that characterizes epideictic praise. In promising “to carry out Prospero’s commands ‘[t]o th’ syllable,’ [Ariel] emphasizes the verbal character of Prospero’s art which is grounded in [his books]” (Cheyfitz 25). As the quilting point between nature and culture, Ariel assumes the position of the Master Signifier. For a discussion of the Master Signifier as a quilting point or point de caption see Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian Unconscious" in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Norton, 1977. 292-325). However, as Prospero takes ownership over Ariel’s labor, he becomes “signifier for which all the other signifiers represent the subject: that is to say in the absence of this signifier, all the other signifiers represent nothing” (*Ecrits*, 316). Taking possession of Ariel’s labor secures Prospero’s position as lord and allows the magic of his narrative to bring together isolated individuals within a social nexus but only within the periphery of the social structure he wishes to re-join.


Propero’s Adamic language is not akin to the use of language by “New World” poets identified by Derek Walcott in his essay “The Muse of history” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 329-332. Instead, Prospero practices a kind of amnesia, “the true history of the New World,” but not by refusing to recognize the western dialectic of history that confined him to the island, but by forgiving and forgetting his emulation of those who overthrew him (330). Thus, like the Hegelian lord, Prospero misrecognizes his self-consciousness as independent when in truth it is defined by his identification with another.

This dialectic of metaphor so fundamental to identity also the structures the relationship between commodities, as Žižek’s examination of Karl Marx’s analogy for equivalent value makes clear. Marx illustrates the principle of equivalent value between two commodities through the Hegelian notion of recognition by which Peter recognizes his identity as a man only in relation to
Paul. Žižek suggests, Marx anticipates Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage theory: “only by being reflected in another man—that is, in so far as this other man offers it an image of its unity—can the ego arrive at its self-identity; identity and alienation are thus strictly correlative” (S.O. 24). Also See Homi Bhabha in “The Other Question…: Homi Bhabha Reconsiders Stereotypes in Colonial Discourse,” Screen 24.6 (1983):18-36. Bhabha argues this same dialectic of identity and alienation helps to explain power and identity within the colonial context: “In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of ‘truth’[…] Only then does it become possible to understand the productive ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse—that ‘otherness’ which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity” (19).

45 See Aristotle’s Poetics, 1457b in Aristotle in 23 Volumes, trans. H. Rackham, vol. 19 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1934). In Aristotle’s illustration of metaphor as analogy, the slippage between hierarchically arranged differential terms becomes clear: “when B is to A as D is to C, then instead of B the poet will say D and B instead of D” (1457b). For translatio or metaphor, as described by Cicero, see n. 37 above.

46 Roland Barthes in “L’ancienne rhetorique” contends Aristotle’s definition of metaphor “rests [repose] on the idea that there exist two languages [deux langages], one proper and one figurative [un proper et un figuré]” (Barthes qtd in Cheyfitz 36). This activity of recuperation of the proper attempts to re-establishes a nation’s linguistic superiority or priority over the foreign term or new meaning.

47 Their relationship to each other’s language is also illustrative of the rules of decorum particularly in the periphery. In The Poetics of Imperialism, Eric Cheyfitz argues the movement of metaphor and language particularly “the English language in its national formation are…governed by a particular dynamics of displacement from periphery to center, in which the rules of decorum attempt to master an essentially equivocal relationship between the foreign or lower class and the domestic or upper class,” with decorum dictating that the speech of the most powerful is the proper form of speech (100).

Heinemann Ltd. 1969). A similar sentiment appears in Shakespeare’s Coriolanus: “By my body's action teach my mind/ A most inherent baseness” (Cor. 3. 2. 123).


51 Plato, *Republic*, 10.598d.

52 Ibid. Socrates establishes the difference between the work of the craftsman (civil or otherwise) who imitates nature and the work of the artist, such as a painter, who imitates the craftsman’s work: the latter imitates the first but both are imitations of the ideal craftsmanship of the Divine (ibid, 598a). The craftsman’s product in mirroring nature is twice removed from the real of the ideal while the artist in imitating what others produce is three times removed from “the truth”: “and this, it seems, is the reason why [art] can produce everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom” (ibid.).


54 This is also Aristotle’s definition of tragedy in his *Poetics*: “Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude […]” (*Poetics*, 1449b).

55 See D. Douglas Waters in *Christian Settings in Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (Cranbury: Associated UP, 1994), 44-49. Waters argues Shakespeare utilizes “Aristotle’s deontheologized mimesis as imitation or dramatic representation on a stage often incorporates some ideas in the Aristotelian and Horation tradition of the Renaissance in Italy and England” and stays clear of the moralizing seen in Sidney (49). Also see Stephen Halliwell, 336 n.65.
Robert Kennedy notes emulation or zelos in the Hellenistic period “becomes an important aspect of literary imitation; for it refers to the zeal on the part of a writer to equal the quality of the great writers of the past” (*Rhetoric*, 161).

*Rhetoric*, 2.10.1. Robert Kennedy observes in his editorial comments for Book 2 Chapter 11, that Aristotle counters envy’s negative emotions with the positive emotions of emulation: “Both are feelings that may result from a sense of rivalry with those a person regards as in some sense equal” (161).

Ibid., 2.11.1.

Ibid.

See Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1101b.20: “For praise belongs to goodness, since it is this that makes men capable of accomplishing noble deeds, while encomia [i.e., epideictic orations] are for deeds accomplished, whether bodily feats or achievements of the mind.” The English translation is taken from *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, trans. H. Rackham. Vol 19 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1934). Hence, epideictic orators and poets can incite their listeners to emulate the praise worthy deeds of which they speak thereby making “many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him.” See Sir Philip Sidney’s “The Defence of Poesy (1583)” in *An Apology for Poetrie*, (Ed. Edward Arber. London: Alex Murray & Sons, 1858.) n.pag.

*Rhetoric*, 1.9.33.

Prospero became no more than an imitation or a mimetic figure of his brother when he claimed possession of an identity Antonio performed; “[a]nd is not likening one's self to another speech or bodily bearing an imitation of him to whom one likens one's self?” (Plato, *Republic*, 3.393c).

For Prospero, the signifier of duke “is that which represents the subject for another signifier” but to assume that identity Prospero becomes nothing more
than a signifier, and in the absence of this signifier he represents nothing “since nothing is represented only for something else” (Écrits, 316).

64 Plato, Republic, 10.598a.

65 Žižek identifies the two possible readings of Hegel’s “notion of self-identity”: the first, identity in the abstract excludes all difference; the second, identity as concrete “qua ‘identity of identity and non-identity’ […] includes all the wealth of difference. […] Within the frame of the second reading, identity-with-it-self is another name for ‘absolute contradiction.’” By way of example Žižek continues, “This is how the tautology ‘law is law’ has to be read. The first law (‘law is…’) is the universal law in so far as it is abstractly opposed to crime, whereas the second law (‘…law’) reveals the concealed truth of the first: the obscene violence, the absolute, universalized crime as its hidden reverse.” See Slavoj Žižek in For they know not what they do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor (London: Verso, 1991), 33-34. Antonio’s use of violence is two fold. Antonio’s first act of violence was to negate his brother identity as duke; despite its negation it is an identity he claims as his own. His second act of violence was to use his crime of usurpation to establish the law by which Prospero was set adrift at sea.

66 Helen Cooper suggests Prospero’s sacrifice legitimizes Antonio’s rule insofar as it is ordained by the will of God; his judgment, thus, is metaphorically linked to God’s judgment. Cooper follows the development of this figure in literary history: “Exposure at sea constitutes a iudicim Dei, a judgment made not by men but by God; it is a marine equivalent of the testing of right in chivalric combat” (110). She notes from Middle Ages through the Reformation there was a gradual alteration in use of this motif that early on approximated the lives of saints, and later, as in The Tempest, is used explicitly to indicate concerns of political legitimacy or the rightful succession of an heir. She points out that the figure cast adrift often appears in the same guise as the scapegoat: “The meme of the rudderless boat links meanings or conditions that at first glance appear widely diverse; pollution, guilt, attaching to sin or crime (including illicit sex), and pollution, the stigma attaching to those who involuntarily transgress some taboo within their culture (such as the offspring of such sins); but considerations of state would seem separate. The link lies in the threat inhering in procreation in patrilineal societies, such as can turn blood relationship, small babies, or pregnant women into a political danger. Victims of casting adrift who are regarded as a threat to the state are sometimes the subject of a prophecy that they will cause the death of the king” (113).
Shakespeare’s definition of the subject *qua* identity bares a striking resemblance to Hegel’s and, after him, Lacan’s definition of the subject as “a Nothing which is not pure nothingness but already ‘counted as One’… in other words: a Nothing which appears in (is represented by) the form of its opposite, of One. The ‘original metaphor’ is not a substitution of ‘something for something-else’ but the substitution of *something for nothing*: the act by means of which ‘there is something instead of nothing’—which is why *metonymy is a species of metaphor*: the metonymic sliding from one (partial) object to another is set in motion by the metaphoric substitution constitutive of the subject: the ‘one for another’ presupposes the ‘one for nothing’…The being of Something is therefore always a being-for-another [*Sein-für-Aderes*]; one attains the One only when this other … is reflected into the (some)thing itself as its own ideal unity” (*Žižek, For they know not*, 50-51).

Which of course is no-where at all since it is the void of the signifier.

Antonio’s linguistic wit at the expense of others, as seen in act 2 scene 1, and his facility with equivocation that often takes the form of the chiasmus is indicative of Shakespearian villains such as Richard III, Iago, and Edmond. Equivocation also chiastically transforms Macbeth from hero to bloody tyrant.

In Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, this same logic leads to the life and death struggle between two extremes of self-consciousness (i.e., two individuals) and the misrecognition of victor as the “lord.” See pars.187-189 in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* (113-115).

The de-fetishization of royal authority that allowed for the metaphoric slippage by which Antonio assumed his brother’s title also introduces a new universal value, in the form of the commodity; “The secret expression of value, namely the equality and equivalence of all kinds of labour because and in so far as they are human labour in general, could not be deciphered until the concept of human equality had already acquired the permanence of a fixed popular opinion. This however becomes possible only in a society where the commodity-form is the universal form of the product of labour, hence the dominant social relation is the relation between men as possessors of commodities” (152). That is, to de-commodify his title and take possession of his identity as duke, Antonio must trade a similar form of labor to usurpation that allowed him to be duke.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., 152.

75 During the Jacobean period just such a transformation was at stake in contest between Parliament and James I over taxes and the absolute prerogative of the king.

76 Whereas Antonio cynically exploits the lie of a sovereign identity, Prospero appears to believe in the lie. But this apparent distinction between the brothers does not alter their relationship to the fundamental ideological fantasy of an absolute identity.

77 The Hegelian bondsman misrecognizes the lord as the author of his being although the truth of his independent being is implicit in him, as he has “experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord” (Hegel, 117). Prospero’s threats of violence against all the characters guarantee the outcome of his narrative as a romance, so long as they misrecognize him as the absolute lord. But this same threat of violence, as Antonio learns, can negate the outcome of the romance.

78 Once again the condition of debt ushers in the structure of the chiasmus now in the crossed relationship of servitude and liberation. Ariel’s debt is the condition under which he enters into the symbolic realm of Prospero’s language and narrative. The payment for Ariel’s freedom is his servitude to Prospero’s narrative that enunciates its possibility.

79 Unlike Antonio who would trade the insufficiency of a debt for his identity as “Absolute Milan”, Prospero trades the value of his daughter, his own issue, present and future, for the identity he had in the past, before he knew he had it. But I resist the reification of Miranda as a commodity proper. While Prospero objectifies her and reduces her to the condition of a product of utility, like a
masque or a staff, and while her exchangeability for his title gives her value much like a commodity, she was not produced with the expressed “purpose of being exchanged” nor was her character as value “taken into consideration during [her] production” (Marx 166). Although that last point is pure speculation on my part, for who knows what goes on in the mind of a character or the maker who made them. I write this in all earnest as Miranda and Prospero may not be commodities within the play, but they are commodities to the playwright whose labor they represent.

80 Cicero De Oratore, III.XIV-XV (Oratory and Orators, 346-347).
81 Bhabha, 18.

82 See Leo Marx, 72.
CHAPTER 3
Remembering to Forget: Desire, Emulation, and Romance in J.F. Cooper’s \textit{The Pioneers}

“As I say, it is perhaps easier to love America passionately, when you look at it through the wrong end of the telescope, across all the Atlantic water, as Cooper did so often, than when you are right there. When you are actually in America, America hurts, because it has a powerful disintegrative influence upon the white psyche. It is full of grinning, unappeased aboriginal demons, too, ghosts, and it persecutes the white men, like some Eumenides, until the white men give up their absolute whiteness. America is tense with latent violence and resistance. The very common sense of white Americans has a tinge of helplessness in it, and deep fear of what might be if they were not common-sensical.”

–D.H. Lawrence (“Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking Novels”)

The focus of my work here will be on first two novels of James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking series. Wrapped in the innocuous genre of Romance, \textit{The Pioneers} (1823) and \textit{Last of the Mohicans} (1826) explore the legitimacy of the new nation’s democratic project. These early novels narrativize the cultural contradictions that arose from revolutionary beginnings of the United States’. The contradictions of our rebellious beginnings also haunted the framers of the constitution, as they worked to establish and legitimize governmental institutions they hoped would “avoid the errors suggested by the past” while nonetheless using some of the very same principles of law and government against which the new nation revolted.\textsuperscript{1} As Robert Ferguson notes, the drafters of the constitution struggled with the contradiction of
inventing a national tradition: “[f]or it was one thing to scrutinize every innovation against the traditional forms of English society; quite another to insist on the same stance in an American context that was filled with novelty and lacked basic traditions,” even a shared cultural tradition among its people. The nation’s revolutionary beginnings effectively threw into question all authority and hierarchy, making the question of how Americans define themselves against and apart from their colonial past particularly pertinent. J. F. Cooper attempts to discover whether a new democratic identity can be constructed out of the imperial “cold and selfish policy of the distant monarchs of Europe” without being tainted by the same policy.

The crisis of a definable national identity was paradoxically exacerbated and aided by both the rapidity with which the vast wilderness was giving way to development and the culturally multifarious newly arriving population that sped on that development with their push westward. As George Dekker contends, James Fenimore Cooper’s novels locate the unifying and defining national experience at the frontier and in the Westward Movement of the new republic. This movement west “belonged to the nation as a whole in a way that even the Battle of Bunker Hill did not.” As Cooper suggests in his novels and others later argue, the frontier was a place of complementary contradictions where Europeans, altered by their cultural contact with native traditions, were transformed into Americans. But this location, most identified with the American identity and experience, was precisely where Americans enacted policies that emulated European imperial practices. Hence, the project of determining a national identity, even as a postcolonial nation, was
complicated still further as the stain of empire marred the birth of the new nation that promised its citizens democratic freedoms unencumbered by legal institutions that protected the rights of landed aristocracy. In other words, while the American Revolution dismantled British imperial authority in the colonies, the nation’s violent opposition to the project of empire was not what define it; instead, its national character would be defined by its own imperial designs on its perpetually shifting western border.

Despite its revolutionary beginnings and its contradictory relationship to Empire building, the new nation promised a glorious future where “law is King.” The republic would find its reason and redemption by making law the final authority in the land, specifically enacting laws that recognized the rights of all “citizens.” But here again, the emulation of European monarchical desire for empire on the part of the new nation effectively undercut any promise of democratic freedoms for the whole of new-republic’s population. In its onward movement west, the U.S. maintained, with a difference, the old imperial social and political hierarchies, no longer defined by hereditary titles and bloodlines, rather defined instead by citizenship. The lingering remainder of the imperial past in conjunction with the nation’s revolutionary beginnings created, as Robert Ferguson notes, “a developing nation obsessed with its own future glory,” that could not “be held by the traditional forms and rhetoric of the past.” Ferguson here is addressing the legalistic and political rhetoric used by the framers of the constitution; however, Cooper launched a similar revolt in the realm of culture against the rhetoric of English domestic
romances. Like his correlative political predecessors who founded a new form of
government by rewriting the forms of the past, Cooper founded a new genre form in
the American literary tradition, the historical romance novel, a genre particular to the
American experience of space and time or place and history. Cooper’s
Leatherstocking series as a whole is an early narration in American Literature of the
American mythology, a tale of the newly formed independent man unencumbered by
the weight of history, and proceeding, as D.H. Lawrence suggests, “backwards, from
old age to golden youth. That is the true myth of America. She starts old, old,
wrinkled and writhing in old skin. And there is a gradual sloughing of the old skin,
towards a new youth.” Ironically, the revolutionary birth of the new republic marks
the beginning of its gradual metamorphosis as it sloughs off “the old skin” of the
British Empire, towards a new expression of the old imperial designs.

The use of Romance in these two novels allows for the imaginative re-creation
of a new world, with a new culture and a new people, after what Cooper refers to as
“the war of separation” from England or Europe generally and their political as well
as cultural traditions. Cooper’s alteration of the war’s name in his introduction to The
Pioneers begins the work of romance insofar as the memory of the conflict is
transformed from the colonists’ strained oppositional relationship to British
imperialism (based on the binary of oppressed/oppressor) to the unmanageable
geographic difference that separates colonists and the metropole. This alteration
exemplifies the structural effect of the genre as the representation of representation
which “makes up for or redeems original loss” by forgetting the memory which began
it (SPE 306). The repetition that structures the “generic intention” of romance functions as a (re)interpretation of an original event that retroactively re-evaluates its meaning (SPE 306). Effectively, the original loss is repaid or redeemed by the creation of something new in art, a repetition with a difference that obscures the original loss with which the narrative begins. Scott Bradfield examines the transformation of the genre in its movement from England to the United States in his book *Dreaming Revolution: The Transgression in the Development of American Romance*. He argues that the American Revolution, in transgressing the traditions and laws of Europe, “acted out a story originally generated by class conflict.” This political struggle is recoded in its transatlantic move as an imperial struggle marked by “the translation of political tropes into psychological ones. The domain of class interests and political landscapes becomes interiorized” as battles between uncivilized natives and civilized Europeans, the racial division then “becomes remetaphorized as a division of self.” Bradfield inverts the traditional dialectic between self and culture (social or political) as seen in philosophy and psychology by suggesting that the social divisions of class and race are symptomatically represented by the loss of the unified self. This argument implies resolving class conflict would not only alleviate racial divisions but could potentially reunify the self or the ego, even within fiction this is a tall order. Bradfield’s insistence on the primacy of class conflict does not detract from his compelling tripartite argument that convincingly outlines the transformation of the genre as it moves from the domestic romances of Europe, engendered by class conflict, to the adventure (or historical) romances.
remetaphorized (translated), by space, imperial desire, racial conflict, and the tragic loss of a unified identity. While the loss of a self-reflexively determined identity or subjectivity is already inherent in the narrativization of class conflict within British domestic romances, Cooper’s American adventure or historical romances, I would argue, reflect the same loss but associate it with a national identity, symptomatically re-imagined as racial and class conflict. Hence, the advent of racial and class tensions in Cooper’s novels bespeaks the loss of a national identity or voided subjectivity around which his structures of representation are erected. These representations account for the condition and space in which the former British colonial subjects found themselves, thus constituting a particularly American subjectivity. Cooper’s work, because of its generic intention, functions analogously to the work of ideology operating as the representation of representation that alludes to an otherwise inaccessible real or as defined by Althusser in his first thesis: “Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” As Althusser argues and as the cultural impact of Cooper’s work demonstrates, subjects (e.g., “Americans”) constitute ideology “insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” through the mechanism of the ideological hail. Hence, the importance of Cooper’s romances or any cultural expression of romance (particularly in postcolonial contexts) is not that they mimetically reflect real conditions, but that they can hail new forms of subjectivity.
Certainly the loss of the colonists’ European national identity left the fledgling nation in a strange new world geographically, legislatively and culturally, but Romance thrives in such environments of mystery, adventure and otherness, often using these qualities as the motivating source of energy for its narratives. Many critics have noted the close relationship between Empire and Romance with the former providing the imaginative raw materials for the later.17 As Northrop Frye argues, the heroic characters in romances typically triumph over the chaos they encounter by rationalizing the very mystery that first began their quest. The violence in these narratives, enacted by the hero in the process of quelling his mysterious foes, “suggests a civilizing force gradually increasing its control of a turbulent natural order.”18 As John McClure argues, Romance requires the mystery and otherness that colonization provides while Empire requires romances (the romantic quest) to incite and train recruits for colonial adventures.19 But, the narrative teleology for both is the conquest of its motivating source. Romance, then, has an overtly conflicted and chiasmatic relationship to Empire building. Moreover, this chiasmatic structure of the genre allows for its manifestly conflicted relationship to the ideology of imperialism. Many critics have identified this conflict within the genre, which Cooper’s his early novels exhibit, as Cooper’s discursive ambivalence toward the civilizing effects of the new settlers on the “savage” wilderness and its inhabitants as well as the socio-political contradiction between the excesses of individual freedom and an individual’s obligations to society.20 His texts offer their readers the mystery and adventure of the American western frontier as well as the “exotic otherness” of
the native inhabitants and the wilderness they are associated, while mourning the disappearance of both with the advance of European colonists, \(^{21}\) while forgetting or overlooking that the new nation was actively engaged in the same imperialist expansion. His use of romance in these novels also allows the (American) reader to forget the new republic’s emulation of Britain’s desire for Empire in North America by allegorically bringing the British identity into the newly formed national family through marriage. Because the new republic emulated the British desire empire, my argument here is that Cooper uses romance, in the first two novels of the Leatherstocking series, to reclaim the nation’s lost cultural identity by resolving any cause for combative competition between England and the U.S. through the legal state of marriage, thereby sacrificing to the nobility of a sacred past any radically alternative formation of the national family that might be projected into the nation’s (imagined) future. Hence, part of the romance of the American West, both generally and in Cooper’s novels specifically, is that it offers a space to forget the transgression against and loss of a British national identity because the rejected identity is continually re-discovered in the frontier (but what to do with it when it re-emerges is another problem).

By the time Cooper wrote the first two books in the Leatherstocking series, the North American continent had seen its share of imperial wars: the French & Indian War (or Seven Years’ War), over territory and trading rights; the War of Independence, over the imperial imposition of taxes on colonial subjects to offset the cost of the previous war; finally, the War of 1812 in which Britain and its former
colony, now two equal sovereign nations, entered into martial conflict over trade, territory, and the rights of U.S. (naturalized) citizens. From whatever national position this history is seen, a competing desire among nations, whether for trading rights or territorial rights, repeatedly lead to the violence of war. The plotlines of both *The Pioneers* and *The Last of Mohicans* reflect this repeated theme in the history of North America. But, Cooper’s reimagining of the “mimetic desire” between two competing nations over the same territory masks the nature of the rivalry, by misrepresenting the true identity of the rivals. The effect of “mimetic desire”, as described by Rene Girard in his book *Violence and the Sacred*, promotes disharmony: “mimesis coupled with desire leads automatically to conflict.”

Similarly, Cooper sets the narrative stage, in the first chapter of *The Last of Mohicans*, by introducing the two competing European empires of England and France preparing for battle over disputed territory. Before the combatants can engage in martial conflict, they must first do battle with the wilderness (forest, stream, mountain passes) they encounter. Hidden behind the apparent conflict between the imperial armies of Europe in the novel, is the submerged competition between the native inhabitants of North America and the European nations who would prefer to interpellate the natives as allies to be emulated. Only by “emulating the patience and self-denial of the practiced native warriors,” do the new inhabitants learn “to overcome every difficulty; and it would seem, that in time, there was no recess of the woods so dark, nor any secret place so lovely, that it might claim exemption from the inroads” of these new people (*Mohicans* 11, emphasis added). Learning from the native inhabitants, ‘emulating’
their habits and customs, the Europeans (colonialists and soldiers) find their way in a new world they would claim as their own, and there was to be no end to their onward push, no “secret place” exempt from their “inroads”. While Girard associates mimetic desire with the onset of violence between rivals, in Cooper, the emulation practice by Europeans in relation to their native ‘allies’ appears to be benign and even beneficial. However, the sublimated violence between natives and Europeans re-emerges in the competition between European rivals for native lands. Although Cooper overlooks the inherent violence and betrayal of the European conquest in this opening passage, he nonetheless avoids the prevalent cultural perception in his era of native inferiority. But the native warrior’s superior ability is also in keeping with the three part structure of mimetic desire outlined by Girard which includes subject, object of desire, and the rival who is accorded the dominant role: “The rival, then, serves as the model for the subject [in many matters but particularly] in regard to desires.”

In Cooper’s The Last of Mohicans, a clear example of Girardian emulation in the relationship between subject and rival takes place in Chapter 3 while Nathaniel (Natty) Bumppo (or Hawkeye) and his close companion Chingachgook are discussing with the different methods employed by their respective nations in the conquest of same territory. Hawkeye reminds Chingachgook of their different origins while noting the similarity of their people’s imperial project:

Your fathers came from the setting sun, crossed the big river,* fought the people of the country, and took the land; and mine came form the
red sky of the morning, over the salt lake, and did their work much
after the fashion that had been set them by yours: 24 (Mohican 30,
emphasis added)

But Chingachgook resists this suggestion of similarity. He argues that his ancestors’
conquest of the land is radically different form the European conquest of North

America:

My fathers fought with the naked red-man! [.... ] Is there no difference,

Hawkeye, between the stone-headed arrow of the warrior, and the

leaden bullet with which you kill? (30)

Hawkeye goes on to argue that the technological advantage his ancestors possessed
was ameliorated by the superior skill of their native rivals. The technological
difference, rather then giving Europeans an unfair advantage, allowed for a more
equal contest between the combatants. Despite his simplicity, Hawkeye’s use of the
logic of emulation demonstrates his epideictic rhetorical skills and allows him to
mask the imbalance of power between the competing nations by overstating the
natives’ skill in relation to European technology. But, the imbalance is nonetheless
registered within the text. Their different geographical origins metaphorically
associate each ethnicity with a more active or passive engagement in the project of
empire. Hawkeye’s people come from the “red sky of the morning,” suggesting an
aggressive and rising empire while Chingachgook’s tribe that come from the “setting
sun,” suggesting that his people’s day has passed and their dominion over the land
has come to a natural end. This discussion narratologically establishes the legitimacy
of European ascendancy in North America by metaphorically plotting the direction of Empire as appropriately moving from east to west. The former owners of the land whose time has naturally (like the setting sun) run its course are giving way to the new (European) conquerors who are assuming the mantle of authority but not before learning to do “their work after the fashion” of the native. The ideological work of emulation and the rhetoric of praise, which are essential to romance, allow for the misrecognition of the native’s skill and obscure the settlers’ (which includes Natty’s) culpability in the project of conquest and empire that is understood as simply an act of imitation among equals.

The movement initiated by mimetic desire—when apparent equals desire the same object, with the subject emulating the rival—is homologous to the Hegelian dialectic between the Lord and Bondsman. As seen in the passage above, the conflict between one consciousness (European), after meeting an other (native), gives itself over to that other who seems to hold the truth of self-consciousness. This truth, like the narrator’s and Hawkeye’s assessment of the native’s skill, is a misrecognition that calls for imitation on the part of the subject. As characterized by Girard, the ideological hail of the other’s desire, calls out, “‘Imitate me!’ ‘I bear the secret of life, of true being!’”25 Girard’s description of the hail or the lure of the other’s desire is similar to the lure of the Imago in Lacan’s “Mirror Stage,” a fantasmatic projection that initiates the aggressive-paranoiac formation of the ego or a self-reflexive “alienating identity.”26 For Girard alienation and identity begin at the point of the other’s desire, initiating a similar aggressive-paranoiac response. The resulting
“[v]iolent opposition, then, is the signifier of ultimate desire, of divine self-
sufficiency, of that ‘beautiful totality’ whose beauty depends on its being inaccessible
and impenetrable.” Violence and the sacred, as characterized by Girard, are
interchangeable terms and have qualities of the sublime, as they are both “seductive
and terrifying” and can create unanimity (for or against the presence of the sacred)
within a community. The two possibilities also create an imbalance “tipping the
scales of Destiny in one direction or another.” Hence, the Girardian sacred wears
two faces of order and disorder and often appears in the robes of royalty that stands
both outside and within the community: “Royalty is an incarnation of the sacred.” But, “[a]s soon as the sacred—that is, violence—has found its way to the interior of
the community, the motif of the surrogate victim will start to emerge.” The
resolution to this mimetic conflict is a social impulse towards sacralized violence
acted out on a victim who is marginalized within or outside the community
(effectively in the same position as royalty). In ritualizing violence, the community
rescues itself from an ongoing and destructive cycle of violence and vengeance over
the same desired object: “The surrogate victim dies so that the entire community,
threatened by the same fate, can be reborn in a new or renewed cultural order.”

Cooper’s first two novels in the Leatherstocking series reflect the American
experience informed by the mimetic desire of imperial rivalry and its “renewed
cultural order” brought about by revolution while narrativizing the containment of
both. However, Cooper’s series never represents the revolutionary violence that is
inextricably linked with the founding of the United States and assumed the status of
the sacred early on, as seen in the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence. In the original draft of that document, Thomas Jefferson’s famous claim of our “self-evident” rights first read, “We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness.” The American Revolution or decolonization, like the scared past it overthrows, is both a program of order and disorder. In the American postcolonial imagination, the revolution assumed the position of the sacred insofar as it violently displaced, and became the placeholder for, the once sacred Royal head of government, His Royal Majesty George III. But, rather then portraying the violence of American decolonization in his first Leatherstocking novel, Cooper demonstrates a concern that the persistence of the “sacred—that is, violence” after the revolution would destroy the nation. In The Pioneers, set ten years after the War of Independence, law becomes the means by which the foundational violence inherent within the national community, represented by the town of Templeton, is ritualized and contained. In Cooper’s first novel to depict American life at the frontier, the defining national experience that brings together the national family is not the revolution or even frontier life but one’s relationship to the law. My contention is that Cooper uses the law to redraw the ideological landscape, clearing a civic space that allows for an American identity which can peaceably emulate its eastern (British) rival’s imperial desires while necessarily sacrificing, within the sacred location of the courtroom, the hybridized and eminently more rebellious identities found in the American west.
The Pioneers, drawn from Cooper’s life experiences growing up in Cooperstown, New York, at times poetically describes the vanishing wilderness and life in early American townships. The novel is set in the year 1793, a period of European political unrest which, the narrator explains, is the reason for the “motley” cast of characters who people the new town of Templeton. The story opens metaphorically at the end of the day, sunset, and the end of the year in dead of winter, December. But, the landscape is paradoxically alive with activity signifying that the town of Templeton and the world of its patron, Judge Marmaduke Temple (‘Duke), are out of balance. While returning home with his daughter, Elizabeth (Bess), after her four-year absence at school, Judge Temple hears Natty’s hounds chasing down a buck. He asks his sleigh driver and slave, Agamemnon (Aggy) to stop so as to shoot at the approaching game. He misses the buck, accidently injuring a mysterious young man, Oliver Edwards, who is out hunting with his friend, Natty Bumppo, the Leatherstocking. Natty is nearing the end of his life at seventy years of age and has resided in the territory for forty years, since before the French and Indian War (1753). Judge Temple, a lapsed Quaker who owns thousands of acres that surrounds the town he founded, actively out sought settlers to whom he sold and mortgaged land for their commercial interests within the town and to farm outside the town. Judge Temple acquired his large land holdings after the revolution by purchasing “estates [at action] that had been wrested by violence from others” who were “adherents to the crown” (33). The manor in which the Judge acquired his wealth left a “slight stain” on his character allowing some to make “dark hints concerning the sudden prosperity of the
unportioned Quaker” (34). However, the narrator tells us, his services and wealth erased the memory of these questionable beginnings from the minds of the townsfolk. But, as with all things believed to be hidden by time, the Judge’s past reemerges as the story progresses. Many in town attribute Oliver’s incivility toward the Judge to his injury and his Delaware Indian lineage that presumably teaches vengeance as a virtue. Despite his incivility, the initial attraction between he and Elizabeth deepens, helped in large part by the frequency with which he and Natty preserve her life and the lives of her family members. Because Natty and Oliver are fiercely independent and protective of their privacy, the former becomes the object of legal persecution orchestrated by the Judge’s cousin and newly appointed Sheriff, Richard (Dickon) Jones whose attempts to gain entry into Natty’s cabin are foiled. At the end of the novel, after the death of Natty’s life-long companion Chingachgook (aka John Mohegan), Oliver reveals the reason for his recalcitrant demeanor. Oliver’s senile grandfather, Major Effingham, a former British officer and the original patent holder for a large portion of Judge Temple’s lands, has been residing with and has been cared for by Natty and Chingachgook. But the good Judge averted any legal contest over the lands surrounding the township and respected the legal rights his friend and one time business partner, Edward Effingham, Oliver’s father, by naming Effingham’s heir in his will.

While Marmaduke Temple had “energetically” exploited the shifting political ground in the United States to secure his family’s fortune, before the revolution the Temple family had fallen on hard times. The Judge’s new world progenitor, Old
Marmaduke, had arrived in the colonies with wealth from the old county. He was the “master of many thousands of acres and the supporter of many a score of […] white servants and dependents” (27 emphasis added). Old Marmaduke’s life in the colonies replicated the life of an aristocratic lord in the old country. But, by the third generation, “his indolent and comparatively uneducated offspring were compelled to yield precedency to the more active energies of a class whose exertions had been stimulated by necessity” (28). The natural decline of the aristocracy, who seemed to whither in a new environment, made way for the more robust energies of the working class. At least a generation before the American Revolution, the narrator represents the war as having already been won.36 The War of Independence merely formalizes the transformation that the narrator suggests has naturally occurred without the violence of class conflict. The narrator’s minimization of the necessity of revolutionary violence follows the same epidictic logic as Hawkeye’s discussion of the rising European Empires who follow in the wake of the “naturally” diminishing presence of the North American natives. In both cases the impressive skills of one group lead to the transformation (or translation) of another group through emulation. While the connection between the “noble” native and the British aristocrat is a repeated theme in these two early novels, in this instance, the native and the working class are linked by the overestimation of their skills although their relationship to the act of emulation appears to differ. As the amplification of the native’s ability was a misrecognition that obscured the true cause of their defeat, the reader might anticipate a similar narrative outcome for the working class.37 The narrator informs us that
demise of aristocratic master and the rise of the servant (bondsperson) occur gradually as a result of work required to survive in their new world. In the early period of the colonies, this dialect could be regularly observed: “and with few exception how inevitable were the gradations, on the one hand, of the masters to poverty, and on the other, of their servants to wealth” (27). Ideally, this dialect should end in mutual recognition, the servant learns through her/his work the true nature of her/his self-consciousness and the master perforce learns that s/he was in fact the servant of the servant and must now also work.\textsuperscript{38} Ostensibly, the master/aristocratic class in emulating the servant/working class’s “active energies” and “exertions” and eschewing its own “indolent” behavior might rise from a descent “below which…it is barely possible for honesty, intellect and sobriety to fall,” thus avoiding the status of slave in a never-ending cycle of class conflict (28). Moreover, the aristocrat, by imitating the class who worked to sustain itself in its new environment, would be incorporated in a community of his equals, suggesting the natural formation of a democratic republic in the colonies. But here Cooper’s text takes an unexpected turn as the narrator claims that the degraded and fallen aristocracy \textit{emulated} its prelapsarian avatar rather than the working class. Essentially, the \textit{principle} of class pride or sense of superiority was the \textit{stimulus} for the aristocracy to rise again in the new nation:

\begin{quote}
The same pride of family that had, by its self-satisfied indolence, conduced to aid their fall now became a principle to stimulate them to endeavor to rise again. The feeling, from being morbid, was changed
\end{quote}
to a healthful and active desire to emulate the character, the condition, and peradventure, the wealth of their ancestors also. (28, emphasis added)

It appears the revolutionary ascension of the lower classes at the expense of aristocratic superiority could not be tolerated or admitted within the text. While the aristocracy, and the narrator who characterizes them, may refuse to recognize the hybridity of culture at work here, nonetheless, in imitating the working class, the lines of distinction between the two classes are effectively blurred. The hierarchical ratios Cooper constructs that typically accompany moral judgment within the narrative, such as Aristocrat/self-satisfied and indolent: working class/active and energetic, again seem to be resolved through emulation, creating similitude between the differential oppositions. But, similitude brings with it the need to reassert a class difference and, for the descendants of the old aristocracy, a desire for the rights and privileges that accompany that difference. While rejecting its own past and imitating working class activity precipitates the rise of the aristocracy’s scion from poverty and indolence, their motivation and success is attributed to their emulation of their ancestors’ “pride of family” (hereditary titles). Hence, Judge Marmaduke Temple’s position in the community has less in common with the citizens of Templeton than with his aristocratic progenitor, whose situation could be ascertained by “the number of his white servants or dependents and the nature of the public situations he held” (27, emphasis added). While the Judge and his ancestor share many similarities, they are notably different. The Judge like his ancestor, old Marmaduke, possesses many
thousands of acres, but the Judge’s land ownership is in question; the Judge holds an important public offices by appointment of a Governor rather than a King; he has a number of “white servants or dependents” as well as black slaves. Ironically, the new Marmaduke, a post-revolutionary citizen within a democratic republic, bares a greater resemblance to a colonizing imperialist than his British ancestors who were engaged in colonization. The aristocratic progeny’s dual emulation of the working class and their own ancestors functions as a kind of counter-revolutionary maneuver within the text in an apparent effort to reclaim the aristocracy’s past position of ascendancy. While the transplanted aristocracy appears to willingly imitate working class desires, it does so in order to posses what the working class possess, wealth in the form of real property, so as to reclaim what was lost, their socio-political dominance.

In the post-revolutionary confederacy of states the conflict endemic to mimetic desire re-emerges in its old world form of class conflict but now with a new world imperial twist. But, also present is the fear that any lingering vestige of an aristocratic class could precipitate the re-emergence of revolutionary violence in the States, such as was occurring in France. In the narrative, it is Judge Temple who suggests the danger unrestrained violence presents to a new nation in his account of Jacobean activity in France during a Christmas Eve discussion at the “Bold Dragoon.” He contends the persistence of the revolutionary violence that gave birth to the French republic was changing the “character of the nation”(152). Judge Temple accuses the Jacobins of being “bloodthirsty” and expresses his sympathy for the French ruling class. As the character of Marmaduke Temple has never taken up arms
in any cause, his opinions concerning the violence in the French Revolution are not surprising. But, as he is repeatedly referred to in terms associated with the aristocracy, his scorn for the Jacobins appear far more self-serving: his cousin Richard refers to him as ‘Duke; the narrator refers to him as the “king” of Templeton; his home is referred to as “the castle” (39-40). Rather then being a member of a democratic community of equals, as the king of Templeton, he stands just outside and above it, becoming the monstrous double of the aristocracy, a repetition of the republic’s “dead colonial father” whose ruling position was sacrificed on the altar of revolution. But, Judge Temple runs a dual risk in too closely resembling the aristocracy: first, by falling victim to the repetition of revolutionary violence; second, by having his right to the confiscated lands he possesses, which endowed him with the “character and condition” of his ancestors, called into question.

Before Judge Temple’s entrance into the “Bold Dragoon,” the class discontents just beneath the seemingly calm surface of the community emerge. One of the town lawyers, on hearing of Oliver’s injuries, hopes a suit will be filed against the Judge, asserting that “all men are equal in the eye of the law…Though some may get property, no one knows how, yet they are not privileged to transgress the laws…” He goes on to say that this equality before the law is a great blessing “handed down to us from our ancestors” (145). The threat of class conflict is safely transferred into the past as a competition between the nation’s ancestors whose progeny in the present/future will determine the validity of their legacies. The “dark hints” concerning the Judge’s wealth that continue to circulate in his absence indict the
legacy his ancestors left to “the unportioned Quaker.” Nonetheless, as the pub’s landlady, Mrs. Hollister remarks it would be a great error to sue the Judge “who has a purse as long as one of them pines on the hill” (146). Just as troubling as the questionable origin of his wealth is the suggestion that Judge Temple’s wealth affords him a greater portion of justice. His excess of justice again places him outside a community in which all men are equal before the law. Judge Temple’s aristocratic emulation and exalted position in relation to the community, and the law that governs it, is suggestive of the Girardian scapegoat or surrogate victim, making the Judge vulnerable to a repetition of revolutionary violence (as in France). In the post-revolutionary world depicted in the novel, law became means by which the outbreak of violence that would otherwise threaten the newly forming social structure within the nation is contained, specifically through enfranchisement of the citizenry with the vote. The vote formalizes the self-governance of each state as well as the confederacy among the states through the legal construct of a constitution. These legal documents determine how leaders are selected as well as their term in office thereby forestalling the any re-eruption of revolutionary violence in places like Templeton. Law becomes the means by which the would-be victim, now leader, is made sacred through the citizenry’s ritual act of voting and by the leaders swearing oaths of induction to serve the people and to uphold the laws of the land. The Justice Marmaduke Temple can afford to pursue places him in the position of would-be victim and also qualifies him for his “court” position in the new nation; indeed, he has no other qualifications beyond his wealth. The narrator’s “apology of necessity” admits that the Judge’s
appointment to the bench would “make a Templar smile.” But, the reader is assured what he lacked in legal training signified by referent to two of the four Inns of Court in London (Middle or Inner Temple—an association of Barristers and Judges), he made up for in “dignity and experience” (34). As Judge, he is sacrificed for the benefit of and in service to his community not at the guillotine but on the court bench. The ideological work of law creates an imaginary landscape of equality for those who would be lead while their leaders, who resemble the aristocracy of the past, are “sacrifice” in service to their community. In the first chapter of *The Pioneers*, Cooper represent this paradoxical imaginary landscape of law where “all men” are democratically enfranchised as equals on the condition that they misrecognize the persistence of the colonial past and aristocratic privilege in the laws of ownership. As Eric Cheyfitz argues, the translation of Native American kinship systems into Western categories of property are achieved through the “shared discursive practices” of fiction and law, specifically Cooper’s “fiction about law and [the] legal fiction” constructed by U.S. Supreme Court in cases such as *Johnson v. McIntosh* that determined property rights and ownership in the U.S. The fiction underwriting the laws of property in the U.S. and in Cooper’s novel is structure by a misrecognition that is proper to the ideological form of the commodity insofar as the land, translated by U.S. law, becomes a commodity.

The contest over land rights and ownership as such, between the three hunters in the opening scene of *The Pioneers*, structures the narrative of the novel. Judge Temple claims ownership over the fallen game that Natty and his young friend Oliver
Edwards also shot at, not because the hunt takes place on his lands (a point to which he only obliquely refers and a right that his cousin Jones later directly claims) but because “it is by no means certain” from whom “one of the two” shots that killed the buck originated (19). The Judge concedes that Natty, to whom he has given the right to hunt on his lands, is the better shot and hit the Buck but argues that one of his own five shots may have hit the deer as well. Natty Bumppo reminds the Judge that his claim of legal priority over the use of the land is not in tune with natural law unless the Judge’s authority is constituted by the rule of might. As “might often makes right here as well as in the old country,” there appears to be little difference between the new authority in the United States and the authority “in the old country” (Britain) (20). Those who have the greatest claim to the land as Natty argues are those whose “right…is of an older date,” in the U.S. that would be the Empires of Europe, or more appropriately and of a determinately “older date” (pre-colonial) Native Americans (23). But, Marmaduke Temple wishes to put the issue to rest by purchasing the carcass and with it the right to claim the kill so as to impress his self-aggrandizing cousin. He then puts his appeal to a vote. The Judge does not force the hunters to hand over their “lawful dues in a free country” (i.e., the fruit of their labor, the game); rather, he attempts to gain their consent and have them freely hand over the carcass by purchasing their votes and the value of their labor (19). When they refuse his payment, he finds that he is “outvoted—overruled” as the two others characters present in this scene to whom he might appeal in his case cannot legally vote despite being in “a free country”: “There is Aggy; he can’t vote, being a slave; and Bess is a
minor” and also a woman, both conditions prevent her from having the vote (22).\textsuperscript{44}

The conflict is decided on the facts, by locating all five of Judge Temple’s shots including the one that pierced Oliver Edwards’ body.

Despite New York’s constitution in this period enfranchising only “freemen” with property (“freeholders”), Judge Temple liberally extends to Oliver and Natty, who neither own property nor pay rent, the rights of citizenship in the mock vote that would assign ownership of their labor to Judge Temple. However, as he was not elected to his position within the town, ‘Duke Temple’s political inclusion (real or not) of the frontiersmen would have little affect on him. The symptomatic evidence of his distance from the citizens who might exercise their voting rights—an ideological fantasy that Natty and Oliver in their silence refuse to recognize or participate in—is Judge Temple’s mixed metaphor of “outvoted—overruled.” The first is a decision made by an electorate; the second, can be read as either the sole decision of a court judge or the action of many, as in a revolution. His juxtaposition conflates the two terms and reflects the vulnerability of his position as an appointed official in the town, a position that too closely resembles the aristocracy of the past and can be similarly “overruled.” His conflation also paradoxically reasserts the revolutionary nature of the vote insofar as the vote, even the refusal to take part in the ideological fantasy, has the power to overthrow the former ruler presumably without the need for violence (despite the fact that the originating cause concerns the accuracy of marksmanship).
The Judge’s clumsy attempt to buy the election symbolically announces the real shift of power in the new nation with the troubling implication that everything can be purchased, votes, property, merit, even human life. Hence, in this new landscape, “might” is translated from the rigid social structure of the landed aristocracy to the more fluid structure of the barons of commerce or capital. Land once held in manor estates is wrested from the old colonial masters, freeing it to be bought and sold for profit. For a dollar, the Judge can claim the merit (‘bragging rights’) and ownership of Oliver and Natty’s labor. Even the value of human life (as Aggy’s condition as a slave reminds us) is subject to the vicissitudes of the market and politics. The laws enacted in the wake of the American Revolution appears not to have freed people—in many cases just the opposite was true, it enslaved and disposed of them for profit—so much as it freed the land to be used as capital.

The first chapter of *The Pioneers* narrates the demise of the democratic ideals of the revolution in the legal structures that defined the everyday practice of carrying on the nation’s business of capital accumulation. The utopian ideals of the revolution evident in the Declaration of Independence that proclaimed the colonists’ right to revolt so as to construct a new nation founded on “inalienable” rights that included “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” are betrayed by the figure of law in the new settlement, Judge Temple. The law Judge Temple arbitrates regulates the forfeiture of these rights as defined by Jefferson and re-inscribes them in terms of John Locke’s theory of property. As in the scene above, the Judge attempts to translate Natty’s labor into a commodity, to be bought and owned, as well as set the
terms of exchange all through the legislative ritual of the vote. In truth, neither Natty nor Judge Temple differ over the principle of property rights indeed Natty repeatedly approximates Locke’s prohibitions against offending “the common law of nature” with his condemnations of the Town’s folks “sinful and wasty” habit of accumulating more then they can use (254). But, unlike Locke, he would leave to nature “the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America […] without any improvement, tillage, or husbandry.” For his part, Judge Temple has appropriated to himself “what is given in common” through his “activity and enterprise” in imitation of the laboring class, specifically in the area of commerce (30). Moreover, in keeping with Locke’s dictates on the use of property, Marmaduke Temple seeks to cultivate the land agriculturally and commercially which Natty later protests as being “all new together,” again asserting the priority of land rights to those who preceded the Judge (153, emphasis added). But always behind the contest over land rights between English loyalists and post-revolutionary citizenry is the colonial tragedy of the misappropriation of native lands. How can post-colonials reclaim ownership over lands once claimed by representatives of a colonial empire when neither can claim to be a natives of the lands? Even Elizabeth, who stands to inherit her father’s hundred thousand acres, feels “how small [her] own right [is] to possess them” when she sees Chingachgook walking about the lands “like the ghost of” the people who once occupied the territory (268). When Oliver questions the Judge directly on the issue of “Indian rights” to the land, the Judge responds: “…the Indian title was extinguished so far back as the close of the old war,” that is the French and Indian War (226,
emphasis added). The peculiar use of the word “extinguished” in Judge Temple’s response recalls the landmark Supreme Court case of Johnson v. McIntosh concerning the disposition of Indian land once held by the Illinois and Piankeshaw Indian nations. The court’s decision, handed down in the same year Cooper’s novel was published, unanimously upheld William McIntosh’s claim to the 11,000 acres he purchased from Congress in 1818 and denied the title of ownership held by the heirs of Thomas Johnson, a British subject who had purchased the land from members of the Piankeshaw tribe in 1773 and 1775 under the auspices of a Royal proclamation in 1763. Chief Judge Marshall in his written opinion retraces the history of discovery in the western hemisphere as far back as the Papal Bull of 1493 in which Spain was given the lands “undiscovered by others.”51 This principle of discovery “gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, [the discovery] was made, against all other European governments” with the right of title “consummated by possession.”52 The principle or doctrine of discovery allowed European nations to claim sole possession of territory inhabited by others. While the natives or original inhabitants of the land were recognized as having a “just claim” as occupants, their sovereignty over their land was “necessarily diminished”.

…rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion; but their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished, and their power to dispose of the soil at their own will, to whomsoever
they pleased, was denied by the original fundamental principle that discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it.

The history of America, from its discovery to the present day, proves, we think, the universal recognition of these principles. *(Johnson v. McIntosh*, emphasis added)*

Chief Justice Marshall also states that the disputed land in the case was within the territory Great Britain had ceded to the United States, through the Paris Peace Treaty of 1783, which “had a clear title to all the lands within the boundary lines described in the treaty, subject only to the Indian right of occupancy, and that the exclusive power to *extinguish* that right, was vested in that government which might constitutionally exercise it” *(Johnson v. McIntosh*, emphasis added). Marshall does not defend “those principles which Europeans have applied to Indian title” and attempts to distance the new government from the “pompous claims”, enforced “by the sword,” of their imperial predecessors *(Johnson v. McIntosh)*. Yet, he substantiates the United States’ power to “extinguish” the native’s right of “occupancy” as being metonymically ceded to new nation, along with the land itself, by the British crown. Further, he finds “justification” for the persistence of the imperial policy in the “brave” “independence” of “fierce savages….with whom it was impossible to mix” *(Johnson v. McIntosh)*. His opinion and Cooper’s narrative exhibits the same ambivalence and prejudice as regards the treatment of original habitants within the new nation. While eschewing the “pompous” principle of
discovery, Marshall upholds the imperial doctrine by which England held title to North American lands, as this same doctrine becomes the means by which the United States secures its territorial claims: “Conquest gives a title which the courts of the conqueror cannot deny” (Johnson v. McIntosh). Both Marshall’s opinion and Cooper’s texts recognize the authority of past claims by juridically asserting the new nation’s priority over the land, secured by conquest and metonymically by right of discovery. Yet, paradoxically, both authors scorn the imperial means that makes their nation’s project possible. Both of their texts reflect the chiastic contradiction at the inception of a democratic republic where “law is king,” the authority of which is necessarily unjust. Like the legal fiction by which the United States secures its territory, Judge Temple’s legal purchase of land eclipsed the rights of the original inhabitants who are represented as naturally diminishing, a ‘ghostly’ presence. He misrecognizes his ownership as the conquest of law and capital (reflecting the ideology at work in the national acquisition that occurred just before the novel’s publication, the Louisiana territory). Judge Temple’s belief in his entitlement to the land mirrors the nation’s misapprehension of its relationship not only to its own territory and expanding borders but also its relationship, as the heir apparent (despite the mask of protestations), to the history of empire in the North America.

The contest over land ownership, in the novel, is resolved, in the manner of the plot resolution of all romances, through marriage. In marrying the territorial desire of the English Empire (Oliver Edwards) to citizenship rights & wealth within the republic (Elizabeth Temple), Cooper brings together a national family whose
business is the buying and selling of land and who, by virtue of their wealth and position, are allowed to arbitrate the laws of that land. Romance transforms the geopolitical competition over territory into the shared social-cultural goal of mutual love (mutual recognition). The contest between empires is allegorically resolved in the romance plot with the subject and the “rival” resolving to work together under the legal contract of marriage. The contract of marriage forestalls the need for violence among the competitors by maintaining a difference in the object of desire; he loves “her,” and she loves “him.” While the desire is the same, the object is different. Cooper uses the difference inherent in romantic desire to transform political conflict brought on by the mimetic desire for empire. The social-bond network of the new national family is neither monarchical nor the more radical republicanism practice by the natives but a new hybridized formation of representational democracy. Oliver operates as the representative for all past claimants to the land who are associated with nobility, both English and indigenous, inasmuch as their claim to the land has been passed on through primogeniture inheritance (from grandfather, to father, to son). But his rights as a member of the Delaware nation, who arguably posses the greatest claim to the land and in to which he was adopted, remains in question as long as John Mohegan lives. Hence, John Mohegan’s (aka Chingachgook) gratuitous death by self-immolation within the symbolic logic of a romance concerning land rights becomes necessary so as to achieve the narrative’s closure. The unification of the national family requires that the original claimant to the land (John Mohegan) be sacrificed. John’s death returns him to a sacred past (a native American heaven)
where Europeans are not admitted, and where all that was lost to the encroachment of Europeans is returned to him: his hunting grounds, his people, and his identity (as Chingachgook). Chingachgook’s return to the character and condition of his ancestors, allows the “white” characters to do the same. But, before Chingachgook’s self-sacrifice, his life long friend, who has been more than a bother to him, is symbolically sacrificed in a court of law presided over by Judge Temple.

Throughout the novel Natty stands in opposition to “wasty” practices of the new settlers (particularly their leading citizens) and “the twisty ways of [their] law” that prevents “a man to have an honest…livelihood” (278, 153). Natty openly flouts the newly imposed deer laws in his naïve belief that the veil of the mountain wilderness and its time-honored natural law (“game is game, and he who finds it may kill it”) will protect him (153). But it is exactly his outlying relationship to Templeton and its laws that induce Dickon’ Jones and Hiram Doolittle to entrap him, believing him to be possessed of secret wealth drawn from the very mountains he hopes will hide him. Jones and Doolittle, contend any wealth Natty has discovered by rights belongs to landowner, Marmaduke Temple. Despite his entrapment by officers of the law, Natty is charged with threatening a constable, resisting the execution of a warrant and other misdemeanors “against private rights,” in short he is accused being of “an example of rebellion to the laws,” hence an “outlaw” (339). Natty, a naturalized citizen of a nation that itself was conceived in rebellion, is an outsider in a land that is now governed by law: “for what has a man who lives in the wilderness to do with the ways of the law” (297). Interestingly, by claiming
exemption from the law, he finds himself in the same precarious place Judge Temple occupies, a position both within and outside Templeton’s social structure governed by laws that treat all equally. The similarity of their positions results in a mimetic conflict that threatens the legal and social underpinnings of the new town, constructed (like the nation itself) on the metonymic extension of the imperial doctrine of discovery. The privilege Judge Temple claims by right of law and ancestry, Natty would deny by right of discovery and rebellion against inconsistent and unjust laws that would tread on the “natural rights of man.” The resolution to the challenge Natty poses takes place within the ritualized locus of the courtroom. Judge Temple exercises the privilege of his appointed position (by virtue of his wealth) to guide the jury in their verdict and to sentence Natty in consequence of the law. To be clear, Judge Temple’s personal belief is not the rationale for Natty’s sentence, nor is it a result of his conviction that the law is just or even right; rather, the law is simply necessary. In response to his daughter’s solicitations on Natty’s behalf, the concerned Judge tells her, “those laws that would convict a man like the Leatherstocking to so severe a punishment […] cannot be perfect in themselves” (364). His disavowal of the law effectively repeats the chiastically structured tautology within Marshall’s opinion in *Johnson v. McIntosh*, that the law is the law even if its “authority is without truth.” As Judge Temple explains to Bess, even as a legal fiction the law is nonetheless necessary to provide social restraints:

Society cannot exist without wholesome restraints. Those restraints cannot be inflicted without security and respect to the persons of those
who administer them; and it would sound ill indeed to report a judge had extended favor to a convicted criminal because he saved the life of his child. (Chap 35, 364)

The law both establishes and secures the authority and rights of those who administer it, such as Judge Temple, and without the restraint of the law, the cycle of violence and vengeance would fray the social network it legitimizes. In court, even the questionable character of Hiram Doolittle quells his desire for “vengeance” with his greater desire for “legal fame” (346). In the function of law, as described by Judge Temple, we can also see the function of ideology as defined by Slavoj Žižek, not as a distortion of or mask for realty, but an illusion “which serves as a support for our ‘reality’” and thereby masks a “traumatic, real kernel,” that is the loss of meaning, the absence of sense.⁵⁹ The dead senseless letter of the law—the authority of which is retroactively established by those whose duties it authorizes—supports Marmaduke Temple’s reality, and by extension the real existence of the people of Templeton.

Having been sacrificed in service to the law, ‘Duke, the king of Templeton, becomes Judge Temple who officiates the social bond in announcing the law, and Natty becomes what he already was “in the eye of the law,” an outlaw in rebellion or excess of the law.

The mimetic desire that drove the plot is resolved through the ritualization of violence now enacted as law that sacrifices the lives and livelihoods of the original inhabitants, native and hunter, of the territory. The novel’s metaphoric opening at the end of the day, the end of the year, and near the end of Leatherstocking’s life also
marks the end of the nation’s post-revolutionary and postcolonial period as Cooper re-envisions, narratologically, the nation as an empire in emulation of “the character, the condition, and peradventure, the wealth of their” aristocratic British colonial forebearers. But does this mean Cooper envisioned the new nation as a shadowy emulation of England, the law a parodic representation of English common law? Or worse, did he envision the U.S. as simply a commercial nation where justice, like merit could be bought and sold? The use of the ideological veil of democracy as a mask for the return of the Hegelian master under the aegis of capital, is not radically new or surprising to us as postmodern readers (we may even cynically read in expectation of it), but Cooper appears to have struggled with this betrayal of the democratic experiment outlined by the framers of the constitution (a betrayal juridically performed in cases like *Johnson v. McIntosh*) even while he narrates its demise as a Romance that forgets the original loss of the democratic promise of the social-political experiment. Hence, the loss that begins the novel is not of the conquered British identity that is narratively integrated into the national family, nor the repressed lingering symptom of imperial conquest present in the legal framework underwriting the romance. Rather, the forgotten loss in Cooper’s romance is of a truly democratic space within the republic in which “the conquered inhabitants can be blended with the conquerors” and where the “law which regulates, […] ought to regulate in general, the relations between the conqueror and conquered” (*Johnson v. McIntosh*). The narrative closure in *The Pioneers* does not resolve the ideological ambivalence inherent in the text despite (and because of) Chingachgook’s death and
Natty’s self-banishment into the West. This lack of closure induces Cooper to move further into the past to the beginning of the “old war,” in his next novel *The Last of the Mohicans*, so as to recuperate and further explore the lost democratic frontier represented in the burgeoning competition between English and American identities as well as their relationship to empire. His exploration into that frontier allowed him to resurrect Chingachgook as well as recall Natty from his self-exile and pioneering adventures in new western territories so as to re-imagine the birth of an American identity through the chiasmatic meeting of a dying (native) empire out of the west and a rising empire out of the east whose mimetic desire is made manifest through the function of emulation. In the next chapter, we will see that Melville further complicates this cartographic device employed by Cooper in *Last of the Mohicans* allowing him structure his sea romance as an allegory of the United States’ imperialist designs within the Western Hemisphere.


2 Ibid.


In 1893, seventy years after *The Pioneers* was published, Fredrick Turner delivered his “Frontier Thesis” in which he argued that the western frontier had been essential to the formation of American Democracy and the American identity. Turner’s thesis, like Cooper’s fiction before him, identifies the western frontier as the incubator of hybridity, a space where “European germs” developed (by adopting native traditions) into Americans. The frontier also postponed the need to deal with the implicit and explicit contradictions in the democratic project by displacing them further west into “open” and “free” lands. For resistant colonists and Americans, the West was also the location of fluid boundaries and borders that were crossed and re-crossed. See Frederick J. Turner in *The Frontier in American History* (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1986), 3. For a corrective to Turner’s notion of the western frontier as “open” space see, Patricia N. Limerick’s *The legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. (New York: Norton, 1987).
In addition to sources cited here, the following texts have been essential to my thinking about the continuity of European imperialism and its movement west into the political, legal and cultural regimes of representation within the U.S.: Eric Cheyfitz “Savage Law: The Plot against American Indians in Johnson and Graham Lessee v. M’Intosh and The Pioneers” and Priscilla Wald “Terms of Assimilation: Legislating Subjectivity in the Emerging Nation.” Both texts appear in Cultures of United States Imperialism (1993), an impressive and necessary anthology of essays; Edward Said’s Culture and Imperialism (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); John Carlos Rowe’s Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism (Oxford: Oxford UP. 2000); Amy Kaplan’s The Anarchy of Empire; Andy Doolan’s Fugitive Empire.

See Paine qtd. in Robert A. Ferguson “We Hold These Truths to be Self Evident” in Reconstructing American Literary History, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Harvard Univ. Press: Cambridge, 1986), 23.

Ferguson, Laws and Letters, 23.

George Dekker argues, and John P. McWilliams concurs, Sir Walter Scott and his Waverley novels are the originating source for Cooper’s historical romances. But, as noted by Leslie Fiedler and Scott Bradfield (among others), and as demonstrated in Cooper’s work, the spatial and temporal moment of the genre across the Atlantic is reflected in the American romance literature with a difference. See George Dekker in The American Historical Romance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and John P. McWilliams in "The Rationale for the 'American Romance.'" Boundary 2 17.1 (Spring 1990): 71-82. Also see Leslie Fielder’s first chapter in Love and Death in the American Novel (Urbana-Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press. 1966), and Scott Bradfield’s introduction in Dreaming Revolution.


Cooper, James F. Author’s Introduction. The Pioneers: Or The Sources of the Susquehanna (New York: Signet Classic, 1964), v. By altering the name of the American War of Independence to a war of separation, Cooper suggests the conflict was simply a matter of spatial necessity rather than a revolutionary act.
12 Repetition of (and in) romance “announces the advent of the Law,” or what Jacques Lacan describes as a point de caption, that allows for meaning or sense to arise from nonsense by anchoring the signification to some ‘thing’ (Žižek, S.O., 62).

13 Bradfield, xiii. Bradfield develops Leslie Fielder’s claim in Love and Death concerning the alteration of the genre in its transatlantic move.

14 Ibid.


16 Ibid., 116.

17 For a general discussion of romance and imperialism see Northrop Frye in Secular Scripture and Fredrick Jameson in Political Unconscious. John McClure, in Late Imperial Romance, uses both Frye and Jameson to make his persuasive argument concerning the relationship between romance and imperialism. Also see David Duff in Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) and David Quint in Epic and Empire (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

18 Frye qtd. in McClure, 9. Cooper’s heroic figures, such as Natty, Chingachgook, Oliver and Uncas, differ only slightly from Frye’s description of the hero as a “civilizing force” within romance as these characters celebrate the sublimity of nature even as they actively confront it. See Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964), 246.

19 Ibid., 10.
For criticism that discusses Cooper’s textual ambivalence see Kay Seymour House, “James Fenimore Cooper: The Pioneers” in *The American Novel: From James Fenimore Cooper to William Faulkner*, ed. Wallace Stegner (New York: Basic Books, 1956), 1-12, and G. Dekker in *James Fenimore Cooper*. Also see Eric Cheyfitz in “Savage Law”; Ryoichi Okada in “Irreconcilable Conflicts in The Pioneers” (July 1988) available online at *James Fenimore Cooper Society Website* (Aug. 2000); Douglas Buchholz in "Landownership and Representation of Social Conflict in The Pioneers” (July 1989) available online at *James Fenimore Cooper Society Website* (1991). These represent only a few of the many articles over the years that have noted Cooper’s narrative ambivalence.

McClure 10.


Ibid., 145.

The asterisk within the quotation marks Cooper’s textual note, added in 1831, that identifies “the river” as the Mississippi. Although the reader is told, in this novel and in *The Pioneers*, that the Mohicans, Chingachgook’s tribe, lived in the northeastern part of the United States between the Potomac and the Hudson River, Cooper, in keeping with his sources, suggests their origins were further west beyond the Mississippi. Effectively, Cooper suggests, in their new environment, the European settlers emulated both the native’s customs and habits of conquest. In the same footnote, and in the Introduction, Cooper extends their origins even further back in time and space to “ Asiatic origin” in the Far East.

Girard 147.

*Ecrits*, 4. Of course the implication of imitating the other’s desire in Cooper’s work is the formation of an aggressive-paranoiac national identity or subjectivity. Also see G.W.F. Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (London, Oxford, 1977), 111-119. Alexander Kojève and Jean Hyppolite helped to introduce Hegel to a generation of French intellectuals. Their direct influence can be seen in the works of Lacan and Althusser and indirectly in
Girard, all three of whom utilized Hegelian dialectics to read and interpret Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

27 Girard 148.

28 Ibid., 152.

29 Ibid., 258.

30 Ibid., 261. Cooper’s choice of sacrificial victims is not British royalty or their national representatives but natives depict in terms of nobility, as they were legally and culturally marginalized within the national project, evinced by the U.S. peace treaties with Britain and the six nations after the Revolution.

31 Ibid., 255.

32 See Thomas Jefferson’s “Jefferson’s ‘original Rough draught’ of the Declaration of Independence” in The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 1: 1760-1776. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1950), 423-8, emphasis added. Subsequent outbreaks of violence that threatened the nation were similarly sacralized not only in treaties, public addresses and monuments but also in anthems and hymnals. Sir Frances Scott Key’s poem “Defense of Fort McHenry” commemorating the British naval bombardment of the fort September 13-14, 1814 in the war of 1812 is one such example. The poem became our national anthem March 3, 1931. Another example is the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” written after the Civil War. In his first novel to deal with the American experience, The Spy (1821), Cooper does narrativize the Revolutionary War.

33 While Girard’s theory does not address the political act of revolution or decolonization, his concept of violence and the sacred share similarities with Frantz Fanon’s definition of decolonization: “Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder.” Decolonization in the U.S. also resulted in “the creation of a new man” evidenced in American literature by the character of Natty Bumppo. See Frantz Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth, trans. C. Farrington (Grove Weidenfield: New York. 1963), 36.
Comically, in the prelude to the Paris Treaty of 1783 that ended the American Revolution, the sacralize person of HRM King George III is forced to make peace with the titularly unadorned upstart of the United States of America: “It having pleased the Divine Providence to dispose the hearts of the most serene and most potent Prince George the Third, by the grace of God, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, duke of Brunswick and Lunebourg, arch-treasurer and prince elector of the Holy Roman Empire etc., and of the United States of America, to forget all past misunderstandings and differences…” See “The Paris Peace Treaty of September 30, 1783; The Definitive Treaty of Peace 1783” available online at The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy (Yale Law School: Lillian-Goldman Law Library, 2008) emphasis added. While England’s King George III maintained the divine rights of kings among the many other “public situations that he held,” the revolution forces the withdrawal of Britain’s “prince elector of the Holy Roman Empire” and assumes the position of the scared in U.S. (Pioneers, 27).

Cooper, The Pioneers, 91. Hereafter citations of this novel will appear parenthetically in text.

This withering of the aristocracy may account for Cooper’s occasional references to the “war of separation” suggesting a re-evaluation of the new nation’s relationship to the old Empire. The nation is not independent from the influence or ideology of the old county; the new republic did not revolutionize the political ideology or cultural influences inherited from the old country; rather, the new country merely fought a war to separate from the old country, leaving intact the political ideology and culture emulated by the new nation.

The narrator explains in Chapter 7 before the power “of the whites had reduced” native inhabitants “to a state of dependence,” the Lenni Lenape were already dependent on the Iroquois nation (78-79). In the frequently anthologized fishing scene of Chapter 23, Natty refuses the charity proffered by Jones’ excesses that will go in part to feed the needy families in town (253). There is a difference between the “equitable division of the spoils” among the fishermen and the dependence Natty resists (250).

G.W.F. Hegel, 119.
Nor could the founders of the republic tolerate the topping of the ruling class by the lower classes, as witnessed by the Federalists’ deep sense of fear concerning popular rule.

The character of the republic was indeed changed by Napoleon’s imperial designs. The Bourbon King and his Queen were executed in January of 1793, and the battle of Toulon, fought in September of the same year, marked the beginning of Napoleon’s rise to power. Tellingly, while the Judge condemns the executions of the French aristocracy, he approves of the aims in the battle of Toulon (154).

I am utilizing Lacan’s notion of repetition that announces the emergence of Law (or the symbolic order) as the Name-of-the-Father. See Žižek in *Sublime Object* (61-62). Marmaduke, as the town’s founder, stands in for the Name-of-the-Father, the departed English aristocrats; hence, he also arbitrates the town’s laws.

See Eric Cheyfitz in “Savage Law,” 121, 119. My work owes much to Eric Cheyfitz’s argument in this essay.

Commodity fetishism is defined by Marx as “a definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of relations between things” (Marx, 165). Žižek points out that the commodity fetish arises from the metonymic misrecognition of displacement that allows for free social relations between people in capitalist societies; that is, commodities are fetishized and the social relations between people are de-fetishized. The “retreat of the Master in capitalism was only a displacement: as if the de-fetishization in the ‘relations between men’ was paid for by the emergence of fetishism in the ‘relations between things,’” that is, between the fetishized commodity (e.g., money) and the property its buys (Žižek, *S.O.*, 26).

In New York, slaves and women did not have voting rights. See “The Constitution of New York: April 20, 1777” available online at *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy* (Yale Law School: Lillian-Goldman Law Library, 2008). Only in New Jersey were women of property
allowed to vote as early as 1776. Property ownership was not dropped from the voting laws until 1820.

45 This change also signified a change in the laws of inheritance within the States. Prior to the revolution and outside of New England the manorial system typically operated through primogeniture inheritance. Only after the revolution did the Puritans’ practice of partible apportionments become more generalized. See Peter Dobkin Hall in The Organization of American Culture, 1700-1900: Private Institutions, Elites and the Origins of American Nationality (New York: New York UP, 1984).


47 Jefferson does not include property among the rights within the Declaration of Independence, but in practice the new Republic operated by the principles of Lockean liberalism rather than Jeffersonian liberalism. Even Jefferson himself was guided by Lockean liberalism both personally and as the President who presided over the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from the French and developed the policy of Indian removal later carried out by President A. Jackson.


49 Ibid.

50 Locke 5.28. The form labor takes is at the heart of the difference between Natty and Judge Temple’s relationship to property. In the Marxian terms of value, Natty is more concerned with the bodily form of his labor or use value whereas the Judge concerns himself with the exchange value of labour in its fetishized expression as a commodity.


The final resolution of both novels is the unification of the Anglo-American identity legally officiated by heterosexist logic within a contract of marriage while the frontier remains the domain of the happy bachelor.

The Cooper’s narrator explains, “But in a government so peculiarly republican as the Indian polity, it was not at all times an easy task to restrain its members” (80). Also see Eric Cheyfitz in “Savage Law” for his discussion of Native American republicanism.

Jones frequently prompts his wealthy cousin to take action against Natty for overstepping Marmaduke’s “private rights.” Earlier in the novel, after the contest over the buck, Jones tells the Judge, “What right has this chap, or the Leatherstocking, to shoot in your woods without your permission?” (89). Natty has the Judge’s permission, but Jones would have the Judge exercise his rights over his lands to deny Natty his livelihood. Jones finally excites the Judge to action when he believes Natty has assumed Jones’ role by amassing wealth at Marmaduke’s expense. Here is the Girardian hail of “Imitate me!” that Jones and Doolittle misrecognize as originating from Natty. Natty is the scapegoat for the real source of the hail Jones and Doolittle heed that originates with ‘Duke Temple. For Jones, Natty has interposed himself between Jones and his identity that operates as an extension of the Judge’s (identity) position in the community (e.g., in his appointed position as Sheriff that the Judge secured for him).

Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence.”

Žižek, *S.O.*, 38. Neither Justice Marshall nor Judge Temple have to believe in the law as the law believes for them. The tautology of law can be seen in Marshall’s decision in moments like the following: “Conquest gives a title
which the courts of the conqueror cannot deny” (*Johnson v. McIntosh*). The conqueror’s legal right is guaranteed by the violence of conquest that vanquished the competitor(s), no longer possessed with the power to deny the right of the conqueror.

58 In Marshall’s opinion, other European nations are restrained by the principle of discovery, and the U.S. *presumably* is restrained by the native’s right of occupancy, history would prove otherwise.

59 Žižek, *S.O.*, 45.
“[...] Berkeley formulated in a poem a cyclical theory of history; he maintained that empires, like the sun, go from east to west (“Westward the course of empire takes its way”) and that the last and greatest empire of history, conceived as a tragedy in five acts, would be that of America.”

—Jorges L. Borges, *An Introduction to American Literature*.

Much of the recent literary scholarship analyzing Herman Melville’s writing in conjunction with American empire building in the mid-nineteenth century has tended to focus, for good reason, on the early novels *Typee, Omoo and Mardi*. These texts offer fertile ground for investigating the effects of United States’ imperialist policies on American literary culture. Melville’s criticism of U.S. imperialism in these novels, as well as in the novels of *Redburn* and *White Jacket*, are expressed in the rhetorical style of the liberal reformer. Melville actively appeals to the reader’s sympathy to advocate for reforms in the treatment of natives, steerage passengers and sailors. The authorial ‘I’ in these first person narratives, a gentleman fallen on hard times, acts as a point of identification for the reader and an intercessor for the narrated experiences of the downtrodden. Still the narrator wonders, in *Redburn*, “perhaps there is no true sympathy but between equals; and it may be that we should distrust that man’s sincerity who stoops to console with us.”²
But of all Melville’s texts, “Benito Cereno” delivers the most stinging criticism on the politics of expansion and U.S. imperialism. As Allan M. Emery argues, it underscores Melville’s “serious engagement with Manifest Destiny.” In it, Melville no longer attempts to bring to light injustices hidden from his audience’s view by past writers nor does he attempt to create an alliance with the reader. Instead, he provides no point of identification that is unproblematic, forcing the reader to examine his/her own subject position in relation to the unfolding events on board the *San Dominick.*

The multiplicity of critical responses to this tale, one might argue, reflects the discomfort this tale elicits in its readership who stand implicated, along with the nation, in an ideological blindness or willful amnesia masked as “Manifest Destiny.” With the use of allegory, Melville textualizes and criticizes the logic of United States’ expansionism both westward and southward effectively drawing together concerns about the relations of power and domination domestically and hemispherically. It reads not only as an American story, but also as a narrative of the Americas--Latin America, the United States and the Caribbean. The issues of slavery, slave revolts, and empire with which the story deals coexist with the ghostly presence of conquest, colonization, and imperial domination structured by ethnic difference. As part of Melville’s criticism of United States imperialism, he rehearses past incursions into the Southern Hemisphere by other imperial forces (namely Spain and France). My interests in this tightly knotted novella are not only Melville’s criticism of the Manichean politics of imperialism, but also his prophetic warning against North America displacing Western Europe as the new imperial power in the Western
Hemisphere, by either emulating the old world’s lust for new territories or developing a new form of imperialism under the guise of conquering new markets.

While there are a number of perspectives that have been brought to bear on this tale, Robert E. Burkholder summarizes the two divergent positions of the most prominent schools in the American critical tradition, formalist and historicist, in this way:

Whereas the formalists wanted to argue whether or not Melville's story was an aesthetic success when measured against formal requirements, historicists implicitly accepted the power of the tale to communicate reality, and [...] they attempt to discover what that reality might be.⁴

In the past, formalists found fault with the structure of the story as told by a highly selective and unreliable narrator that is retold, again selectively, in the form of a legal deposition. Historicists have found fault with the tale because of the moral ambiguity with which it treats the question of evil generally and slavery in particular. These two issues have led critics to read the character of Babo as either villain or rebel hero, with the result that critical responses to “Benito Cereno” have alternated between dismissing the issue of slavery or the treatment of an African diaspora as insignificant and reading the issue of slavery as the central moral dilemma of the story.⁵

Yet a third group has argued that the mystification with which the formalists and historicists found fault was in fact the key issue in the story. Burkholder characterizes these critical interventions into the text as essentially historicist in position, "turning away from the notion that the tale's point is its mystification."⁶
Dennis Pahl, however, combines the last two forms of critical analysis, examining the historical narrative form of this story as mystification. As in the historicist readings of the past, he argues that the moral and political significance of the revolt and the use of violence by the enslaved population on the *San Dominick* are issues still in question. Nonetheless, Pahl contends “that ‘Benito Cereno’ is less interested in propounding a certain moral message than in exploring…the precise ways in which narrative, and especially historical narrative, goes about constructing the illusion of moral truth.” Moreover, the “desire” within historical narratives to create the illusion of moral truth “cannot help but contain […] the very violences that would paradoxically call that truth into question.” Melville’s own discussion of truth in literature also suggests its paradoxical nature.

In his review of *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Melville suggests the dialectic of “truth” in literature requires an artful deception. In this essay, Melville praises Nathaniel Hawthorne’s genius, only partially revealed in the work, for its subtlety and depth. Whether for "playful or profound" reasons, what Hawthorne reveals is "directly calculated to deceive--egregiously deceive--the superficial skimmer of pages." The deception appears to be deliberate both with regard to the construction of the narrative and the author's own position in relation to it. Hawthorne, Melville contends, is continually misread by those who are "hoodwinked" by the lighter side of both the man and the work, appreciating the former while holding the latter as exemplary of mediocrity, skimming over the "darker" regions of the author and his work wherein lies the “truth:”
For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side--like the dark half of the physical sphere--is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black... Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effects he makes it to produce in his lights and shades; or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom...Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeal to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations...no deeply thinking mind is always wholly free.

(“Mosses” 243, emphasis added)

While Melville claims Hawthorne willfully deceives his readers, also suggested here is that the author himself is deceived, as the blackness 'lurking' in the author is present without his knowledge. Here Melville is "touching on the conjectural parts of the mind"—the unconscious—knowable only by the effects it produces (“Mosses” 243). Melville’s discussion of the “great power of the blackness” and Sigmund Freud’s theorization of the unconscious are homologous by virtue of their connection to the structuring force of metaphor. For Freud, the unconscious is only knowable “after it has undergone transformation or translation into something conscious.”9 The force of blackness, Melville discusses here, is similarly knowable only when translated by a “deeply thinking mind.” This function of translation Jacques Lacan, after Freud, identified as metaphor, a symptom of the “conjectural part
of the mind” that reveals through dissimulation and is motivated by “Original Sin” or, rather, the sin of origins, our entrance into language and the loss of the first occulted signifier “remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest” of the signifying chain. Wherever the locus of the "blackness," it is clear that its effects are powerful, throwing the world out of balance and creating a sense of terror in the reader:

...no man can weigh this world, without throwing in something some how like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance...perhaps no writer has ever wielded this terrific thought with greater terror than this same harmless Hawthorne. ("Mosses” 243)

The "uneven balance" arising from the blackness results in the inconsistency of our moral judgments and our capacity for injustice, explained by Melville as “something…like” original sin (the unsettling effect of which “Benito Cereno” clearly has evoked in its readership) that is unrepresentable insofar as it is in part unconsciously driven. Shakespeare and Hawthorne fascinated Melville because, for him, their writing shares this dark characteristic. It is against this "infinite obscure" that Shakespeare's "grandest conceits" have been played; where we find "those occasional flashings-forth of the intuitive Truth in him; those short, quick probing at the very axis of reality." Out of the mouths of his "dark characters" Hamlet, Lear and Iago the "sane madness of vital truth" is heard ("Mosses” 244, emphasis added). It is clear that, for Melville, great literature is not simply a place where repressed material is safely able to emerge from the deep and then be re-contained. What is laudable in
Shakespeare and Hawthorne is exactly that which remains undisclosed, hidden in the blackness only "dimly-discernable," and their ability to foreground the very uncertainty of truth in language. Using metaphors that resonate with the materiality of the printed text, Melville, in this oft-quoted passage, characterizes the truth found in writing ("this world of lies") as:

…forced to fly like a scared white doe in the woodlands; and only by cunning glimpses will she reveal herself, as in Shakespeare and other masters of the great Art of Telling the Truth,—even though it be covertly, and by snatches. (“Mosses” 244, emphasis added)

As with the above oxymoronic coupling of "sane madness," we are again faced with the madness of discourse in the pairing of Art and Truth, the clashing of two opposed semantic fields: art, read not merely as skill and ability, but as cunning or artifice; Truth, read as fidelity and constancy, but also, as "real" events or facts. Art, in the act of representing, by necessity registers the loss of what is tangibly real or present. Truth in art or elsewhere is an objectless referent. In literature, truth is apprehensible only by tricks or deceptions that force the reader to peer past the "woodland" characters on the white page to catch sight of the timid "white doe" beyond. Melville here seems to have recognized the anxiety produced by literary works that foreground language as its own object, the rattle of empty signifiers signifying nothing. The artifice, or deception, is the rhetorical trick, the madness of language that allows us to maintain some sense of referent—although it is only a shadow of a shadow—albeit paradoxically established.
Deception or mystification, on the part of the author, be it Hawthorne, Shakespeare or Melville, is both willful and unconscious: willful in that writing requires skill, unconscious in that it is "mindful of [its] higher master"—the blackness, the gap at the “very axis of reality,” divides or separates the real and its representation. Writing the “truth” is the conscious attempt to represent the unrepresentable, hence the deception, which is paradoxically the truth. Deception is the only means by which the truth can be represented (to say otherwise would misrepresent the truth of writing the truth). Melville’s duplicity is in fidelity to the structure of language. The paradoxical relationship of language and truth is, as Ferdinand de Saussure reminds us, a result of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign, as the signifier “has no natural connection with the signified.”
Pahl’s characterization of “the illusion of moral truth” as willful ignorance appears to come closer to Melville’s notion of truth in literature than Wai-chee Dimock’s assessment of the “characteristic Melvillean” depiction of Truth as a “persecuted object.”

While Dimock’s book, Empire of Liberty, does not include a discussion of “Benito Cereno,” her analysis of Melville’s prose style and its link to the United States’ expansionist rhetoric during the Jacksonian age is important to the larger issues of the present project. She argues that a homology exists between a politics of Manifest Destiny that operates on the “logic of freedom and domination” and the literary mode of allegorical representation peculiar to Melville. Allegory, Dimock affirms, is the temporal extension of a spatial design. As Joel Fineman contends, from whom Dimock’s argument draws, allegory begins with the structure of metaphor
selected from a series of hierarchically arrange ratios that maintains “the rigor of the original conceit by appealing to the overall structure that governs each term in the series” in the metonymic unfolding of the narrative as it develops. As a result of the primacy of structure, “allegory is always a hierarchizing mode….an inherently political and therefore religious trope, not because it flatters tactfully, but because in deferring to structure it insinuates the power of structure, giving off what we can call the structural effect.”

Dimock ties together the hierarchizing logic of allegory with the “social governance of antebellum America and the textual governance of Melville’s narratives: each “subordinates those who are ‘destined’ to those whose freedom it is to assign destinies.” Further, the same desire for sovereignty that characterizes an imperial nation, in Dimock’s assessment, similarly characterizes Melville’s relationship, as author or allegorist, to his text, effectively undercutting any depiction of political agency:

…each of Melville’s novels stands as a testimony to the absolute sovereignty of the author. Each is a testimony as well to the double character of that sovereignty, its conjunction of freedom and dominion. In fact, it is the doubleness that makes for the usual relation between author and characters in Melville’s writing: a relation of complementarity rather than of equality, a relation that not only operates through an asymmetrical distribution of power, but makes that asymmetry the constitutive grounds of its form.
In essence, the relation of the author to his/her text is similar to or complementary with the relationship of a subject to an object or the empowered to the un-empowered (subjugated). Thus, she argues Melville’s use of allegory is indicative of his project to create a literary “empire of liberty” for himself reflecting the larger national project of his day. Dimock’s criticism of Melville’s authorial function too easily elides the difference between the real and representation. While no author, not even literary critics, can escape the allegorical mire of the structure of language, Dimock’s suggestion that Melville’s authorial relation to his text has a complementary structure with an imperial nation’s relation to subjugated lands or people misreads the structural effect of allegory. The problem is not that texts will reproduce the hierarchizing structure of allegory (they can do nothing else), but rather that nations will structure themselves and their history allegorically, endowing their actions with fictional authority. Nonetheless, her discussion of the structure of allegorical desire linked to the logic of empire is provocative. For, as Fineman contends, allegory, “however subversively intended,” is motivated by a desire to heal “the gap, between the present and a disappearing past, which, without interpretation, would be otherwise irretrievable and foreclosed.”17 We might then ask, what must Melville retrieve from the past through the interpretative work of allegory that is absent in his nation’s present?

Many critics have pointed to the duplicitous nature of the narrative of "Benito Cereno" and in turn have concluded that Melville's sympathies were of course revolutionary, while others using the same evidence read the story as at best an
equivocal “endorsement of revolutionary violence.” Perhaps, like Hawthorne, Melville too "delight[s] in hoodwinking the world--at least, with respect to himself" (“Mosses” 250-51). Much more plausible is that Melville in this story makes apparent the essential deceptive nature of all narratives, and those deceived are both reader and author. In deceiving the reader, the author is in turn deceived, resulting in a kind of obsessional narrative that continually repeats itself and its effects as evidenced by the twice-told story of the events on the San Dominick: first, by the narrator, whose perspective is limited to Captain Delano, and then repeated by Captain Cereno in the deposition. That the story so closely resembles its source, the eighteenth chapter of the actual Amasa Delano’s travel narratives, both in form and content, only adds to the allegorical effect of its repetitive structure. In the original tale, Amasa Delano, a Captain of the American trader Perseverance, tells the story of his encounter with the Spanish ship, the Tryal and the aid he provided to her before his discovery, almost too late, of her true condition.

As in the original account, Melville’s story takes place off the coast of Chile. Delano’s ship, renamed the Bachelor’s Delight, is anchored in the bay of a small deserted island when one morning an unmarked vessel comes into view. The ever-optimistic and good-humored Yankee captain sets out to offer his navigational aid to the strange vessel that is drawing too close to land. Delano discovers that the ship, renamed in the novella the San Dominick, is a Spanish merchantman with slaves on board. Its captain, Benito Cereno, tells the American a woeful tale of a voyage plagued by bad weather and illness. Delano listens sympathetically while noting the
Spanish captain’s weakened state and the disorder of his ship. In Melville’s tale, Delano notes that Cereno is attended at all times by the Negro slave Babo, who is ever solicitous of his master. The American captain is reminded by Babo’s attentiveness how well suited Negroes are to their roles as servants. In fact, Delano is so impressed by Babo’s service to his master (whose illness and odd behavior Delano at times finds inhospitable) that he offers to purchase Babo, but his offer is refused. While waiting for the wind to pick up and for the supplies he ordered to be retrieved from his ship, Delano occupies his time with attempting to make sense of the unsettling behavior of the crew and cargo as well as “lightly arranging Don Benito’s” fate (700). After Delano has navigated the San Dominick to safety, he disembarks to return to the Bachelor’s Delight. Suddenly, Benito Cereno without explanation jumps into Delano’s whaleboat as it pulls away and Babo, knife in hand, jumps after him. Delano interprets this desperate and bizarre act as piratical and the key to Cereno’s strange behavior all that day. Fearing for his life, Delano roughly grabs Cereno and holds Babo beneath his foot. He soon learns, however, that the knife in Babo’s hand was not intended for him but for Cereno. The truth of Cereno’s condition is uncovered and the mystery of the crew’s behavior explained in the legal depositions that follows the limited third person narration of the events as seen by Captain Delano.

The original conceit of Melville’s allegorical recreation of his source opens with a world in gray newly emerged from the "deep." The objects in the world are distinguishable but indistinct; that is, while discernibly different, the objects in this world are all of a kind. Troubled gray fowl are "kith and kin" with troubled gray
vapors, and both fly above what "seemed" the fixed gray surface of the sea. In Melville’s “new world,” the first rhetorical move is to create distinctions or differences within the undifferentiated gray, but not as might be expected with the introduction of light, metaphorically or otherwise; instead, there is a deepening of the present gray into "shadows" with "Shadows present, foreshadowing deeper shadows to come" (673). Nor does the light bring any more clarity than the uncertain "shadows": for the sun too is "in company with the strange ship" that has entered the harbor. It appears Melville is availing himself of the "mystical blackness" as a means to produce his effects, in keeping with his position that only by writing out of this blackness is the truth to be glimpsed. As a result of creating negative distinctions, differentiating by obscuring rather than clarifying, the world Captain Amasa Delano encounters is represented as wholly untrustworthy, out of balance and unsettling; certainly a world not navigable by sight alone. Although circumscribed by Delano's point of view, the narrator is much less trusting of appearances, so much so that many of the narrator’s statements are constructed as similes, containing words such as "seeming," "appeared" and "as if" (or some qualifying variant as these).

The hesitancy the narrator evinces regarding Delano's observations functions much as the opening description of the world bathed in gray; it unsettles the reader and introduces doubt—doubt that Delano constantly refuses to entertain. Delano never doubts his perceptions of the world or his place within it. His reliance on vision is precisely what blinds him to what is before his eyes while on board the San Dominick. All of Delano's interpretive ventures are based solely on appearances, as, for example,
when he determines that the strange ship is no "freebooter" because she was "drawing too near the land, for her own safety's sake" (674). That the San Dominick does not know what lies beneath the surface of the water reassures Delano that she is no threat. We shall see that Babo, and his reliance vision, also makes a similar error in judgment.

Even when appearances "seem" deceptive Delano steadfastly holds to his epistemology of vision. On his approach toward the San Dominick, dim details and vague images of "Black Friars pacing the cloisters" are visual tricks of the eye, the deception of sight: "Upon a still nigher approach, this appearance was modified, and the true character of the vessal was plain" (675, emphasis added). Forgetting for the moment that the "true character" of the ship proves to be quite problematic and not in the least "plain," we begin to understand, early on in the text, the importance of vision for Delano. It is when the ship is close enough to make out its identifying features—the details which categorize it, assign it to a class, in effect, render it intelligible—that "appearance [is] modified" to truth. For Delano truth is empirically discoverable. The description of the "white-washed monastery" becomes a fairly 'scientific' description of a ship: "a Spanish merchantman of the first class; carrying Negro slaves, amongst other valuable freight" (675). This perspective, of course, stands in stark contrast to the epistemology rendered in the opening description of the tale; there truth is not discoverable by observation or clarification, but lies somewhere in the shadows. Delano disregards his earlier misapprehension, attributing it to the "effect of enchantment" and the "unreal" quality a ship has in relation to the "blank ocean, which zones it"(677).
It would be unfair to say that Captain Delano is completely unaware that things may not be as they appear. Yet, he banishes such thoughts from consideration because to doubt things-as-they-are is to doubt the whole structure of his world and his place within it. To entertain thoughts that hidden beneath the appearance of leadership may lie something quiet different is tantamount to questioning his own authority. It would be in effect to live as Don Benito lives: in terror. For Delano, rather than Cereno, it must be "with captains as with gods" (681). He is the "mark" (read: standard) of every tongue while objectifying all who fall under his gaze:

While Captain Delano was thus made the mark of all eager tongues,

his one eager glance took in all the faces, with every other object about him (677, emphasis added).

Although "impatient of the hubbub of voices" and the obvious disorder among the ship’s populace, his all-encompassing glance seeks out "whom ever it might be that commanded the ship," objectifying all others, without ever doubting that a leader would be found among them. Believing his place secure and power unimpeachable while at sea, he leaves unquestioned the relative positions of others, be they master or slave. True to form, Delano makes his determination of who is in charge based solely on the formal expectations of a leader’s appearance: "The Spanish Captain, a gentlemanly, reserved-looking, rather young man...but dressed with singular richness" (678). Although order may be somewhat lacking, the signs of leadership are still operative. The disorder is simply a reflection of a weak or ineffectual leader, rather than an indication of a shift in the social hierarchy.
Delano operates as a kind of exemplum of "the superficial skimmer of pages." He resists reading the "Spaniard's black-lettered text, [thinking] it best, for awhile, to leave open the margins" (695). In refusing to gloss the events on board the San Dominick Captain Delano is doomed to fall victim to them. He is spared that fate, however, thanks to Don Benito's desperate act. That he will fall victim again in the future is almost assured by his refusal to "moralize upon" what he has witnessed and his desire to "[f]orget it" (754). He secures his position of leadership and sense of identity by repressing the knowledge of how they are maintained: always at the expense and with the subjugation of the other. Unlike Cereno, Delano’s identity, as the final authority at sea, does not appear to rest on the Hegelian dialectic of Lordship and Bondsman. Rather, it is a product of a misrecognition that already presumes the advent of subjugation and, as we shall see, is dependent on specular affirmation of authority presented in the image of Benito Cereno, an image with which Delano identifies. If Delano operates as a kind of function for the (superficial) reader and paradigmatically as the figure of authority maintained, then Babo is the figure for the usurper and, as some have argued, the function of the author. It may be that Babo is a kind of writer, a playwright staging his own production. But the question remains as to the nature or character of his authorial function? Before attempting to answer this we first must examine his role as leader.

To overthrow and re-establish authority is a delicate and difficult task as those whose national history includes the overthrow of monarchical imperial power are only too well aware. Dismantling the illusion of authority draws into question the nature
and structure of all authority. To establish the semblance of order on-board the *San Dominick* after a revolution, Babo must create the illusion of authority both for himself and later for Don Benito Cereno. Captain Cereno, in his deposition, places Babo on deck during the planning stage of the revolt as the "ringleader" who, along with his associates, was seen in secret conversation with Aranda's personal servant José some nights before the attack occurred. Cereno also gives evidence that "Babo was the plotter from the first to last; he ordered every murder, and was the helm and keel of the revolt; that Atufal was his lieutenant in all" (750). In fact, half the crew was killed the first night of the revolt—eighteen in number—during the melee on deck. The presumption that Babo and Atufal directed the actions of others once the rebellion began is difficult to substantiate, particularly as Cereno was not on deck. Moreover, Cereno declares the two did not commit any murders, even during that chaotic first night. Don Benito, of course, has reason to portray Babo as “captain” of the uprising; how else can he explain surrendering his command to someone who, like himself, was hiding below deck out of harm's way?

Only after Don Benito surrenders himself does Babo begin to direct the action on the ship. Babo and Atufal metonymically assume leadership by accepting Captain Cereno's "offering, [of] himself, to obey their commands" (741). In a sense they become leaders by association. Nonetheless, the role of leader is still shared with Atufal, and as a means to secure their position of leadership, they are determined to kill Don Alejandro Aranda, their master:
…to keep the seamen in subjugation, he wanted to prepare a warning of what road they should be made to take did they or any of them oppose him; and by means of the death of Don Alexandro, that warning would be given; (742, emphasis added).

It is ambiguous who the referent for “them” is in the quote above. “They,” we can be certain, refers to the seamen, but “them” could refer to the Spanish passengers, or all passengers, Spaniards and Blacks. Soon thereafter, the ambiguity above is underscored by the parenthetical "clarification" of the referent when Cereno describes Babo's display of Aranda's skeleton:

…that they (the Spaniards), being then assembled aft, the Negro Babo harangued them, saying that he had now done all...warning...them that that they should, soul and body, go the way of Don Alexandro if he saw them (the Spaniards) speak or plot anything against them (the negroes) (744, emphasis added).

There are two points that must be stressed here: first, for Babo to assume leadership, he must not only subjugate the Spaniards but the blacks as well (who have, after all, just fought to undo the arbitrarily constructed nature of authority); second, there is little distinction linguistically (at least for Don Benito) between the “them” of the Spaniards and the “them” of the Blacks. They are all of a kind, much as they were for Captain Delano when he first boarded the Spanish ship. However, unlike Delano, who maintained the distinction between "us" (the leaders) and "them" (the populace), no such ordered division remains for Benito. And as we saw earlier in the text, when
distinctions or differences are in question, one must proceed with caution or fall victim to the reestablishment of hierarchy. Don Benito, no longer blind to what is at stake in the establishment of authority, is necessarily cautious while Babo is setting about the task of creating order and reconstructing authority for himself.

The staging and presentation of Aranda's skeleton to those on board the San Dominick is our first indication of Babo's ability to orchestrate spectacle, in the form of a revenge play, so as to establish himself as supreme authority. Babo appears to be emblematic of the tyrannical author function as described by Dimock, a testament “to the absolute sovereignty of the author.” He not only has taken command away from Don Benito, but also has done away with the Master behind the masters, Aranda. Since most of the "valuable cargo" was Aranda's, the ship's captain would be answerable to him as the main investor in their venture. And, as Babo explained, with Aranda dead "he and his companions" could be assured of their "liberty." But his first tyrannical act was to delimit the liberty of his companions by assuming authorship/ownership of his companions’ labor, claiming, “he had now done all.”

Yet, before Babo's decision to enter the bay, Atufal and he "conferred" on everything. However, "by himself" and against the advice of Atufal, Babo proceeds with his plan, which he first discusses tellingly with Don Benito and only after "announces" it to his companions. With the opening of our story, Babo has effectively assumed sole command. Within a space of two to three hours, Babo sets the stage for Captain Delano's entrance. He "disguised the truth" with "devices" which "united deceit and defence." Captain Babo puts in place his "deck officers" to whom he
entrusted the policing of the populace on board ship. The final move to solidify his authority was to place Atufal in chains.²⁴ Atufal's mock enslavement only serves to underscore the masquerade of both Don Benito's and Babo's leadership. The fiction of authority and the story of enslavement are but two versions of the same story, and in repeating the narrative Babo himself falls victim to it.

Captain Delano is allowed on board because as long as he is deceived by appearance he poses no threat to Babo's authority. However, Babo has forgotten that he need not fear other leaders—it is not in their interest to question the structure of their authority—rather it is those who are held in the position of alterity that pose the greatest threat. Babo, like Delano, begins to rely heavily on vision alone, in part because he must keep Don Benito constantly in sight to maintain his authority throughout the masquerade. His eye becomes his weapon, the threat that keeps Cereno in his place, metaphorically associated with the hidden dagger that is as "alert as his eye" (746). Although Babo understands only too well the duplicitous structure of authority, he begins to fall prey to the lure of leadership and the small benefits of the office. As, for example, when Delano was dividing the food among those on board, Cereno insisted that no special favor be shown to the whites, including himself. Yet Babo insisted that a bottle of cider be set "aside for his master" (he being his own master). However, Babo’s action is in imitation of Delano’s own sense of “republican impartiality […] which always seeks one level” (712). While Delano serves water to whites and blacks in equal proportion, he makes an exception for “Don Benito whose condition, if not rank demanded extra allowance” (712). Significantly, Babo’s desire
to extend his rule to the *Bachelors Delight* suggests that he is beginning to believe his own fiction: "the negro Babo again drew him [Cereno] aside, telling him that that very night he (the deponent) would be the captain of two ships, instead of one" (748).

Although Babo fully exploits the doubled nature of fiction (presenting captains who are not captains and slaves who are not slaves), he believes himself exempt from its effects, forgetting that his own position is founded on exactly the doubled (and crossed) nature of fiction. As Edgar A. Dryden points out, Babo's masquerade "is not discredited by a discrepant reality, for the 'facts' which are in conflict with it are no less unreal." However, Babo mistakes his own authority as "real," when it is but a shadow cast by another('s) shadow. Little wonder that the unraveling of Babo's fiction should produce the effect of "past, present, and future seem(ing) one" (733). For Babo's tale is not new but has been and will be repeated by those who fall victim to its deceptive structure. The *San Dominick* is haunted by the shadows of all those who have preceded Babo: the 'lost grandeur' of Spain's imperial past as seen in the ruin and decay of the ship; the ghostly images of the Dominican Friars walking their cloisters; the doddering visage of Charles V in the wasted figure of Don Benito; even Christopher Colon is resurrected as the image of death. All who have authorized the fictional division of master and slave, on which the colonial enterprise was founded, continue to survive on board the "shadowy tableau." Babo may well be Melville’s self-critical reevaluation of himself as author particularly in relation to his earliest works *Typee*, *Omoo* and *Redburn* in which he gains the “confidence of his readers” by allowing for the suspension of their disbelief while undercutting past accounts by
questioning the motives of the authorities who penned them. No matter how laudable
his motives in those early narratives, Melville, like Babo, replicated the same structure
of authority he brought into question. However, as remarked earlier, the confidence
game in this narrative does not allow for an unproblematic identification with the
author function as the final arbiter of truth.

With the overthrow of Babo's rule, the allegory of shadows that created the
effect of depth, or hidden reality, collapses into the spatially visual and temporally
present world, the world inhabited by Captain Delano. To borrow from Lacan’s
description of the desire, the world of shadows “robbed of its shadow swelling
volume, holds out once more the lure of the shadow as if it were substance.” Babo
was deceived by his own lure of narrativized "substance" which has no substance of
which to speak. The breach in Babo's story opens the door for a newly authorized
version of the same tale, which in fact occurs in the form of the legal deposition.
Perhaps the only remedy to this obsessional narrative is to keep ever in mind the
"malign machinations" of the narrative structure:

So far may even the best man err, in judging the conduct of one with
the recesses of whose condition he is not acquainted. But you were
forced to it; and you were in time undeceived. *Would that, in both
respects, it was so ever, and with all men* (754, emphasis added).

In one possible reading of the above quote Don Benito is imploring Captain Delano to
remain "undeceived" ("ever") about the deceptive and duplicitous nature of the
shadowy structure he presumes to be real. Cereno’s hope is that Delano will
allegorically read and interpret the masquerade that Babo has authored and in which they have all played a part. But Delano refuses to “moralize upon it,” because to do so would be to recognize the contingent and arbitrary nature of his authority (754). The dualism of deceiver and deceived is useful to think through the fundamental distrust that we as post-Melvillean readers should have of historical accounts and perhaps of Melville himself (indeed of all authors). Nonetheless, it is the much-contested ambivalence inherent in this dualism that marks “Benito Cereno” as an allegory of historical narratives.

In keeping with the allegorical nature of the tale, there are two lessons to be learned from this story: first, it operates as a warning to remember history; second, it is a narrative of authority, reminding us that history is a tale of and by those in power. Hence, there is a need for great care and suspicion when reading an historical account or any narrative for, as Hayden White suggests, “narrative in general, from the folktale to the novel, from the annals to the fully realized ‘history’ has to do with the topic of law, legality, legitimacy, or more generally authority.”27 Where there is no contestation over the truth claims of a narrative or "indeed the very right to narrate,"28 there is no need to narrativize.

The question this text poses to its readers is not whether Melville, the historical figure, is ambivalent about the then unresolved issue of slavery or even whether Melville, the author, has anti-democratic sympathies that are manifested in his characters. Instead, the problem seems to be whether anyone assuming the function of the author can escape the allegorical structure of desire in narration, which
is to ask, can one escape the structuring effects of language? Joel Fineman points out that even when we believe ourselves to be free of the effects of such desire, in the act of critical interpretation we fall victim to the structural effect: ”[…] criticism, whose things are not words but meanings of words, meanings forever foreclosed by words, will find in silence only the impetus for further speech, further longing.”

The danger of this desire to end desire, to fill-in the gap, to end the slippage of signification in language that allows for the possibility of truth, is not that we will somehow escape the web of language, but that we will assume the products of representation to be unquestionably real. The horror and violence that results from the blind acceptance of fiction as truth, Melville’s text suggests, is all too real, as Babo’s unmasking of the violence inherent in assuming the position of master amply illustrates. This same violence can also be found in the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny particularly during the period of aggressive territorial expansion in which Melville writes. The political climate, at the time this story was published, may have required Melville to frame his criticism allegorically which “seems to regularly surface in critical or polemical atmospheres, when for political or metaphysical reasons there is something that cannot be said.”

When “Benito Cereno” first appeared, in 1855, the highly charged atmosphere surrounding the issue of slavery in the new territories in the South and West brought into question not only the character of the United States’ democratic enterprise but also the future of the confederacy of states. His use of allegory leaves intact the dualism and contradiction at the heart of the burgeoning
American Empire and seems to measure “the distance between the world of appearances, chance and self-deception and the world of reality, order, and truth.”

Melville’s allegorical criticism of imperialism, both past and present, is evinced in the alterations he makes to the original account. While Melville left unchanged many of the characters’ names, the setting, the structure and even whole lines of prose found in the original account, he recast the sea tale as a fiction to affect the spirit of the story he read. While Amasa Delano’s original representation illustrates a literal or historic event, Melville’s figural retelling interprets this event allegorically, uncovering the implicit “truth” within it. The alterations made to the original are suggestive of the shifting power relations in the New World. In addition, they also emphasize the hierarchizing logic of allegory at work in the (self)-deceptive narrative of Manifest Destiny that finds its own pre-figuration in the empires of the past (as seen in Supreme Court decisions that “extinguished” native title to North American land discussed in the last chapter).

One significant alteration Melville makes to the original narrative is in the names of the ships: the American ship from the Perseverance to the Bachelor’s Delight; the Spanish ship from the Tryal to the San Dominick. The American ship’s name recalls an infamous pirate ship (of the same name) captained by John Cooke, while the name of the Spanish ship is metonymically associated with Spain’s first colony in the New World, claimed by Christopher Columbus as Hispaniola and known today as Santo Domingo (sandwiched between Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean). The island is also the location of modern day Haiti, once the French
colony of San Dominque, renamed in 1803 after an armed revolution of the slave population. Eric Sundquist points out that by renaming Captain Cereno’s ship the *San Dominick* and changing the year from 1805 to 1799, Melville “accentuated the fact that his tale belonged to the age of democratic revolution.” In addition to the name of the ship recalling for the reader the Haitian struggle of independence, the change in date also recalls the general turmoil of the late eighteenth century that brought about both the America and France revolutions. In addition, the alteration of the ships’ names, Cereno’s ship in particular, effectively signifies the figural remapping of power in the Western hemisphere. The *San Dominick*, as its name might suggest, is not placed south in the Caribbean or east in the Atlantic but west in the Pacific. The placement of the *San Dominick* in the Pacific does two things: first, it draws our attention further west away from what many in the United States at the time already considered duly theirs, the Caribbean, to a region in which the United States could not as yet claim territorial rights; second, the shift also reconfigures the structural unfolding of the tale. That is, the tale walks us through the history of colonization in the region from past, to present and projects itself into the future while moving directionally from east to west and north to south. Each of these directions corresponds to a movement in time.

Metaphoric links to the east surface in the story as references to ancient Egypt and Alexander’s conquest of Egypt and parts of Asia, and direct us into the past: specifically, the great empires of the ancient world. Similarly references south also take us into a past moment of empire; however, in this case it is the “tottering”,

184
“disorderly” ineffectual world controlled by the Spain. The Africans on board are likened to objects and animals of Egypt. The four old sentries disguised as junk pickers “were crouched sphynx-like,” a riddle Delano ignores (677); Atufal is referred to as a “bull of the Nile” (710) and a “sculptured porter of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian Tombs” (725). These references share a connection to the monuments of the Egyptian Empire and the slave labor used to erect them. While on the “starboard quarter-gallery” and observing the dead-lights “calked fast like a sarcophagus,” Delano stands in a state of reverie, as at a grave, envisioning the “Spanish king’s officers” and the “Lima viceroy’s daughters” that might have once haunted the gallery (705). Finally, the old sailor tying “The knot….for some one else to undo” appears to Delano as an “Egyptian priest, making gordian knots for the temple of Ammon” (707), a reference to the belief in antiquity that whoever unraveled the gordian knot in the Temple of Ammon would conquer Asia. The tombs of the pharaohs are linked with the now past glory of the Spanish Empire, while Delano, like Alexander the Great, stands to inherit the empires of the past but is apparently not up to the challenge.

By placing the question of the United States’ southward expansion in the west, Melville metaphorizes the moment of empire spatially through time from east to west to include south to north. Each of these points of reference has a temporal valence, such that east is to west as the past is to the future, and south is to north as past is to the present. Just as the logic of empire is the movement from east to west and from the past to the future, so too is the movement of the north displacing the south, the past
giving way to the present as it shifts into the future. Hence, the southward expansion, placed in the west signifies the north’s projected future.

Like his ship, the Spanish Captain seems fray and haunted by the past. His “tottered” state is underscored by terms used to describe him such as “sullen”, “apathetic”, “withdrawn”, and “mute.” The descriptive terms used to characterize Captain Cereno and his leadership were equally interchangeable in the American mind for the character of Spanish rule in the New World. Both the popular press and politicians of the day routinely used such characterizations as arguments for the necessity of United States’ intervention in Latin America. Delano, however, the blindly optimistic, energetic Captain of the Bachelor’s Delight, “a large sealer and general trading vessel” sailing from Duxbury, Massachusetts, is very much involved in the business of the present, particularly the business of trade.

In the character of Captain Delano we discover Emerson’s description of the American character in “The Young American” (1844):

> It seems so easy for America to inspire and express the most expansive and humane spirit; new born, free, healthful, strong, the land of the laborer, of the democrat, of the philanthropist, of the believer, of the saint, she should speak for the human race. It is the country of the Future.

The promise and future of the country of the future is in trade, “the principle of liberty.” Trade, for Emerson, destroyed the unencumbered reign of Kings; it was the “strong man that broke it down, and raised a new and unknown power in its place.”
Delano, as the figure for North America, personifies the Emersonian young American. Embodying the innocent, philanthropic spirit of America, Captain Delano assists the beleaguered Spaniard. His concern for the condition of crew and carriage is only matched by his equal concern for cementing the terms of trade with the Spaniard.

In both the original account and in Melville’s tale, Delano’s patience is finally exhausted when Don Benito refuses to dismiss his servant so that the two might come to terms over the materials the American Captain has provided him. Delano is offended further by what he perceives is the aristocratic reserve of the Spanish Captain who refuses the hospitality extended to him: “Captain Delano’s pride began to be roused. Himself became reserved” (729). The hierarchical social relations between the aristocratic Spaniard and the American tradesman were in the American’s mind ameliorated by the good turn of business he had conducted to the benefit of the Spaniard. When Captain Delano discovers that Don Benito refuses to recognize that the exchange of capital also means a change in social relationships, Delano decides to limit his assistance while remaining aloof but polite, in essence, imitating the behavior of Don Benito. Cereno’s apparent aristocratic disdain for the man of business is repaid in kind by Delano. This struggle for social recognition, as seen by Captain Delano, takes place between equals pursuing the same desired object. Rene Girard describes this model of recognition as “mimetic desire”:

Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, the subject desires the object because the rival desires it….The rival then serves as a model for the subject.
What distinguishes Girard’s model of recognition from the Hegelian dialectic of Lord and Bondsman is that it occurs between equals and that the coupling of mimesis with desire leads necessarily to conflict. Delano’s desire is constructed on the model of what he believes to be Cereno’s desire—unimpeachable authority. The conflict between the two Captains described in the original account is only hinted at in our story when Delano happily takes the opportunity offered by the rising wind and Benito’s sullen and “weak position” to take over the piloting of the San Dominick and bring it alongside the Bachelor’s Delight (729). The piratical takeover is completed later in the tale after the slave revolt is discovered, when Delano sends his chief mate in his place to forcibly overtake and board the San Dominick as it attempts to sail away.

Delano’s words of encouragement, prompting his men to actively pursue the San Dominick, underscore the piratical nature of the act and the questionable use of violence:

…they were told that the Spanish captain considered his ship good as lost; that she and her cargo, including some gold and silver, were worth more than a thousand doubloons. Take her, and no small part should be theirs. (736)

There was no reason for the American captain to pursue the lost ship—beyond personal gain—particularly as pursuit could jeopardize his life and the “duty owing to the owners” (his masters). Delano’s act is “kith and kin” to the take over threatened by Babo; however, it is without the moral imperative of liberty (673). Whatever
Delano’s purpose, the result leaves but one “captain of two ships.” It is not difficult to read Delano’s act of piracy as Melville’s indictment of the United States’ long held belief in its own projected future. Nor is it difficult to read Delano’s action as an imitation of the United States’ military action in 1846 at its southern border with Mexico (territory Spain “considered good as lost”) that resulted in the loss of Mexico’s North American land holdings, and opened the way to the Pacific for the Republic.

By the 1850’s, the United States continental empire indeed had reached the Pacific and the belief in Manifest Destiny would eventually extend its borders westward to include Hawaii and other islands in the Pacific. But as early as 1786, Thomas Jefferson wrote of the inevitable spread of the North American Empire in a letter:

> Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest, from which all America, North and South is to be peopled. We should take care too, not to think it for the interest of that great continent to press too soon on the Spaniards. Those countries could not be in better hands. My fear is that they are too feeble to hold them till our population can be sufficiently advanced to gain it from them piece by piece. The navigation of the Mississippi we must have. This is all we are as yet ready to receive.\(^{43}\)

If Jefferson’s letter evidenced a long-held belief in the “right” of the United States claim to lands to the south and west, it was the Monroe Doctrine that informed the
Republic’s policy in Latin America. In 1823 President Monroe, in the seventh annual address to congress, declared that the American continents should not be considered as subjects for “future colonization by any European powers.”\textsuperscript{44} His declaration created a safety zone of the entire Western Hemisphere for the United States. While warning European colonial forces to steer clear of Latin American, Monroe’s remarks did not renounce any claim to the same. The Monroe Doctrine continued to be used by others in conjunction with the rhetoric of republicanism to argue for United States involvement in Latin American revolutions. The push for a hemispheric empire, as Eric Sundquist has argued was intimately connected to the institution of slavery.\textsuperscript{45} Many who aggressively pursued expansion into Mexico and the Caribbean hailed from southern states—and hoped to shift the balance of power south by extending the border—while many of the dissenting Senators were from the north. At the end of the Civil War the project of Manifest Destiny safely remained an Anglo-American enterprise, but it did not mean an end to the long-standing policy of the Monroe Doctrine. While nations south of the United States would not be forcibly annexed, they would nonetheless fall within its ever-growing “sphere of influence.”

In like fashion, Delano, true to the democratic principles of the North and the imperial ambivalence inherent in the Monroe Doctrine, does not forcibly wrest authority from the ineffectual Spanish captain of the San Dominick. Instead, he seizes the opportunity of Cereno’s abdication as captain to establish himself as sole authority. Delano’s north, as the energetic present, will of necessity overtake and displace the ineffectual past located in Cereno’s south. Here at last, we discover the structural
necessity for the untimely demise of Benito Cereno, an event without precedent in the original tale. Cereno’s sullen submission to his death, can be read as the necessary demise of the outdated and despotic rule of Spain while Delano, the vigorous republican, becomes the figure for the newly born American Empire, free from the nightmare of history, sailing into the gap of disorder to reestablish law and authority in the region. The colonial empire of the past fades to clear the way for the republican empire of the future. But, as Edgar Dryden points out, “‘Benito Cereno’ is not a story which celebrates the replacing of Cereno’s feudal world with the republican one of Delano, for Delano also regards Providence as the ground for universal order.” In the following passage Delano responds to Cereno’s belief that his safe conduct was providential:

“…you had the Prince of Heaven’s safe conduct through all ambushades.”

“Yes, all is owing to Providence, I know: but the temper of my mind that morning was more than commonly pleasant, while the sight of so much suffering, more apparent than real, added to my good-nature, compassion, and charity, happily interweaving the three.” (754)

Unlike Cereno’s notion of God’s destiny made manifest in the affairs of man, for the protestant Delano, one’s good works determines one’s destiny. Providence, as reflected in the social relations between “men,” is contingent on good works, delimited by the preordained structuring principle of nature. The contingency of a “man’s” character allows for the possibility of change in the social order, and an alteration to
the on-going narrative of empire. However, Delano’s blind acceptance of the world of appearances is predicated on his belief in a social order structured by the naturalized inferiority and superiority of the “races.” As a clear criticism of the North’s anti-slavery sentiments, Delano, like most good-natured Anglo-American men of his day, “took to Negroes, not philanthropically but genially, just as other men do to Newfoundland dogs” (716). The slaves’ proximity to the state of nature places them outside the social bonds that define the relationship between Cereno and Delano. Hence, the philanthropy proffered to Cereno was not demanded in Delano’s dealings with Babo. By all appearances, Babo, an African enslaved in the Spanish colonies, has a radically different relationship to the ebb and flow of power in the New World than do the two Captains. Nonetheless, as argued earlier, Babo was able to emulate the authority and leadership which purpose and not providence had denied him.

Babo, as the conflation of three different men from the original tale, is the most significantly altered of the three main characters in Melville’s tale. The alteration serves to underscore the resemblance of Babo’s role/rule to the two captains onboard ship. Indeed, he is far more similar to them than Delano’s faith in appearances (which marks clear differences) would allow him to believe. Moreover, it is precisely this similarity that dooms the revolt on board the San Dominick. The failure of Babo’s revolt results not from Melville’s blind adherence to the original tale, nor the imperial ideology Melville must evince as the “mere reflection” of his historical period nor even the allegorical necessity of the triumph of Delano’s “good nature” over Babo’s “malign machinations;” rather, the revolt fails because it too closely resembles
Delano’s piratical designs. It is Babo and not the Spanish captain who is Delano’s rival for the same object of desire, Cereno’s ship of state.

As the figure of usurped authority, Babo intrudes on the allegorical “progress” of empire as suggested by the spatial and temporal shifts structuring the narrative. He disrupts the established equivalence between the two captains of the New World—their unassailable authority—structure by logical oppositions (or complementary inequalities). Indeed, insofar as Babo is both master and slave, product and producer, subject and object, he embodies the diacriticality that allows for the structural effect that insinuates authority as characterized by Girard’s scared or Lacan’s sublime object petite a. He too closely resembles the white masters whose authority is founded on his blackness and his servitude. The gray world in the opening of the story prefigures the marriage of contradictions Babo’s character represents. Read more generally, the figure of Babo confounds the narrative of Manifest Destiny, the substitution of an older European imperial rule, driven by a colonial economy of capital accumulation grounded in the expropriation of surplus value, with a neo-imperialist rule situated in the periphery searching out open markets to trade its surplus goods. The slippage from old to new imperialism repeats the same structure of empire with a difference. However, Babo prevents the onward movement of this slippage between differences, indeed threatens the very continuity of the structure, by reconfiguring the nature of the similarity between the differences. Behind Cereno’s image of authority and mastery that Delano wishes to imitate stands its negation. Babo, the would be slave of a slave, is the problematic reminder that to assume absolute authority requires the necessary
crime of its undoing. Thus, the basis of similarity between competing forms of imperialisms lies in the construction of their authority that is founded on the necessary de-authorization of its predecessor. Babo is a figure for Delano’s own desire of conquest and mastery and, as his monstrous double, threatens to end the movement of metaphor, the substitution of one signifier for its equivalent by intruding on the necessary process of identification (for Delano). Babo represents Delano’s (and by extension North America’s) own sin of transgression. He recalls the distance between an idealized image of sacralized authority whose governance is sanctioned by God, and a violent usurper operating outside the law. Delano’s piratical capture of the San Dominick is paradoxically his act of contrition. It is the same paradoxical logic at work in the notion of Manifest Destiny; a destiny made manifest only after the act of transgression (or aggression). Hence Babo, the guilty reminder of the violence and contradiction at the heart of the new empire of liberty, is sacrificed at the altar of the very authority Delano wishes to overthrow.47

Delano’s figure read allegorically is a reevaluation of the North American republic that sacrifices its revolutionary beginnings to an overweening desire for territorial increase both west and south, thereby assuming the mantle of imperialism it once eschewed. Babo, as the image of the decolonized subject in the New World, is alternately vilified as uncontained evil or celebrated as democratic revolutionary. He is and is not the image of America’s (all of the Americas’) past, present and future, insofar as he is and is not a participant in the social bond within a democratic community; he stands as a remainder who nonetheless defines the nature of that
community and its future. For all who would assume the function of author(ity), Babo stands as an “object” lesson (“a certain moral message”) at the “very axis of reality” where the metaphoric and metonymic poles of language collapse one into the other. Into this gap of language and reality stands Babo’s shadow that represents what it lacks, indeed what it has killed in order to represent at all, the master (signifier) Aranda. The master’s death makes possible the performance of authority on board the San Dominick. Only in death is Aranda the absolute authority, which Babo, Cereno and Delano all emulate. Babo as the author of Aranda’s death is the object-cause of the desire for authority in the story.

Melville’s use of allegory is not indicative of his tyrannical attempt to create an “empire of liberty” for himself, nor solely to rehearse the movement of empire from east to west; rather, he retrieves from the past the democratic promise that once characterized the American Revolution that by 1855 had been irretrievably lost. The revolution on board the San Dominick is rewritten by Babo and overrun by Delano whose projects, as the original conceit of the story suggests, are “kith and kin” with all such imperial projects (673). “Benito Cereno,” written some forty-three years before the Spanish-American war imagines the culmination of Jefferson’s belief that what once was Spain’s would in time fall “piece by piece” to America. While this story criticizes United States’ policies regarding slavery and its imperialist designs that follow the patterns of a weakening Spanish empire.


3 See “‘Benito Cereno’ and Manifest Destiny” in *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 39.1 (June 1984): 49.


6 Burkholder, 11.

7 Dennis Pahl, “The Gaze of History in ‘Benito Cereno’” in Studies in Short Fiction 32.2 (1995): 173. I would agree that this story is concerned with how historical narratives construct the illusion of moral truth, but I do not see this concern as divorced from “a certain moral message.”

8 Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in The Piazza Tales and Other Prose 1839-1860, ed. Harrison Hayford et al, vol. 9 of The Writings of Herman Melville (Evanston: Northwestern UP and Newberry Library, 1987), 251. Subsequent references to this essay will be noted as “Mosses” in the text within parentheses.


11 Herman Melville, Epigraph to “The Bell Tower” in Pierre; Israel Potter; The Piazza Tales; The Confidence-Man; Uncollected Prose; Billy Budd (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 819. The first epigraph to this story fittingly draws together many of the major issues Melville raises in his collection of short stories. In its entirety, it reads: “Like negroes, these powers own man sullenly; mindful of their higher master; while serving, plot revenge.” Here the slave and the creative power of the blackness serve a hierarchizing structure
(“their higher master”) of metaphor of which they are positive examples as well as its negation.

12 See Ferdinand de Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye and Albert Riedlinger (La Salle: Open Court, 1983), 73. Nor does the signified stand in any direct relationship to the object it conceptualizes. The diachronic and synchronic structure of the sign, which later Roman Jakobson associates with metonymy and metaphor respectively, recalls the same arbitrary distance between the referent and its representation which is nonetheless motivated by the possibility of selecting and substituting equivalent entities in a code (i.e., the structure of metaphor). See Roman Jakobson “Two Aspects of Language and Two types of Aphasic Disturbances” in *Language in Literature*, edited by K. Pomorska & S. Ruby (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987), 95-114. Lacan identifies the paradox of truth in language with Sigmund Freud’s greatest theorization:

…the pretension of the spirit would remain unassailable if the letter had not shown us that it produces all effects of truth in man without involving spirit at all. It is none other than Freud who had this revelation and he called his discovery the unconscious. (*Ecrits* 159)


16 Ibid., 24.


18 See Carolyn Karcher, *Shadow over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville’s America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 142, as quoted in W. Bartley, ““The creature of his own tasteful
hands’: Herman Melville’s ‘Benito Cereno’ and the ‘Empire of Might’’’ in
Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern
Literature 93.4 (May 1996), 448. Bartley discusses recent critical interventions
that recognize Melville’s engagement with the problem of slavery while he takes
issue with those who suggest that Melville foregrounds the “incommensurability
of revolutionary means and ends.”

19 Edwin Honig refers to the “allegorical quality in a twice–told tale” as
literature written in “rhetorical, or figurative, language and express[ing] a vital
belief.” Moreover, the figural repetition of the tale produces “self-reflective
images—that is, its figurative character makes possible the retelling of the old
story simultaneously with the telling of the new one.” See Edwin Honig in Dark
Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Hanover: UP of New England, 1982), 12. This
repetitive or compulsive quality in allegory caused Angus Fletcher to liken it to
Freud’s notion of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: “it is characteristic of
allegorical plots that they preserve, on some level of literal meaning, a highly
ordered sequence of events […].” See Angus Fletcher in Allegory: The Theory of

20 Amasa Delano, Narratives of Voyages and Travels, in the Northern and
Southern Hemispheres: Comprising Three Voyages Round the World; Together
with a Voyage of Survey and Discovery, in the Pacific Ocean and Oriental Islands,
and Other Prose 1839-1860, edited by Harrison Hayford, et al, vol. 9 of The
Writings of Herman Melville (Evanston: Northwestern UP and Newberry Library,
1987), 810-847.

21 This allegory begins as Edwin Honig suggests all allegories begin:
with “a tabula rasa assumption, as though the world in its view were being made
for the first time. The double purpose of making a reality and making it mean
something is peculiar to allegory and its directive language” (Honig, 113).
Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno," in Pierre; Israel Potter; The Piazza Tales;
The Confidence-Man; Uncollected Prose; Billy Budd (New York: The Library of
America, 1984), 673. Subsequent references to "Benito Cereno" will be noted
parenthetically in the text.

22 H. Bruce Franklin, "Past Present and Future Seemed One," in Critical
Essays on Herman Melville’s Benito Cereno, ed. Robert E. Burkholder (New
York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1992.), 243. Also see Joyce Adler, War in Melville’s
Dimock, 2.

William Bartley draws parallels between Babo’s objectification of Cereno and Atufal who “additionally invites comparison to a sculpted figure and who is no less the creature of Babo’s tasteful hands” (Bartley op. cit., 464).


Ecrits, 319. This is the lure of desire in language, Lacan’s object petit a (see note 28 below for a further discussion of this term and its effects in language).


Ibid.,19.

“The Structure of Allegorical Desire,” 22. The question of whether one employing this figure of speech (“par excellence”) can choose to be free of its structure raises further questions concerning the possibility of a metalanguage: an object language beyond the concatenation of empty signifiers. The now familiar dictum of both Lacan and post-structuralists that “there is no metalanguage,” no position outside of language to speak of language meaningfully, would seem to suggest its impossibility. However, Slavoj Žižek argues that in Lacan’s teaching the phrase is to be taken literally: “All language is an object-language; there is no language without object” (S.O., 158). There is, he contends, an “objective, non-signifying ‘referent’” to the movement within the signifying chain that is both lost and belatedly rediscovered in representation. Lacan designates this original lost object, the ghostly presence of which is glimpsed in the creative spark of metaphor, as the object petit a: “a pure void which functions as the object-cause
of desire….present only in a series of effects, but always in a distorted, displaced way” (Žižek, S.O., 163). Similarly, the Lacanian “Real” occupies this impossible position and is also only apprehensible through its effects.


31 The first of three installments of “Benito Cereno” was published in Putnam’s Monthly in October of 1855. Under the editorship of Frederick Law Olmsted, Putnam’s was the first nationally circulating periodical to advocate for abolition and against the further spread of slavery. The publication of Melville’s story of a slave rebellion aboard a Spanish ship appeared in the same issue with an announcement of the periodical’s new radicalism. The publication of the novella comes five years after the Compromise of 1850 that included the untenable Fugitive Slave Act and five years before the beginning of the American Civil War (1861) (Yellin 216). Moreover, Melville’s tale recalled a landmark case heard in the United States courts fifteen years before concerning a slave rebellion aboard another Spanish ship, La Amistad (as well as a case in 1841 concerning an American slaver, the Creole, in the British Caribbean).

32 Honig, 117.

33 Melville’s figural retelling of Amasa Delano’s narrative functions as a middle term between the historical event and the postponed or promised fulfillment as truth, or Erich Auerbach’s description of the figura:
Beside the opposition between figura and fulfillment or truth, there appears another, between figura and historia; historia and littera is the literal sense or the event related; figura is the same literal meaning or event in reference to the fulfillment cloaked in it, and this fulfillment itself is veritas, so that figura becomes a middle term between littera-historia and vertias.

34 John Cooke is cited as the Captain of the Bachelor’s Delight by one of its crewmembers and fellow privateer, William Dampier, in his accounts of his travels. After the death of John Cook, Edward Davis is elected by the crew to captain the ship. See William Dampier in A New Voyage Round the World

35 Eric Sundquist, “Benito Cereno and New World Slavery,” 95.

36 As R.W. Van Alstyne points out that the United States had long coveted the Spanish Caribbean, Cuba in particular. After the war with Mexico the time seemed ripe to turn “the Caribbean into an American lake” (130). John Q. Adams gave voice to the popular sentiment of his day when he referred to Cuba as a ripening apple that “cannot choose but fall to the ground” (qtd. in Van Alstyne, 148). The metaphor of the ripening fruit was later applied to Hawaii when U.S. business interests attempted to solidify their relationship with the Hawaiians to the exclusion of the French and English, through annexation.

37 Allegedly, after being told whoever untied the Gordian knot would conquer all of Asia, Alexander the Great’s cut the knot with his sword and went on to conquer the Persian Empire.

38 See for example Emery’s review of the article appearing both in Putnam’s Monthly Magazine and Harper’s New Monthly Magazine which, he argues, Melville may have read (Emery, 51-52).


40 ibid., 221,220.

41 Don Benito’s inhospitable temper causes Delano to alter his plans concerning the “fate” of the San Dominick: “postponing his ulterior plans, he would regulate his future actions according to future circumstances” (729, emphasis added).

42 Violence and the Sacred, 145.
As quoted in Van Alstyne, 81. For the direct source see n. 48 below. This sense of entitlement to lands held by a weakening imperial power, would later be described in 1845 by John O’Sullivan, editor of the Democratic Review, as “our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (quoted in Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States 1492-Present, 149).


Sundquist, To Wake the Nations, 185.

Dryden, 205.

In Amasa Delano’s text, Babo’s trial takes place in Concepcion, Chile. Melville relocates the trial to Lima, Peru, the capital of Spain’s New World Empire in South America well into the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 5

The Happy Resolution and the Solace of Amnesia

“[…] it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits, & cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar, forms and by similar laws; nor can we contemplate with satisfaction either blot or mixture on that surface”

–Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison (1801)

My argument in the proceeding chapters has been that the genre of romance was not only foundational to the American literary tradition, but also to the construction of an American national identity insofar as the cultural logic of the genre helped to reconcile the new nation’s identity as a rising empire in emulation of its former imperial ruler by sacrificing its anti-colonial identity and its revolutionary democratic political project to the past. My contention has been that the pathos of emulation between rivals, characteristic of romance, allows for the narrative’s happy conclusion, but only after the hero’s memory concerning his tragic beginnings is foreclosed and projected into the new, seemingly magical, environment in which the hero finds himself, thereby effecting a sense of cultural similitude between the hero and his rival. While this sense of similitude allows for the reconciliation between rivals, it does not secure the hero’s identity, complicated by a difference between his
tragic past and fortuitous present condition. However, the function of projection along with the discourse of colonization, occasioned by the hero’s new environment, utilize a perceived, typically racialized, difference found in the colonized ‘other’ to secure the hero’s identity, which is then associated with the core’s authority and national project. The difference the hero finds within himself at the periphery is transferred to the colonized other through the function of metaphor. Hence, any lack of cultural similitude between the rivals as well as with the colonizing core is transferred into the periphery, where it is reconstituted, as an ideological fantasy of debt, specifically a cultural debt the colonized other is force to assume. Even if the hero retreats from the colonized territory, the colonized are forever changed, translated as both subjects and objects, cursed to carry the burden of the diacritical difference that has been foreclosed and projected from the hero’s identity.

I have chosen to begin with *The Tempest* because it represents, within the English literary tradition, an early intervention into the genre of romance that is also informed by a moment of historical crisis brought on by the ascension of Scotland’s King James VI to the English throne as Kings James I. Even as England began its colonial enterprises in the New World, the nation—which could no longer claim to be unequivocally English—struggled to define its national identity as an Empire. Thus, *The Tempest* can be read allegorically as an examination of King James I’s desire for empire, which emulates England’s own past imperial designs within the British Isles as well as the imperial desires of other nations beyond its realm. But the desire for empire, narrated as a romance, leaves unrecognized the loss of an unambiguous
national identity, a loss that nonetheless shaped England’s imperial identity and Shakespeare’s play. *The Tempest* suggests that England’s colonies in the New World provided the source material needed to propel the romance of empire in England. As these peripheral territories were domesticated, the loss at the heart of new imperial identity was transferred to the natives of those territories who appear to have some difference in them “which good natures / Could not abide to be with.”¹

Prospero’s tragic beginnings, the result of Antonio and King Alonso’s imperial desire, are repaired when Prospero (much like King James I) emulates the actions of his political rivals. His redemption is secured, in the last scene of the play, with the proposed marriage between his daughter, Miranda and the son of King Alonso, Ferdinand. However, the play also demonstrates that the happy conclusion of romance is only possible for those who share a similar cultural past, which the hero’s emulation of his rivals makes possible. Those who are perceived as possessing a cultural difference, such as Caliban, are tragically stripped of their original identity and remain outside the regime of the romance narrative. While the initial scene of tragic loss for these characters is not enacted within the plotline, it is parodically re-enacted, appearing as a comedic subplot, a genre classically appropriate to the underclasses. In the comedic repetition of his loss, Caliban solidifies his class status when he consigns himself to slavery in the service of drunkards. The redemption of romance is thus reserved for the aristocracy while the tragic story of characters such as Caliban is left unresolved; their fates remain uncertain. Hence, in *The Tempest*, class and race mark the limits of the promise of
redemption within romance. The confluence of empire, colonialism, and emulation in Shakespeare’s play is important to my understanding of how the genre later helped to represent and inform an American national identity which emulated its geo-political rival in its post-revolutionary period.

The racial and class tensions present within Shakespeare’s romance are also present in early American romances, such as in James Fennimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels. In Cooper’s The Pioneers, these tensions signify the loss of the rebellious American identity that scorned British imperialism. However, the novel’s generic structure allows the readers to forget the loss of this original revolutionary American identity that rebelled so as to create a radically new democratic social experiment. In the character of Marmaduke Temple, Cooper reshapes the American identity in imitation of a British imperial identity, albeit tempered by the rule of law as king. Any cause for combative competition between the figures of the United States and Britain is resolved within the novel through the legal state of marriage between the American citizen Elizabeth Temple and the English subject Oliver Edwards. Thus the narrative imagines the future of the American republic as married to its past, emulating the cultural and imperial practices of its former rival. Hence, the loss that begins the romance is not that of the vanquished British identity, which is narratively integrated into the national family; indeed, the seemingly renounced identity lingers symptomatically in the legal framework of the principle of discovery which underwrites the romance and recalls the imperial conquest of the new world. Instead, the foreclosed and forgotten loss
that initiates Cooper’s romance is of the distinctive American identity as well as the democratic project of the republic that might have recognized the debt owed to the indigenous population it first emulated so as to survive. However, the comic subplot of The Pioneers allows the reader to imagine the possibility of an American identity that may have attempted to reconcile the colonial relationship that often went unacknowledged or unrecognized.

Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook’s story represents an alternate narrative that has been subsumed within or absorbed by the national romance, marking the “social ascendancy” of the new Republic. These sympathetically comic characters have reconciled their differences through the pathos of emulation with the effect that their identities are constructed as cultural hybrids born of the chiastic meeting of a (presumed) diminishing native empire out of the west and a new empire out of the east (England). However, both Natty and Chingachgook are diminishing along with the American experiment that produced their identities, signaled by the inexorable alteration of the national landscape. Any sympathies the American identity may have once had with the cultural practices of the Native Americans are fading like Natty and Chingachgook into the mythos of the past. Even as American literary culture began to define and represent an American national identity, the identity Jackson Turner in 1890 would assert was composed of European germs modified by the wilderness and indigenous habits, it had already become a myth, prematurely aged, “naturally” diminishing along with the original inhabitants of the land whose way of life help to shape it. The new identity of the rising American empire is also associated with the
east and represented in Cooper’s novel by Judge Templeton, along with the townsfolk. Having distanced themselves from the colonial project of the past, they are bent on rehabilitating and re-presenting a renewed national identity in emulation of “the character, the condition, and peradventure, the wealth of” the British landed aristocracy.⁶ The new American identity has far more in common with Old World imperialism and the divisions of class and race on which it depends. Not surprisingly, American expansion in Cooper’s novels has the appearance of European imperialism with the privileges of the American ruling class resembling the legal privileges of the English aristocracy, while liberty is translated into the economic freedom of the market place. The allegorical structure of romance, part of the cultural inheritance from the Old World, helped to reconcile the new American national identity with its fading past.⁷ By the mid-nineteenth century, the ambivalence many critics have noted in Cooper’s Leatherstocking narratives, which seems to register the distance between the fading promise of the republic and the rising new empire, becomes an unwavering critique in Herman Melville’s allegorical novella, “Benito Cereno.”

In “Benito Cereno,” Herman Melville looks beyond the then gathering storm of the Civil War and delivers to his American readers a searing criticism of the Manichean politics of imperialism, warning North America against displacing Western Europe as the new imperial power in the Western Hemisphere by either emulating the Old World’s lust for new territories or developing a new form of imperialism under the guise of conquering new markets.⁸ In 1855, frustrated by the poor reception of his recent novels, Melville returned to the sea romances that his
American reading public craved. Drawn from the actual Captain Amasa Delano’s account of his voyage in *Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, Comprising Three Voyages Round the World* (1817), the narrative of “Benito Cereno” also echoes some of the famous speeches given in the Senate during the spring of 1850 concerning slavery in the new western territory. For example, in Melville’s novella, Captain Delano’s observation regarding the Spanish captain’s leadership resembles Daniel Webster’s characterization of the Mexican government, in the opening of his famous three and a half hour speech before the Senate on March 7, 1850, as being too “distracted and feeble” to prevent California’s revolt against Mexico’s provincial rule. That Melville may have been touching on a correspondence between California’s revolt against Mexican rule and the slave revolt on board the *San Dominick* might be seen as overreaching had not Webster, the senator from Massachusetts, in a speech before the Senate two years earlier, offered just such a parallel, when he suggests the former Mexican citizens residing in the new Western territories were as incapable of self-government as Southern slaves.

On March 23 1848, Webster re-asserted his opposition to the war with Mexico (1846-1848) as an unconstitutional exercise of executive powers for the express purpose of forcing “cession of Mexican territory, to acquire territory for new States.” Webster understood that, with the usurpation of Mexican territory under the auspices of Manifest Destiny, the political tensions dividing the North and South would be amplified. He also feared, like others, the admission of new states would only serve to enlarge the legislative influence of the slave-holding South. In his
speech, Webster argued against sending more troops to secure the new territory wrested from Mexico with the signing of Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo (1848) by first appealing to his fellow senators’ better angels: “We have compelled a treaty of cession. We know in our consciences that it is compelled.” Webster then proceeded to appeal to the lessor angels of his colleagues’ natures, quoting Colonel John J. Hardin’s war report on the conditions in Northern Mexico during his advance: “The [Mexican] people are on a par with their land. One in 200 or 500 is rich, and lives like a nabob; the rest are peons, or servants sold for debt, who work for their masters, and are as subservient as the slaves of the South, and look like Indians, and, indeed, are not more capable of self-government.” While mestizos in northern Mexico are seen as slaves incapable “of self-government,” Webster warned the reports of the new territory of New Mexico did not promise any better. Reading from the travel writings of the British explore George Ruxton, he ironically introduced the “soon to be…respected fellow citizens of New Mexico,” to the Senate and his fellow Americans he knew would read his speech in their newspapers:

‘It is remarkable that, although existing from the earliest times of the colonization of New Mexico, a period of two centuries, in a state of continual hostility with the numerous savage tribes of Indians who surround their territory, and in constant insecurity of life and property from their attacks;…entirely dependent upon their own resources, the inhabitants are totally destitute of those qualities…we might naturally have expected to distinguish them, and are as deficient in energy of
character and physical courage, as they are in all the moral and
tellectual qualities. In their social state but one degree removed from
the veriest savages they might take a lesson even from these in
morality and conventional decencies of life. Imposing no restraint on
their passions, a shameless and universal concubinage exists, and a
total disregard of morals to which it would be impossible to find a
parallel in any country calling itself civilized. A want of honorable
principle, and consummate duplicity and treachery, characterize all
their dealings. Liars by nature, they are treacherous and faithless to
their friends, cowardly and cringing to their enemies; cruel, as all
cowards are, they unite savage ferocity with their want of animal
courage;’

These, Sir, are soon to be our beloved countrymen!15

Under the guise of preventing any augmentation to legislative power of the slave
holding Southern states, Webster betrayed his affinity with the racialized social
hierarchy that allowed for the institution of slavery he ostensibly opposed. Webster’s
Delanoesque sympathetic complicity with the South’s racially determined social
structure and institutionalize inequity is apparent in his attempt to undermine the
Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo by casting Mexicans as “treacherous” “liars,” no
more capable of full citizenship than “slaves” or “savages.”

In his speech on March 7, 1850, Webster’s equivocations regarding the
Republic’s fundamental principle of equality among all “men” ended his senatorial
career when he advocated for Henry Clay’s Compromise that would allow California to enter the Union as a free state with an amendment to the Fugitive Slave Act that would criminalize anyone who might “aid, abet, or assist” a fugitive slave.\(^{16}\) He outraged his pro-abolitionist Massachusetts constituents by asserting the right to hold humans in bondage was guarantee under the Constitution, and that its Biblical and Roman precedent made it a moral gray area, a matter of differing opinions:

There are men, who…deal with morals as with mathematics, and they think what is right, may be distinguished from what is wrong, with the precision of an algebraic equation. They have, therefore, none too much charity toward others who differ with them. They are apt, too, to think that nothing is good but what is perfect, and that there are no compromises or modifications to be made in submission to difference of opinion, or in deference to other men's judgment.\(^{17}\)

Four days after Webster’s fatal equivocation, on March 11, 1850, Senator William H. Seward from New York gave his first speech in chambers to advocate for California’s admission into the Union as a free state but not at the cost of a compromise that would extend the reach of the South’s peculiar institution. In his speech, he accedes that the institution of slavery is protected under the Constitution, but nonetheless condemns it as a relic of a brutal past of “Conquest, in which the captivity of the conquered was made perpetual and hereditary.”\(^{18}\) Quoting the English philosopher Edmund Burke, Seward asserts there is “but one law for all—namely, that law which governs all law—the law of our Creator—the law of
humanity, justice, equity—the law of nature and of nations.”¹⁹ Hence, he affirms, the “Constitution regulates our stewardship…. [but] there is a higher law than the Constitution against which all governing laws need be measured as democratic governments maintained by acquiescence, without force, are preferable to institutions exercising arbitrary and irresponsible power.”²⁰ Yet even Seward, who condemned Clay’s resolutions for compromise, envisioned the nation as homogeneous, populated by Caucasians, whether “native” or “exotic” in origin, possessing a common language, religion, and culture:

The population of the United States consists of natives of Caucasian origin, and Exotics of the same derivation. The Native mass rapidly assimilates to itself and absorbs the Exotic, and these therefore constitute one homogeneous people. The African race, bond and free, and the aborigines, savage and civilized, being incapable of such assimilation and absorption, remain distinct, and owing to their peculiar condition constitute inferior masses, and may be regarded as accidental, if not disturbing political forces…. The question now arises, shall this one great people, having a common origin, a common language, a common religion, common sentiments… remain one political state, one nation, one republic, or shall it be broken into two conflicting and probably hostile nations or republics?.... The Atlantic states, through their commercial, social, and political affinities and sympathies, are steadily renovating the governments and the social
constitutions of Europe and of Africa; the Pacific states must necessarily perform the same sublime and beneficent functions in Asia. If, then, the American people shall remain an undivided nation, the ripening civilization of the West...will, in its circuit of the world, meet again and mingle with the declining civilization of the East on our own free soil, and a new and more perfect civilization will arise to bless the earth, under the sway of our own cherished and beneficent democratic institutions....And now it seems to me, that the perpetual unity of our empire hangs on the decision of this day and of this hour.²¹

Seward insisted that California’s statehood should be affirmed without delay, as it is a necessary stepping-stone in the onward march of a global commercial empire “under the sway of our own cherished and beneficent democratic institutions.” Although slavery has no place in this new empire that must be responsive to a “higher law,” the civilized or “savage” racialized other remains beyond the pale of the imagined community that draws together a domestic and foreign population from similar (European) backgrounds. While Seward and others might well have wished to regard racialized others within the U.S. as “accidental,” they were nonetheless a present reminder of past conquests that made use of “arbitrary and irresponsible power”; hence, they were “disturbing political forces.” In their deliberations of the nation’s future, these oratories in the Senate, both for and against the Compromise of 1850, made use of the same epideictic rhetoric found in romance narratives and to the same effect: to imagine a happy and “more perfect” national future by forgetting the

215
nation’s founding principles of liberty and equality for all “men” so as to emulate its former rival’s (England’s) desire for empire. While the role of the listening audience differs in epideictic and deliberative discourses, the audience of an epideixis (performative or inscribe in newsprint) is encouraged “to make ‘observations’ (theôria)… not to make rulings but to form opinions about and in response to the discourse presented.” As Laurent Pernot contends in his book, Epideictic Rhetoric: Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise, “Epideictic rhetoric’s chief function is a social one. It gives a shape to the representations and common beliefs of the group; it renders explicit, and justifies, accepted values; and on occasion it even offers lessons in new values.” The rhetoric of romance in these speeches is used to bind the members of fractious regions within the United States into an imagined community of Anglo-Saxons whose destiny was to be a new global commercial empire. But, just as in romance, the community is obliged to forgive and forget its troubled and contradictory past.

In linking the violence inherent in the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny to the violence of slavery, “Benito Cereno,” written five years after Webster’s and Seward’s speeches, and some forty-three years before the Spanish-American War, imagines the culmination of Jefferson’s belief that the territory that once was Spain’s would in time fall “piece by piece” to The United States. Much like Webster and Seward’s speeches in the Senate chambers, Melville’s tale walks us through the history of colonization in the New World from past to present and projects itself into the future. But Melville frames his criticism of slavery in the United States as a consequence of
imitating too closely the imperialist practices of an enfeebled Spanish empire. In the novella, the temporal movement is allegorically linked to the four cardinal points of east, west, north, and south, with each of these directions corresponding to a movement in time: the east, past empires; the west, new colonial possibilities; the south, a fading present; the north, a rising present. Although Captain Delano hails from the rising new empire in the North, in his new environment out West, he is willing to participate in the slave trade that is associated in the novella with the fading Spanish Empire of the South. While Melville’s use of allegory heals the gap between the past and present to recall the logic of *translatio imperii* as the movement of empire from east to west, he does not return to the past to claim the authority of former empires. Instead, Melville retrieves from the Nation’s past the democratic promise that once characterized the American Revolution but which by 1855 appeared to be irretrievably lost.

The allegorical structure of the novella and its hierarchizing logic underscores the same structural logic at work in the (self)-deceptive narrative of Manifest Destiny that finds its own pre-figuration in the empires of the past, as seen, for example, in the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823) that informed Cooper’s *The Pioneers*. The High Court’s decision, in that case, recalled the principle of discovery utilized by European empires to “extinguished” indigenous peoples’ title to their lands in the Americas. But, as suggested in *The Tempest* with Antonio’s usurpation of Prospero’s dukedom that precedes and foretokens Prospero’s usurpation of Caliban’s native rights, to assume absolute authority over a territory
belonging to others requires the disavowal of any claim to absolute authority and necessary crime of usurpation.

This chiastic twist in the onward movement of empire is illustrated by the relationship of the three central characters in Melville’s “Benito Cereno,” the American captain, Amasa Delano, the Spanish captain, Benito Cereno, and the rebellious slave, Babo. In Delano’s identification with and imitation of the Spanish captain’s position of authority, he leaves unquestioned Babo’s condition of servitude that is determined by his racial difference, in large part because that difference secures the authority of both captains. Delano discovers (almost too late) that behind Cereno’s image of authority that he wishes to imitate stands its negation, Babo, the black slave of a slave who nonetheless too closely resembles the white captains. Babo’s usurpation of Captain Cereno’s authority not only unmasks the violence inherent in assuming the position of master, but also disrupts the established equivalence between the two captains of the New World and their seeming unassailable, yet opposed, positions of authority. He intrudes on the “progress” of empire, suggested by the spatial and temporal tableaus that help to structure the allegorical narrative. Read more generally, the figure of Babo confounds the narrative of Manifest Destiny that would substitute an older European imperial rule, driven by a colonial economy of capital accumulation grounded in the expropriation of surplus value, for a neo-imperialist rule operating at the periphery searching out open markets in which to trade its surplus goods garnered from the expropriation of surplus value.
The slippage from old to new imperialism repeats the same structure of empire with a difference—a difference that metaphorically allows for the transference of authority between seemingly similar forms of empires, with similar racial origins. However, Babo, a black slave and black master, product and producer, object and subject, embodies the diacriticality of metaphor that allows for the structural effect by which the illusion of authority is maintained. However, the inclusion of difference disrupts the very continuity of the metaphoric structure on which the transference of authority depends by reconfiguring the nature of the similarity between rival forms of imperialism from which the figure of the slave is usually forcefully excluded. Thus, Babo stands as the problematic reminder that behind any claim to the right of absolute authority is the violent act of usurpation and territorial piracy.

Babo, as Delano’s monstrous double, is a figure for the American captain’s own desire of conquest and mastery. His usurpation of authority on the San Dominick represents Delano’s (and by extension North America’s) own sin of transgression, recalling the distance between a violent usurper operating outside the law and the idealized image of a revolutionary whose moral authority is sacralized by the struggle against tyranny. Although the revolution on board the San Dominick is rewritten by Babo and overrun by Delano, their piratical plots, as the original conceit of the story suggests, are “kith and kin” with all imperial projects (“Benito Cereno” 673).

To restore the metaphoric progress of imperial rule, from the fading Empires of the Old World to the rising Empire of North America, Babo, the guilty reminder of
the violence and contradiction of slavery at the heart of the new empire of liberty, is sacrificed in the capital of the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru, Lima (la Ciudad de los Reyes—the City of Kings), at the seat of the old empire’s authority that Delano wishes to overthrow. Thus Delano’s piratical capture of the San Dominick is paradoxically his act of contrition. As Delano’s rescue of Cereno suggests, the promise of reconciliation between the past and the present in romance is only possible for those characters that identify with and emulate the authority they would usurp. In recognizing and emulating the structure of a past authority, the original difference that separates the present and the past is forgotten and the crime of usurpation is rewritten as an inheritance from the past while a shared amnesia of the piratical crime of conquest forms the bonds of kinship between rival empires. This same paradoxical logic is also at work in the notion of Manifest Destiny, a destiny made manifest only after the transgressive act of territorial aggression is forgotten and re-narrated as a romance with its structurally preordained happy conclusion which rescues the colonial authority of the past. This magical amnesia allows for the reconciliation of rivals whose difference in the past once separated them; however, the rivals’ reconciliation always produces a symptomatic trace in the present that marks the transference of their difference to an “other.” Emulating the English example found in The Tempest, the symptomatic remainder, in the North American romances examined here, is typically associated with a racialized other who is understood to be insensible to the colonizer’s lessons of civility and ethics. Because of their unforgivable difference, these “others” are forced to pay the price, or carry the debt,
for the national hero’s newly won authority with the forfeiture of their land, culture, and lives. Thus, the losses of those who are forced to maintain the integrity of metaphoric construction of authority—as the fate of the slaves on board the San Dominick suggests—are tragically unpaid if not completely forgotten within national romances that narrate the reconciliation between rival empires. The allegorical reconciliation of a national community with its former rival’s culture of conquest is achieved in romance through the pathos of emulation with the result that the cultural practices and territorial expansion of a former enemy, which once threatened the nation, are understood as the national family’s “inheritance.”

In The Tempest, Prospero’s pathos of emulation, expressed in the conquest of the island and subjugation of the island natives, makes the recovery of his dukedom possible and allows for his kinship with former enemies that forestalls a perpetual war between the fratricidal rivals. The reconciliation in The Tempest that binds together the northern Dukedom of Milan and a southern Kingdom of Naples allegorically represents the unification of two former rival kingdoms within the British Isle, Scotland in the north and England in the south, to form a larger national family by imaginatively displacing the threat of conquest into a New World. The structure of this romance becomes a model for romance narratives within the United States, particularly those such as Cooper’s Leatherstocking narratives that imagine the nation’s reconciliation with its former English colonial ruler. While Cooper’s novels, with some ambivalence, affirm the new nation’s bonds of kinship with England and its project of empire that continues at the ever-shifting American frontier, Melville’s
novella warns that the outcome of Mexican-American War has extended the bonds
kinship beyond England to include all Empires (past and present) and their piratical
conquest of territory.

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1 See William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, in Graff and Phalen 1.2.362-3
or Greenblatt 1.2.358-59.

2 See Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the
national independence in the United States is often understood as an “inheritance”
affiliated with the genealogy of European conflagrations between rival kingdoms
and religions, that finds its historical emplotment as a fratricidal war within a
national family romance (196). This genealogy, narrativized as a romance, allows
Americans to understand their own War of Independence as a war “between
kinsmen…[which] ensured that, after a certain period of acrimony had passed,
close cultural, and sometimes political and economic, ties could be reknit
between” the new nation and its former metropole (Anderson, 192). American
romances, such as Cooper’s *The Pioneers*, helped Americans to imagine their new
country as taking part a longer history that also included the promise of empire.

3 In the first chapter of *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper reminds his
readers that the success of the earliest European settlers depended on their
“emulating the patience and self-denial of the practised native warriors” (see
James Fenimore Cooper in *The Last of the Mohicans*, 11). In the introduction to
the first edition (1831) of the same novel, Cooper describes the character of Natty
Bumppo, as having been improved by his exposure “to the [natives’] customs of
barbarity” (7).

Frederick J. Turner in *The Frontier in American History*, 3. Turner’s oft cited quote reads, “Our early history is the study of European germs developing in an American environment.” The wilderness “masters the colonist….It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin” (3-4). Tuner’s American appears to be drawn from Cooper’s narrative vision of Natty Bumppo.

See James F. Cooper in *The Pioneers*, 28.

The apocryphal story of how Cooper began his writing career epitomizes the cultural emulation of English literary forms by American authors. Presumably, Cooper penned his first novel after being challenged by his wife to make good on his assertion that he could write a better novel than the English romances she enjoyed. The result of the challenge was *Precaution* (1820), a romance set in England and written in “imitation of Jane Austen’s novel of manners,” *Pride and Prejudice*. See Hans Bertens and Theo D’haen in *American Literature: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 52.

Thomas Jefferson’s imperialistic designs to expand the U.S border west and south was formally rearticulated as a hemispheric influence in President Monroe’s address to Congress on December 2 1823 and popularize in newsprint as the nation’s Manifest Destiny. While President Monroe’s speech to Congress warned Europe against colonizing within the Western Hemisphere, United States traders assumed control of the Sandalwood market, a product harvested from Hawaii that was essential to U.S. trade with China. After the Sandalwood trees were exhausted, whaling further expanded U.S. commercial interests across the pacific and into the Far East. Aware of the perilous consequences of U.S. trade on the native peoples of the pacific islands, Melville’s critique of U.S. imperialism recognized that the extension of the American sense of Manifest Destiny further westward into the pacific would fundamentally alter the principles of democracy within the U.S. For a discussion of Melville’s *Moby Dick* and U.S. imperialism in the pacific and Asia, see John Eperjesi in *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2005). Also see Amy Kaplan’s discussion of Puerto Rico’s status as an “unincorporated territory”’ in the introduction to her book *The Anarchy of Empire*, 7.
9 See Daniel Webster in *Speech of Hon. Daniel Webster, On Mr. Clay's Resolutions: In the Senate of the United States, March 7, 1850* (Washington: Printed by Gideon and Co., 1850), 5. This speech, in which Webster lends his support to Henry Clay’s compromise resolutions of 1850, angered the people of Massachusetts, to whom (ironically) it was the dedicated, and ended Webster’s career in the Senate.

10 See Daniel Webster in *Mr. Webster's speech, in the U.S. Senate, March 23, 1848, upon the War with Mexico* (Boston, Eastburn's Press, 1848).

11 Ibid., 5. Webster’s speech was available to the public in newsprint. Papers like *The Boston Daily Atlas* reprinted the speech in its entirety. See “Remarks of Mr. Webster” in *The Boston Daily Atlas* 29 March, 1848: 5.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 22.

14 Newspaper, as B. Anderson argues, are key to imagining a unified national family because they allow one to imagine taking part in the “mass ceremony” of reading with anonymous others in homogenous empty time (Anderson 35). In addition, newspaper display, or put before our eyes the deliberative logos of the nation as a national performance of unity; hence, newspapers perform that which they help to shape. That is, newspapers transform the deliberative speeches of the legislative branch of government in the U.S. into displays of verbal performance or epideictic speech that help to shape the values and attitude of the audience. See footnotes 23 and 24 below.

15 Ruxton qtd. in Webster, *Mr. Webster's speech, March 23, 1848*, 22.

16 Fugitive Slave Act, September 18, 1850: sec. 7, in *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*.

17 See Webster, *Speech of Hon. Daniel Webster, March 7, 1850*, 16.

Ibid., 303.


For Seward, membership within the imagined national community requires the obligatory amnesia of romance as recalling the nation’s founding principles (such as the equality of all people) could hamper the nation’s projected commercial empire.

See Jeffrey Walker in Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity (Oxford: Oxford UP. 2000), 9, author’s emphasis. Epideictic rhetoric can lead an audience “to make ‘observations’ (theôria) about what is praiseworthy, preferable, desirable or worthy of belief in the speakers logos. (It is worth noting that theoria can also mean ‘speculation,’ and that theôros can also mean an ‘ambassador’ sent to consult an oracle). Moreover, speeches, whether they were originally deliberative or juridical, that have been removed from their “original pragmatic forums and placed before a reader years, decades, or even centuries later cease to be pragmatika and instead become epideiktika: they become, in effect, performances the reader ‘witnesses,’ as if in a theater—or performances the reader mimoetically rehearses, if we take the usual assumption that reading in antiquity normally was reading aloud, in other words, oral interpretations” (9). The distinction between “epideiktikon and the pragmatikon in every instance is the nature of the audiences and forum to which the discourse speaks, and the function of the discourse for the audience in that forum. As Aristotle recognizes
(in Rhetoric 1.3.1358b), pragmatic discourse is presented before an audience of
_kritai_, ‘judges’ or ‘deciders,’ people who have been formally empowered to make
rulings within a particular institutional setting—that is, not people who make
judgments in the general sense of forming an opinion about something (_gnômê_),
but people who actually determine the practical outcome of a contest or dispute
by casting votes” (8). Effectively, the role of the listening audience determines
the categorization of the rhetorical expression.

24 See Laurent Pernot’s Preface in _Epideictic Rhetoric: Questioning the
Stakes of Ancient Praise_ (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press. 2015), n.pag. Also see
James A. Herrick in _History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction_ (New York:
Routledge. 2013) for a definition of the “goal of the epideictic speech” which was
not simply to “entertain, but to encourage audience members ‘to form opinions, or
even to revise their existing beliefs and attitudes on a given
topic’….‘contemplation’ of ideas by the audience was the specific purpose of
epideictic discourse. An _epideixis_ is literally a ‘showing forth,’ the presentation
or ‘demonstration’ of the virtue of an idea, a practice, or an action, Epideictic
orators employ amplification (_auxesis_) of an action to illuminate its beauty and
greatness for all to see. Epideictic’s goal was thus contemplative rather than
pragmatic; it prompted the audience to think, to reflect, or to embrace a new idea”
(77). So as to shape the beliefs and values of a society, epideictic speech displays
the value of the things it praises.

25 See Benedict Anderson’s discussion on “The Reassurance of
Fratricide” and the obligation of forgetting. National unity presumes that the
“tragedies” in the nation’s past are “already forgotten” (_Imagined Communities_,
199-203).

26 See “UNION (The Federal), Expansion, Sec. 8666.,” 892. This famous
quote is cited from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson in 1789 to Archibald
Stuart who read law under Jefferson’s tutelage. In the letter Jefferson imagines
the expansion of the national boundaries both as inevitable and necessary so as to
“drown the little divisions at present existing” within the nation (892, Sec. 8666).

27 See Anderson, 196.
Like Melville’s novella, Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don: A Novel Descriptive of Contemporary Occurrences in California* (1885) is often read as a romance that operates as a critique of American imperialism, but her narrative complicates the structure of romance insofar as her American readers are asked to sympathetically identify with the vanquished rival—“native Californians” (specifically those possessing Spanish and Mexican land grants) incorporated under the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo (1848)—who are also the figure of the colonized other within American public discourse.¹ This added complexity collapses the different narrative perspectives of the protagonist and the antagonist and alters the structure of the heroic identity by skewing the pathos of emulation in romance that facilitates the reconciliation between rivals. The complication also muddles the generic analysis of Ruiz de Burton’s novel that some critics have identified as an historical romance, a sentimental romance or a romance that anticipates naturalism.²

The central conflict in the novel, informed by the history of post-Civil War California, concerns the landed Californio elites, formerly citizens of Mexico, and land hungry newly arriving Americans who, refusing to recognize the property rights of the Californios, squatted on ranch lands they insisted were public.³ The novel’s romance narrative evolves from and helps to resolve the conflict between two
families, the embattled Alamar family, headed by Don Mariano and his wife Josefa Alamar, whose 47,000 acre ranch is under siege by squatters, and the Darrell family, headed by William Darrell, the titular Yankee squatter whose Southern wife, Mary Moreneau Darrell, is possessed of a greater ethnical sensibility concerning property rights than her well-meaning but misdirected husband. When Clarence Darrell, at the behest of his mother, but unbeknownst to his father, visits Don Mariano to purchase the family’s claim, he meets and falls in “[l]ove at first sight” with the Don’s genteel youngest daughter, Mercedes Alamar (S/D 100). The happy union of Clarence Darrell and Mercedes Alamar culminates the romance narrative but not the novel, the final chapter of which advocates for the dispossessed and disempowered “white slaves” still in need of succor (S/D 372).

In their introduction to the 1992 reissue of Ruiz de Burton’s second novel, Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita contend that the narrative “follows two tracks”: one, a romantic quest for love; and the other, an historical quest for justice and land. Together they create an unresolved tension that is, as George Dekker explains, the result of the paradoxical coupling of the temporal dimension of history and the atemporal narrative of romance. The oppositional narratives operating together within the same text indicate the “failure of a character or class to understand that attitudes and behavior recently appropriate and tenable are so no longer” (Dekker 15). Sánchez and Pita point out, with regard to both Dekker and Northrup Frye, an historical “romance often focuses on the moment of transition between two distinct modes of production in which the incompatibility of the older aristocratic traditions
and the new capitalist situation is made clear” (“Intro” 19). As in all romances, and
historical romances in particular, the contrary discourses mark the advent of a new
behavior brought about by a shift in the mode of production, which in Ruiz de
Burton’s novel moves from semi-feudalism to monopoly capitalism. However, in
The Squatter and the Don, the social contradictions within the historical narrative
signal “a slight break with those [discourses] expected of a romance” (“Intro” 19).
The “slight break” in fact disrupts the eloquent sleight of hand that produces the
magical amnesia within romance which occurs when the heroic conqueror
“condescends to see the ‘enemy,’ that is, the pre-capitalist society, as [also] ‘heroic’
but primitive and even as unfortunate and abused by local authorities” (“Intro” 19).

Indeed, the mark of romance generally is the hero’s willingness to recognize
his rival as an equal, worthy of forgiveness and inclusion within the national project.
This recognition allows for the reconciliation on which the happy conclusion of
romance depends. The narrative closure in The Tempest— the marriage that unifies
the rival cities of Milan and Naples—is only possible after Prospero forgives his
usurpers, Antonio and King Alonso. In The Pioneers, the unification of the lovers
and the township of Templeton occurs only after Judge Temple recognizes Oliver
Edwards, the son of a British loyalist, as the rightful owner of half his property. In
“Benito Cereno,” Captain Delano rescues the San Dominick only after he recognizes
Don Benito as an abused fellow captain rather than a usurping pirate.

The happy ending in a romance resolves the binary that begins the narrative
when the difference that divides the hero and his rival is forgiven. However, the
fundamental chiastic structure of the genre, reflected in its narrative desire to lose loss, paradoxically also (re)structures the hero’s identity as a mimesis of his rival’s identity. Thus, what appears to be condescension—the hero’s willingness to recognize his rival as similarly heroic and extend to him the bonds of kinship—is chiastically dependent on the hero’s emulation of his former rival’s presumed outmoded behavior. In forgiving the rival, the hero forgives and forgets the tragic difference between his past identity, which is projected onto a racialized other, and his present identity. Effectively, the hero, in “condescending” to forgive the crimes of his former enemy, is able to forget his own crime of usurpation of his rival’s authority over territory the rival expropriated from others. The mimetic continuity between the rival’s past and the hero’s present, marked by the hero’s emulation of the rival’s actions, makes the metaphoric transfer of authority from the past to the present possible and links the genre of romance with foundational narratives that imagine the birth of a nation as an empire. Hence, the genre of romance offers a narrative that allegorically reconciles a divided national community in the present with the desire for a future empire that it has inherited from the past. However, *Squatter and the Don* does not move towards but instead begins by blurring the distinction between the rival and the hero which produces and uncertain future.

Although Clarence Darrell plays the traditional role of the romantic hero, saving Mercedes and her family from the prison house of poverty, the antagonists who directly threaten the Alamar family, “appropriating the property of ‘the conquered’” (*S/D* 76), are members of Clarence’s own family and national
community. While William Darrell and the other American squatters believe their appropriation of land to be “all perfectly lawful,” their actions are likened within the narrative to the Visigoths’ invasion of Rome, lead by Alaric, and the Carthaginian invasion of southern Europe, lead by Hannibal (S/D 76). This complication to the role of hero as the representative of a national family that refuses to forgive, and thus, seemingly cannot emulate the rival is underscored by both the squatters’ as well as the Don’s characterization of “native Californians” as a “conquered people,” (S/D 102, 67). The distinction within the narrative of Californios as a conquered people indicates the persistence of an antagonistic rivalry within the nation despite the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo that promised Californios their “rights would be the same as those enjoyed by all other American citizens” (S/D 67). While the novel represents the squatters and the American government as continuing the rivalry the treaty promised to end, their sympathies and actions do not reflect those of the Yankee hero. Clarence acknowledges his honor is stained by his community’s “barbarous act” of land confiscation that is made worse by the “national shame…of guaranteeing, by treaty, a protection, which was not only withheld, but which was [legally] denied [retroactively]” (S/D 102-103). Rather than condescending to forgive his enemy, the hero and his nation are in need of forgiveness from the “abused” rival (“Intro.” 19). This reversal in hero’s role, as the protagonist who is the source of recognition and forgiveness, presents yet another complication to the generic structure of this romance narrative that should end with the reconciliation of rivals.
David Luis-Brown, in his book *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico and the United States*, contends that the success of *The Squatter and the Don* in fact depends on reading the novel as a sentimental romance that advocates for the victims of U.S. imperialism by “defending morally superior victims; adopting conciliatory approaches to avoid direct, violent conflict; and forging alliances among the elite of different cultures and regions through marital and other unions that expand whiteness.”

His argument suggests that the narrative advances Don Mariano as an heroic victim who attempts to conciliate the contentious rivalry between squatters and ranchers. But, as Don Mariano points out to George Mechlin (his future son-in-law), he is not the conqueror but the conquered: “scarcely, half a dozen years…have elapsed [after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo, before] the trusted conquerors…passed laws which were to be retroactive upon the defenseless, helpless, conquered people in order to despoil them” (S/D 66). Sánchez and Pita, who first read *The Squatter and the Don* as an historical romance, also note that the novel advocates for and is “written from the perspective of the conquered” (“Intro” 6). Within the generic structure of an historical or a sentiment romance, the conquered may well be conciliatory, but cannot reconcile the antagonism between the two rivals, in large part because the purgative for that act forgiveness and reconciliation belongs to the conquering romance hero. Nonetheless, the Californios, represented by Don Mariano Alamar and his family, “are not the ‘enemy.’” They are not the *Other* for the narrator, who most clearly identifies with this aristocratic, enlightened, upper-class family that
is disposed to adapt to the new capitalist mode of production” albeit unsuccessfully (“Intro” 19). Instead, the Californios operate as the abused conquered rival who has not been integrated into the national family. Although the Californios are not represented as the “other,” the narrator criticizes American imperialism from the divided position of being both domestic and foreign to the nation, as marked by the textual *mestizaje* of the author’s bilingual pseudonym of “C. Loyal.” Although written in English, the penname uses the Spanish syntax of “*ciudadano leal*” (“loyal citizen”), signaling that the romance includes the perspective of both citizen and “other.”

In recognition of the exclusion or “othering” of the Californios within the national consciousness, Ruiz de Burton often has the Californios themselves recite the appellations associated with them: “lazy…thriftless Spaniards…good-for-nothing, helpless wretches” or “indolent, unwilling to work” (*S/D* 175, 343). Because these characterizations of the new citizenry, formerly of Mexico, circulated in the public discourse (the legislative chambers of government, newspapers, and so on), the novel struggles to maintain the distinction within romance between the role of the conquered pitiable rival and the function of the conquered racialized other who is “bereft of sympathy” (*S/D* 352). In her effort to counter the national discourse that portrays the “native Californian” as the conquered racialized other, Ruiz de Burton represents the men of the Alamar family as hard working, many times to the detriment of their own health (*S/D* 351). While the Don does not do the work of a *vaquero*, instead hiring “lazy Indian[s]” to “go ‘busquering’ around lassoing” his
cattle, he nonetheless is willing to work (S/D 278, 94). Victoriano, the Don’s youngest son, is paralyzed because “he worked very hard, in fact, entirely too hard for one so unused to labor. Work broke him down” (S/D 344). Ruiz de Burton represents Californios as aristocrats who are industrious but “unused to work” and dependent on the labor of their “lazy” Indian servants. This chiastic representation muddles the distinction between the hard working, conquered, Californio-elite “unused to labor” and the “lazy,” conquered, racialized-other doing the hard work of a ranch hand. But this paradoxical coupling bespeaks the novel’s narrative strategy that attempts to elicit a sentimental response from the American reader, so as to bridge the national divisions on which the narrative dwells, by eliding the differences that separate the conqueror and the conquered or newly arriving Americans and the “native Californians” (S/D 66). Ruiz de Burton effectively blurs any differentiation between the romance hero’s and the rival’s national community by articulating both communities through the category of class, the same distinction that marks the chiastic relationship between Californios and their Indian laborers. The narrative appeals to the sympathies of all “well bred” people in both the American and Californian communities who share the same the culture values while condemning the barbarous actions of “low, vulgar fellow[s]” whether they are squatters, millionaires, or legislators (S/D 203, 82).

To be clear, the narrative does not resolve the binary that gives the novel its name, nor does it invert the position of rival and hero; instead, it ameliorates the antagonistic rivalry and elides the differences between the newly arriving Americans
and Californios by representing both as equally capable of heroic actions. To obscure the distinction between rival and hero, the narrative shifts the mode of emulation typically found in romances from an imitation of action—which demonstrates a cultural similarity among rivals and ostensibly enlarges the national family after the hero forgives his rival whose actions that are so like his own—to an emulation of sensibility, sentiment or pathos—that simply expands the cast of heroic characters to include Americans and Californios alike; hence, Clarence and the Don both operate as heroic figures, as do all people of reason.7 Whether they are from the North, South, East, or West, all gente de razón are represented as sharing the same cultural values and the same racial identity as European aristocrats.8 Heroes, or all people of “good taste” (S/D 362), within the narrative, are identifiable by their “inherited…natural nobility” as well as their appreciation of “[h]igh culture, good antecedents, [and] accomplishments” (S/D 352, 351). The expansion of the role of hero also redefines the role of the rival, identified in the novel as simply “bad-mannered people,” led astray by their legislators and greed, who “spread discord and discomfort wherever they are” (S/D 203). However, the expansion of the role of hero disrupts the expected resolution within the genre of romance that is dependent on recognition and forgiveness. Moreover, the kinship of sympathies that exists among all “well-bred” people no longer requires the heroic act of forgiveness to facilitate community. Because the narrative emphasizes a pre-existing correspondence of feeling or pathos, rather than an emulation of action between would-be-heroes and would-be-rivals, the
hero’s model of authority (moral, legal, imperial or otherwise) is located further in the past.

For Ruiz de Burton, the natural social expression of these shared cultural values among “well-bred” people was to be found in the paternalistic relationship between the landed Californio elites and their indigenous labor force, which Don Mariano deems “a good policy” (S/D 176):

The land-owners [sic] were useful in many ways, though to a limited extent they attracted population by employing white labor. They also employed Indians, who thus began to be less wild. Then in times of Indian outbreaks, the landowners with their servants would turn out as in feudal times in Europe to assist in the defense of the missions. (S/D 176)

The relationship between the Californios and their Indian “servants” mirrored the feudalistic social relationship between European aristocrats and their serfs. This social relationship, determined by patrimony, established one’s relationship to the land and labor. While the European aristocrat inherited his class position and lands, the Californio rancher purchased his land and with it his class position. Before California’s annexation to the United States, one’s relationship to land and labor determined both one’s class affiliation and one’s racial identity. But, as Don Mariano’s remarks illustrate, one’s racial identity was also determine both by the part one played in the civilizing mission of Spain’s (and later Mexico’s) colonization of California as well as, tautologically, one’s relationship to property ownership.
Landowners were ever “useful,” “efficient and faithful collaborators” in Spain’s and later Mexico’s colonial project, helping to cultivate civility among the “wild” indigenous people of California. Spanish or criollo Mexican laborers were presumably not landowners, but they could potentially own property, and hence were identified as white settlers who needed to be “attracted” (S/D 176). However, Indians, not counted among the white “population,” were be dispossessed of their lands by their colonizers who held them in a state of forced servitude or peonage. Hence, the ability to own land both determined and was determined by one’s racial identity. This tautology allowed for the fiction of an absolute racial identity in which one was deemed white (i.e., of European ancestry), whether one owned property or not, simply because one was able to own land as a citizen under the law. For Don Mariano, as for all good people of reason, in the novel, one’s relationship to the project of empire as well as the right to own property secured one’s citizenship, racial identity, and class position.

However, the commodification of land that benefitted the Californios during an earlier phase of empire introduced far more fluidity into their social structure than existed “in feudal times in Europe.” Hence, those characters within the narrative that do not own land, or who have had their lands appropriated, lose their class position and their racial identity, which leads them to question their rights as citizens. Despite their English and Germanic physiognomy, the Alamar family’s racial identity is called into doubt along with the title to their family ranch (S/D 89). When Gabriel Alamar, the Don’s oldest son, is separated from his family’s land and forced to labor
as a bricklayer, his identity as a “native Spaniard” and white Californio is diminished. But, his wife Lizzie observes, “If he had been rich, his nationality could have been forgiven, but no one will willingly tolerate a poor native Californian” (S/D 351, author’s emphasis). Contrary to the regimes of romance, the heroic figures within the narrative repeatedly meet with tragic fates, not from a want of nobility or even land, but because the possession of land, in the new country, as a commodity that marks one’s class and racial affiliation has been displaced by the possession of money, the commodity that designates the value of all other commodities. Legal fees and “heavy taxation” are “making money out of [California] lands” (S/D 177). With land ownership displaced by money as the measure of one’s place within the nation’s social and racial hierarchy, the noble people who own land in California “will die in poverty, [while the monopoly capitalists] revel in wealth” (S/D 322). Lizzie Alamar muses that “this transposing of positions perhaps was right, being the unavoidable outcome in a new country, where naturally the raw material is so abundant, and the chase after social position must be sort of ‘go-as-you-please’ race among the golden legged” (S/D 352, author’s emphasis). However, American capitalism is not represented as dismantling the social hierarchy of feudalism; it merely replaces or shifts the signifier of one’s social position from landed, white citizen to moneyed, white citizen. The fluidity of the social hierarchy within the narrative is underscored when the “low, vulgar” squatters are represented as believing that money makes Americans “the equal of princes” (S/D 335). The class threat this “transposing of positions” implies suggests that if the California elite can be conquered, so too can
the newly transplanted American settlers, as James Mechlin’s story exemplifies. The Mechlin family is originally from the East, and while his children, George and Lizzie, marry into the conquered Alamar family, Mr. Mechlin is also defeated (tragically taking his own life) by the same business practices within the new economy that ruined Don Mariano. Mr. Mechlin’s fate, like the fate of his daughter Lizzie, stands as a warning; whether white Californio or white American, all people _de razón_ can share the same fate as the Alamar and Mechlin families who are defeated “to rise no more” (S 351/177). The new mode of production within the U.S. places both the Californios and the newly arriving Americans, wherever their sympathies lie, equally at risk of being reduced to the same condition as Native Americans, in debt and dispossessed.

To pinion the signification of class, race, and citizenship, Ruiz de Burton seems to be proposing that Anglo-Americans reject the new form of imperialism with its fluctuating markets and take part in the neo-colonial romance of the Californio landed elites who presumably practice a more humane approach to profits. Luis-Brown suggests that Don Mariano’s conciliatory plan, to quit deed to the American squatters the lands they occupied and to provide them cattle on credit, would incorporate the squatters into the hacienda culture and economy, allowing for the peaceful coexistence of Californios and newly arriving Americans. The Don’s plan, Luis-Brown contends, “represents a shrewder, more rational capitalism” that balances the cultural practices of the rancho system with the need for higher profits. The Don also argues for this same balanced approach to profits when he speaks with Leland
Stanford regarding the western terminus for the Southern Pacific Railroad. While the Don understands the benefits of economic competition as having “the effect of securing…preference to whosoever deserves it,” he goes on to cite “what Mr. Spencer maintains [which] is that monopolies should not exist when they have become so powerful that they defy the law and use their power to the injury of others. The fundamental principle of morality is then subverted” (S 318). Elisa Warford, who like Luis-Brown reads *The Squatter and the Don* as a sentimental text, reasons that this endorsement of capitalism is rhetorically structured to prevent Ruiz de Burton from appearing to advocate for the radical dismantling of “the entire economic system” and to invite “her readers to envision a moral system of capitalism that refrains from destroying others’ property interests.”

But, as Warford points out, Don Mariano dies “practicing this beneficent capitalism” although Clarence Darrell succeeds, thus, presumably “showing that such a system is tenable and reform possible.” Yet Don Mariano, who still operates within an agrarian economy in which the productive use of the land determines its value, attempts to adapt to the economy in the new country and speculates on the fluctuating value of the land as a commodity in the marketplace. While Clarence and the Don seem to practice the same form of rational capitalism, the Californio rancher turned entrepreneur ostensibly does not “deserve” success since he has heavily invests in a single commodity (land) within a single region, whereas the Yankee entrepreneur diversified his investments and is more deserving of success. Don Mariano’s vision of a beneficent form of capitalism is untenable while still maintaining the culture and economy of the Californio hacienda.
It may be surprising that a novel wishing to appeal to the emotional sensibilities of its readers is concerned with the operation of financial systems. But as Sánchez and Pita note, *Squatter* “focuses as much on social villainies and immoral action [of men]…as on the domestic sphere wherein family relations and women are dominant” (“Intro” 42). Sentimental fiction, as Amy Kaplan contends, with its “‘cult of domesticity,’ [and] ideology of ‘separate spheres,’” often “bolstered the public male arena of the market” with the result that “the extension of female sympathy across social divides can violently reinforce the very racial and class hierarchies that sentimentality claims to dissolve;” hence, “the determining division [in sentimental fiction] is not gender but racial demarcations of otherness.”

Effectively, sentimental or domestic fiction has the colonial task of monitoring “the borders between the civilized and the savage,” and regulating the “traces of the savage within itself.”

The task of the sentimental novel, to determine what is domestic and expel that which is alien within the culture, is made more difficult in *The Squatter and the Don* because of the narrative’s attempts to obscure the differences between hero and rival, or domestic and foreign, or even conquered and conqueror. Moreover, the alien interloper of corporate monopolies, identified as the real threat to the nation, mimics the same strategy used by the narrative insofar as it makes the domestic foreign and blurs the boundary between civilized and savage behavior as well as the racial distinction between black slaves and white masters.

Choosing to read this novel as a sentimental romance does not resolve fundamental contradictions within the text that operate against the rhetorical effect of
sentimentalism, with its emotional appeal for social reform and moral correction, inasmuch as the narrative advocates for the same racial hierarchy it rails against. To counter the pernicious influence of corporate monopolies, Luis-Brown contends, “the novel proposes a hierarchy on the terms of the elite Californios, racializing the Anglo elite and Californio elite as white at the top of the social order, while grouping…the Indians, at the bottom, along with mestizos and African Americans.”¹⁴ For the neocolonial romance of the Californio landed elites to work, the class status of all white citizens, Anglo and Californio, must depend on the unquestioned racialization of mestizos and Indians, who are affixed to the bottom of the social hierarchy. Without the fixity provided by the colonized other, all Californians, “native Spaniards,” new settlers, and indigenous people become one and the same; all can be denied the rights of white citizens by a predatory alien interloper that has disrupted the natural social order within California and threatens the national unity of the racially “homogenous population” within the United States.¹⁵

As Ruiz de Burton’s narrative alters the structure of romance that requires the hero’s act of recognition and forgiveness so as to include the perspective of the conquered rival, the closure offered by the narrative—the union of the two lovers—does not bring with it the solace of amnesia necessary to resolve the national divisions. Hence, at the conclusion of the novel, the social contradictions within the historical narrative and its competing ideological discourses concerning Californios’ property rights vs. squatters’ rights, negotiated territorial acquisition vs. aggressive colonialism, rule of law vs. depredation, are left unresolved. Thus, the romance narrative does not
conclude with the image of the newly wedded couple, Mercedes Alamar and Clarence Darrell, who bridge the divide within the national family between the Californio landed gentry and “money-making Yankee[s]” (S 360). Instead, the reader is left with the image of Doña Josefa who is unable to forget that her family is “one of the many who have suffered so much….because a few heartless men want more millions” (S 363). Confronted with the excesses of one of the monopoly capitalists (identified in the novel with the railroad land barons) who brought her family to ruin, the widowed matriarch of the Alamar family rejects the obligatory amnesia of the American romance that would make it “a crime to speak of the wrongs…suffered [by the dispossessed], but…not a crime to commit those wrongs” (S 364, author’s emphasis). As Doña Josefa’s comments suggest, those who refuse to forget their losses of the past transgress the generic boundaries of romance. In punishment for their crime of memory, these characters remain outside or beyond the borders of the national romance, the moral authority of which the presence of these characters reminds the reader to question. Nonetheless, lingering in tragedy and dispossessed of their national community, these characters are “transposed” from hero to racialized other within the novel when it is read as an American national romance.

In attempting to construct a romance that includes of the perspective of the other, Ruiz de Burton refuses to forget the history of the Californios’ losses; hence, she is unable or unwilling to create the magical amnesia necessary to reconcile the fractious divisions represented in her narrative. The narrative’s de-emphasis on the emulation of action allows Ruiz de Burton to ignore or forget that the actions
committed against the Californios by the American government and its ill-bred citizens are “kith and kin” with actions committed by the Spanish government and their native or criollo colonizers against indigenous people of California (“Benito Cereno” 673). Ruiz de Burton fails to represent or happily forgets the new conquerors are a continuation of a much longer story of colonization and dispossession. Spain’s colonization and dispossession of California’s indigenous people was completed only after Mexico’s independence and the passage of the Act of Secularization of 1833 that permitted the confiscation and enclosure of mission lands along with other prime coastal areas. These confiscated lands formed some of the largest Mexican land grants that comprised California ranchos.16 As Jesse Alemán argues in “Historical Amnesia and the Vanishing Mestiza: The Problem of Race in The Squatter and the Don and Ramona,” “Ruiz de Burton seems to forget that Californios like her fictional Alamares…squatted on Indian-owned lands…in the name of the Spanish then Mexican governments” (66). Alemán contends historical amnesia in The Squatter and the Don is indicative of the “‘profound changes’ in colonial consciousness that framed [the novel’s] production” when colonial power in California was transferred from the Californio elites to Anglo-American after the U.S.-Mexican War (66).17 As I have argued in this project, the historical amnesia in The Squatter and the Don is also symptomatic of the narrative desire in all romances, historical, sentimental or otherwise, that is, to lose the loss of an identity associated with a tragic past by projecting it onto a racialized other so as to reconcile the differences between the nation’s past, present, and auspicious future identity.
However, Ruiz de Burton’s romance is unsuccessful not because she attempts to reform the genre of romance by writing from the perspective of the “conquered Californians,” who refuse to forget that they have been translated into the racialized other by representatives of a new country operating under a new mode of production; rather, her romance fails precisely because she has successfully forgotten the example of the past, which American conquerors have emulated, and the dispossession of the indigenous “native Californian[s]” by “native Spaniard[s]” (S 351, author’s emphasis). Hence, her tragic heroes bemoan a present moment in history they helped to create and yearn for a past that never was.

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1 See María Amparo Ruiz de Burton in The Squatter and the Don, 177. Hereafter cited parenthetically as S/D.

2 Northrup Frye notes the inherent malleability of all fiction, which of course includes romance. However, he notes romance differs from other forms of fiction in that “romance radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks” which is why “a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes” (see Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, 304.) The inherently “mixed” nature of romance is apparent in the multiple critical approaches to The Squatter and the Don. Sánchez and Pita’s introduction to the reissue of the novel provides an early and comprehensive reading that positions the narrative as a historical romance. Many of the critics who followed in their wake took issue with their assertion that the Ruiz de Burton’s narrative made a “space for the counter-history of the sub-altern” (see Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita, Introduction in The Squatter and the Don by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, ed. R. Sánchez and B. Pita. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1992), 5. Hereafter cited as “Intro.” See John M. González, “Romancing Hegemony: Constructing Racialized Citizenship in The Squatter and the Don,” in Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage, ed. Erlinda González-Berry, and Charles Tatum. Vol. 2. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996), 23-39. Also see Jesse Alemán’s article “Novelizing National Discourses: History, Romance, and Law” in The Squatter and the Don” in Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage, ed. Maria Herra-Sobek and Virginia Sánchez-Korrol. Vol. 3. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1998), 38-49. In addition, see Alemán’s article “Historical Amnesia and the Vanishing Mestiza:


Amelia María de la Luz Montes calls for a reading of the novel against periodization so as to account for and analyze the realist and naturalist elements in the novel. See her article “Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton Negotiates American Literary Politics and Culture,” in *Challenging Boundaries: Gender and Periodization*, ed. Joyce W. Warren and Margaret Dickie (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2000), 202-225). Both Vincent Pérez and Brook Thomas link this novel with elements of naturalism. Pérez argues that the novel should be read as regional narrative in his article “Remembering the Hacienda: land and community in Californio narratives,” in *Ruiz de Burton: Critical and Pedagogical Perspectives*. Ed. Amelia María de la Luz Montes and Ann E. Goldman (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2004), 27–55. Also see Brook Thomas, “Ruiz de Burton, Railroads, Reconstruction,” *ELH* 80.3 (Fall 2013): 871-895. In this article, Thomas argues for an “economic analyses of [regional] works associated with the age of Reconstruction as much as racial analyses of works associated with the Gilded Age” (874). Michael Velez reads *The Squatter and the Don* against Frank Norris’s novel *The Octopus: A Story of California* suggesting Ruiz de Burton’s novel is an early engagement in the discourse of naturalism. See Michael Velez’s article, “Train, Trestle, Ticker: Railroad and Region in Frank Norris’s The Octopus and Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don*” in *Trains, Literature and Culture: Reading and Writing the Rails*, ed. Steven Spalding and Benjamin Fraser (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 219-235.
On March 3, 1851, “An Act to Ascertain and Settle the Private Land Claims in the State of California,” was approved by Congress. Senator William Gwin of California, who also helped to draft California’s first Constitution in 1849, introduced the Act in Congress. Gwin’s goal was to circumvent Articles VIII and IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo that protected the property rights of Mexicans who lived in territory subsumed by the United States after the Mexican-American War. See Kevin Starr in *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973), 135. Starr also discusses the vast acreage of arable lands that was held by a relatively small number of Californio ranchers. In Ruiz de Burton’s novel, Don Mariano understands the true rationale for the racialization of Californio landowners by the newly arriving Americans as stemming from envy rather than emulation:

> The squatters were [an] increasing majority; the Spanish natives, [a] diminishing minority. Then the cry was raised that our land grants were too large; that a few lazy, thriftless, ignorant natives, holding such large tracts of land would be a hindrance to the prosperity of the State. *(S/D 175)*


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4 See “Intro.,” 5.


6 See James Frazier in “The Squatter and the Don: Title Page as Paratextual Borderland.” *ANQ* 22.2 (Spring 2009): 33-34. Frazier argues Ruiz de Burton’s pseudonym reflects the author’s bicultural allegiances, and emphasizes the fact that Ruiz de Burton has, figuratively and grammatically speaking, one foot on each side of the border. This fact augments narrative reliability by heralding Ruiz de Burton’s unique authorial perspective: as a loyal citizen of the United States, she has the best interests of her adoptive fatherland at heart, but as a loyal former citizen of Mexico, she is well situated to denounce the greed and racism that the dons have encountered at the hands of their compatriots. (34)
Her penname identifies Ruiz de Burton as a “distinctly transamerican” writer whose position allows her to measure the distance between the promise of U.S. citizenship and the its realities for newly naturalized population in the West (Gruesz 13). For a discussion of literary figures and texts that operate mediums of transnational exchanges see Kirsten Silva Gruesz in *Ambassadors of Culture*.

7 See Ruiz de Burton, *S/D*. 82. William Darrell accuses his son of speaking “like the Don” after Clarence describes the squatter John Gasbang as a “low, vulgar fellow.” Later in the narrative, Gasbang accuses Clarence of sympathizing with the Californio ranchers whom he refers to as “the aristocracy” (92).

8 The Spanish phrase, “people of reason,” was used in the colonial period to describe people, both colonizers and the colonized, who “‘with some help from the fear of God, would…manage or even renounce, instinct for the good of the social organization’” demonstrating their “breeding, class, and also race” (Douglas Monroy qtd in Dawson, 45). Dawson also notes, “for the Californios the modulation of feeling not only underscored the aristocratic heritage of the *gente de razón*, but also attributed racial (i.e. white) overtones to reasonable behavior, consolidating the Californios’ claims to privilege and whiteness (46).


10 Warford, 18.

11 Ibid.

12 See Amy Kaplan in “Manifest Destiny.” *American Literature* 70.3, No More Separate Spheres! (Sep., 1998): 582. The cultural work of domesticity, in uniting the male and female spheres of influence, entails “conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien” (582).

13 Ibid.

14 Luis-Brown, *Waves*, 54. The full quote reads as follows:
the novel proposes a hierarchy on the terms of the elite Californios, racializing the Anglo elite and Californio elite as white at the top of the social order, while grouping the Anglo ‘riff-raff,’ the squatters, paired with other alleged ‘theives,’ the Indians, at the bottom, along with mestizos and African Americans. (emphasis added)

I edited out the italicized portion of this quote, which pairs Anglo-Americans with those identified as racialized others in the novel, because I do not believe Ruiz de Burton “expand[s] whiteness” to the Californio elites, or the Alamar family in particular. Her narrative presumes, indeed insists, the Alamar family’s racial status to be undeniably white, much like members of the Mechlin family. Moreover, while squatters such as John Gasbang and William Mathews are depicted as thieves, along with those who allow them to operate with impunity, such as Judge Lacklaw and the lawyer, Peter Roper, they are not striped of their racial identity or depicted as racially distinct others. Instead, her narrative uses class distinctions to demark the boundary between civilized and savage behavior.


16 See Steven W. Hackel in “Land, Labor, and Production: The Colonial Economy of Spanish and Mexican California.” California History, 76.2/3, “Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush” (Summer - Fall, 1997): 111-146. While The Colonization Act of 1824 and the Supplemental Regulations of 1828 provide a means for private citizens of Mexico as well as foreign immigrants to gain title to California lands, Many of the land grants issued were for ten or twenty thousand acres although some grants

The Supplemental Regulations, however, specified that mission lands, by far the most valuable and accessible, could not be colonized ‘at present.’ The Secularization Act of 1833 swept this qualification aside, transferring the temporal authority of the missionaries to secular priests and opening up prime mission lands for pasturage and settlement. Taken together, these laws ushered in the greatest transfer of land and resources in California since the Spaniards first set foot in the region. As a result, by 1840 the private rancho had replaced the mission as the dominant social and economic institution in California, and all but a handful of former mission Indians had been rendered landless. (132)

Many of the land grants issued were for ten or twenty thousand acres although some families amassed hundreds of thousands of acres such as the Yorba and Castro families. Political power followed landowner. Hackel cites Thomas Larkin who in 1846 “estimated that a group of forty-six men of substance ruled
California” (136). However, Hackel also notes the inclusion of British and American immigrants among those granted title to California land by the Mexican government: “While exact figures remain elusive, approximately one-third of all grants in the 1840s went to settlers with non-Spanish, mostly British or American, surnames” (132).

17 Alemán, Jesse. “Historical Amnesia and the Vanishing Mestiza,” 66. Alemán points to the scene in which Victoriano Alamar wishes that he too could be a squatter: “Victoriano’s historical amnesia highlights the ‘oblivion’ caused by the ‘profound changes’ in colonial consciousness that framed The Squatter and the Don’s production” (66).
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