



D. H. Lawrence and Studies in Classic American Literature

Citation

Peterson Newton, Angela Noelle. 2011. D. H. Lawrence and Studies in Classic American Literature. Master's thesis, Harvard University, Extension School.

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D. H. Lawrence and *Studies in Classic American Literature*

Angela Peterson Newton

A Thesis in the Field of English
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

November 2011

Abstract

Although D. H. Lawrence is still considered by many critics one of the most significant English writers of the early twentieth century, a general perception of racist and misogynist tendencies in Lawrence's writing has meant that his work has all but disappeared from university curricula in Britain and the United States. This study examines Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, a series of critical essays about American literature and culture, and seeks to identify what, if any, lasting contribution Lawrence made with *Studies*. Several critics have argued recently that *Studies* is an interesting post-colonial text. Close scrutiny of several passages from the essays "Benjamin Franklin," "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," "Fenimore Cooper's White Novels," and "Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Novels" reveals the ways in which Lawrence makes a contribution to post-colonial discourse—and the ways in which he fails.

This study also examines the role of exile in Lawrence's writing of *Studies*. Lawrence conceived and wrote *Studies* while living in Britain; he would write a second, sharply contrasting version of the same collection while staying in Taos, New Mexico, after three years' exile from Britain. Lawrence was profoundly affected by his experience of exile. But how, exactly, did it change his writing, and how did it alter his view of American culture and literature? Comparisons of the first versions with the final versions of the aforementioned essays provide answers to these lines of inquiry. Lawrence's initial view of America was as a potential paradise, a place of rebirth and reinvention of the self.

This initial vision was complicated by a contrapuntal view of the United States as a reifying, dehumanizing machine. However, his modified vision, coincident with his exile in America, contained little of his earlier idealism, and was wholly given over to a dark, satiric critique of American culture and its literature.

This thesis concludes that, although Lawrence does embrace several problematic positions throughout his career—and throughout *Studies* itself—with regard to other races, he also puts forward an original and prescient critique of United States imperialism and cultural hegemony, which is, indeed, an interesting and valuable contribution to post-colonial literature.

About the Author

Angela Peterson Newton holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in theater and drama. Prior to studying at Harvard, she worked in New York as a stage director and producer. She now lives in Paris, where she teaches English language and literature at the university level.

Dedication

For Andrew

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my excellent instructors at the Harvard Extension School, in particular Sharmila Sen, for her seminar in post-colonial literature; Michael Shinagel, for his seminar in satire; John Stauffer and Timothy McCarthy, for their course in American protest literature; and Peter Zusi for his seminar in modernism. It was in the discovery of these literatures, and, finally, in their intersection, that I was able to define a thesis of deep and lasting interest to me.

I am also grateful to Dean Sue Weaver Schopf for providing early guidance in the thesis-writing process, and to my thesis director, Dean Michael Shinagel, for his encouragement and advice throughout the process.

I could not have written this thesis without the support of my extended family: I thank my parents and stepparents, Donna Peterson and Alan Tegeler, and Bonnie and Dwight Peterson, for their boundless support, and countless hours of babysitting. I am grateful to my father-in-law, Keith Newton, for hosting my pilgrimages to the British Library; to my brother-in-law, Michael Gasson, for his thoughtful reading of my first draft; and to my mother, Donna Peterson, for her meticulous proofreading of the final draft. Finally, I am grateful to my husband, Andrew, for his provocative questions and original insights, and for his loving care of me during the long thesis process, and throughout my time at Harvard.

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Introduction

[*Studies in Classic American Literature* is] one of the most striking and unhackneyed books ever written on our life and literature...[it is] the best critical work ever written by anyone, even Americans.—Leslie Fiedler (Marcus and Sollors 749)

Art-speech is the only truth. An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell you the truth of his day...The artist usually sets out—or used to—to point a moral and adorn a tale. The tale, however, points the other way, as a rule. Two blankly opposing morals, the artist's and the tale's. Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it. (Lawrence, Penguin 8)

D. H. Lawrence's place in the literary canon is unstable; his "reputation, both literary and personal, has undergone extraordinary vicissitudes, fluctuating more wildly than that of any other twentieth-century British author" (Fernihough 1). A flamboyantly uneven and often self-contradictory novelist, poet and essayist who led a life marked by personal and literary scandals, Lawrence is an artist whose biography has held as much interest for scholars as have his tales. In the decades since his death, successive generations of critics have veered from venerating Lawrence as a prophet to discounting him as an outmoded embarrassment, if not flatly denouncing him as a misogynist, anti-Semite, or racist. Today, most new Lawrence criticism in English is written under the auspices of British universities while, in the United States, there is little published on Lawrence, and his works have largely disappeared from university curricula, both in the United States and in Britain (Allen 4). Getting to the root causes of Lawrence's fall from academic grace is not the purpose of this thesis; however, it does raise a relevant question: why read Lawrence in the twenty-first century? The work herein examined, to

answer this question and others, is Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, a once-influential work of criticism now virtually unknown to the reading public.

Why read Lawrence? is not the only question this thesis seeks to answer; however, it does provide a useful framework for several narrower questions contained within the thesis. In seeking to answer these questions, the following chapters examine four of the ten essays in *Studies*: "Benjamin Franklin," "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," and two essays on Cooper, "Fenimore Cooper's White Novels," and "Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Novels." These essays were chosen because, firstly, subject authors Franklin, Crèvecoeur and Cooper share certain writerly themes, in that all three authors wrote about "early American" life, which is to say, the lives of white colonist-citizens, from shortly before the American Revolution until, roughly, the War of 1812. Secondly, the authors share certain biographical details: whether coincidentally or not, all three men spent part of their lives enjoying literary fame in exile—specifically, in Paris. Finally, in part because of these shared characteristics, Lawrence's essays on these authors place particular emphasis upon the themes herein addressed: questions of identity, exile, and empire, and the ways in which literature does, or should, according to him, engage with these phenomena.

Studies in Exile

Studies represents Lawrence's extensive engagement with North America: its peoples, its cultures, its literature, and what Lawrence termed its "spirit of place." After the British government banned *The Rainbow* in 1915, Lawrence sought a means to escape from England and the contiguous horrors of the First World War. Unable to secure a visa,

however, he managed to escape only as far as Cornwall. Lawrence began the project that would become *Studies* during his Cornish pseudo-exile, when he conceived of a series of essays on American literature, returning with pleasure to books he had read as a boy, such as Cooper's "Leatherstocking" novels, and also reading some American authors for the first time, among them Crèvecoeur and Franklin. Lawrence's selection of books for criticism was "striking" (Worthen 91): Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, Crèvecoeur's quasi-fictional *Letters from an American Farmer*, and Richard Henry Dana's memoir *Two Years Before the Mast*; selected fiction of James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Edgar Allan Poe; and finally, the poetry of Walt Whitman. *Studies* was published in two versions, originally in Britain as a series of rambling, esoteric essays for *The English Review* in 1918-1919, and then, in 1923-1924 as a strikingly rewritten, pithy and puissant book in both the United States and Britain.

Lawrence had developed his theory of "spirit of place" in advance of writing *Studies*, exploring his ideas while staying in Cornwall. He was convinced that every geographic location had its own, palpable presence that affected human consciousness:

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality. (Penguin 12)

As he read and wrote his initial essays, Lawrence gazed the while at a distant, imagined American wild west. Convinced that his future lay abroad, Lawrence began to envision America as a place where life could begin anew. His views on a possible life in America grew with time into hope for renewal, not only for himself and for his career, but also for European society as a whole: his hope was that a degenerating society might renew itself

by syncretic contact with the more “primitive” cultures of the Mediterranean, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Lawrence’s desire to go abroad intensified when, in 1917, Lawrence and his German-born wife Frieda were charged with espionage and sent under surveillance back to London, thereby intensifying Lawrence’s conviction that he wanted to “transfer all [his] life to America” (Worthen 93).

Lawrence’s creative process for *Studies* was burdened by a prolonged and wearisome campaign for publication. He initially composed the essays between 1916 and 1919, when he was successful in publishing eight of twelve original essays serially in *The English Review*. That same year, the Lawrences were finally issued their long-sought travel permits, and went abroad, first to Italy. In 1922 they sailed east, “ultimately to go west” (Worthen 95) to North America via Ceylon and Australia. Between 1919 and 1922, Lawrence reworked many of the essays, especially those he had been unsuccessful in publishing, while also writing his Italian travel pieces, such as “Etruscan Places,” and the Australian novel *Kangaroo*. Meanwhile, Lawrence conducted negotiations with two American publishers for a book version of *Studies*; however, securing a firm deal proved difficult. Finally, in the autumn of 1922, during his first months in Taos, New Mexico, Lawrence reached an agreement with New York publisher Thomas Seltzer. Staying at the ranch of one of his most ardent supporters, in a cottage that had been built expressly for his use, Lawrence quickly finished his manuscript of *Kangaroo*, and then set about revising the complete *Studies* one last time.

In the *annus mirabilis* of modernism (North 3) during which Eliot published *The Wasteland*, and Joyce, *Ulysses*, Lawrence performed his own remarkable literary act in revising *Studies*: the final Taos versions of the essays were less the result of typical

revision than of radical re-conception of the originals. In both form and meaning, Lawrence created a set of essays that at times bore but passing resemblance to their originals. Where the *English Review* essays had been filled with “lyrical enthusiasm,” the rewritten Taos essays were “short, sharp, slangy” and “occasionally mocking”; Lawrence was writing in a style that was “more adapted, he felt, to the American public and more suited to the fast pace of American life” (Kinkead-Weekes, *Game* 67). Lawrence reworked the essays extensively, virtually eliminating the arcane musings occupying perhaps a third of the original works, conceiving wholly new passages, and changing many passages nearly beyond recognition. At the same time, Lawrence dramatically altered his authorial voice, adopting a colloquial, “American” tone:

Lawrence took far longer over the job than might have been expected for a man who regularly wrote a novel in six weeks. But he was totally rewriting his essays; he described what he was doing as ‘Americanizing them’...Lawrence marked his completion of the essays, in December 1922, with a celebratory ‘Lobo, New Mexico’ at the bottom of the final page of manuscript...It was the first time he had ever put the place of writing at the end of a prose work. He was staking a kind of claim - not just ‘Made in America’ but ‘Made in Wild America.’ (Worthen 98)

If Lawrence was trying to get attention with the new *Studies*, he certainly succeeded; in the months after its publication, a large proportion of the American literary press responded with a “quick, vociferous reaction.” *Studies* was quickly reviewed by *The Nation*, *New Republic*, *New York Times Book Review*, *New York Evening Post Literary Review* and *Dial*, among others. Critical opinion ranged wide: *Current Opinion* called him the most “thoroughgoing iconoclast since Nietzsche” and his work an exercise in “egotism,” while the *Nation* called it “honest, independent, and eccentric,” even though attacking his “reductive, homogenizing reading of the American past.” Raymond Weaver wrote that “His ignorance of American literature is comprehensive and profound.” Most

critics were united in taking up the “crackling topicality of Lawrence's analysis,” and not its “Americanized” form for literary debate. However, Henry Irving Brock, writing for the *New York Times Book Review*, “the first to note and comment formally on Lawrence's soon-to-be famous distinction between the tale and the teller,” (Greenspan et al., *Studies* Cambridge ix) draws his own distinction between Lawrence as teller and his tale:

What does matter is that the more or less celebrated D. H. Lawrence has undertaken to put together a string of pearls about certain American writers, from Franklin to Whitman. And that he has broken the string and mixed the pearls with what comes out of the sty, to sling them both about as offensively as may be. The offense is all the greater because the pearls are really pearls of price. What he has observed and divined about American classical writers is arresting, illuminating, often the truth—or very near it. What he has analyzed out as the essential American quality is something which may very likely be just that. Yet, if upon the subject properly in hand he writes like a man of insight and a clever workman with the edged tools of language, the next sentence might often be composed by a gum-chewing Main Street soda-fountain cut-up or a bleary-eyed bar-room bum. (BR9)

Brock's view is that Lawrence's prose undercuts his “pearls” of truth with inelegant argot; for him, the “Americanization” of the essays was arguably a failure. Yet the sharp, slangy prose was essential to Lawrence's expression of the truths that Brock found so valuable.

A comparison of the essays' two published versions makes clear the effects of Lawrence's “Wild America” revision; while the reasons behind the revisions can only be guessed at through educated speculation, the deeper significance of Lawrence's act of rewriting, and the resulting alterations in meaning, are open to critical interpretation. It is Lawrence's revision, and the associated phenomenal questions, including the possible motivations for revision, the resulting changes in form and meaning, and the broader significance therein, with which this thesis is concerned. In his “Americanizing” process, Lawrence arrived at a deep re-evaluation of his subject, even, at times, completely

reversing his original appraisal.

Chapter I examines the mechanics of Lawrence's revisions, comparing passages from the *English Review* essays with the Taos revisions. It discusses the possible ways in which Lawrence's experience of exile in America may have influenced his own rewriting process, and how it may have affected his view of the literary exile of his subject authors Franklin, Crèvecoeur, and Cooper. It also investigates the ways in which the conditions of exile illuminated, for Lawrence, the precise nature of the literary production of his subject authors, and, finally, the ways in which Lawrence's linguistic choices reflect alterations in Lawrence's view of his subject, and the impact that the changed language has upon the meaning of the text.

Post-colonial Reading

Outside the whale is the unceasing storm, the continual quarrel, the dialectic of history. Outside the whale there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world. Outside the whale we see that we are all irradiated by history, we are radioactive with history and politics; we see that it can be as false to create a politics-free fictional universe as to create one in which nobody needs to work or eat or hate or love or sleep. (Rushdie 5)

A possible answer to the question *why read Lawrence?* can be found by examining Lawrence's works in light of post-colonial studies, a vein of inquiry that has yielded at least a partial response to Lawrence's marginalization due to racist, misogynist or otherwise exclusionary views. Post-colonial readings have permitted scholars to reconsider Lawrence in light of the "Western cultural archive" Edward Said describes, and "do a rather different kind of reading and interpretation" (*Culture* 59). Most, if not all, of the travel essays, stories and novels Lawrence wrote in exile have received some

measure of post-colonial critical treatment; so, too, have some of Lawrence's novels, most notably *Women in Love*, in which English characters engage with African themes. A post-colonial reading of *Studies* presents a strong argument in favor of including Lawrence in a list of early twentieth-century Western authors (a list that might begin with Joseph Conrad and extend through, for example, Graham Greene) who engaged critically with the world they encountered, and (albeit problematically in some cases) considered imperialism as something other than the destiny of Britain, France and the United States; they lived and wrote "outside the whale," to use Salman Rushdie's term. By this measure, *Studies* is, indeed, a work of post-colonial criticism. Written by an outsider, it takes as its overriding object of criticism a rising republican empire, which appeared set to dominate the world stage in the coming century.

Lawrence's letters, which John Worthen called a "work of art in their own right," (Scammel) have also been the object of post-colonial scrutiny; it is in the letters, however, that Lawrence proves most mercurial and problematic, where he can be seen to have tried out various ideas on colonialism and the Other,¹ which is to say, the non-Western, non-Christian subject, and where he seems most often to have aired views that are seen today as racist and reactionary. As he does throughout his correspondence, in *Studies* Lawrence reveals himself as a product of his time, incapable of acknowledging the Other. Yet many critics credit Lawrence with attempting what few Western writers of his generation did, that is, an engagement with different races and cultures. Although, according to Howard J. Booth, "Racist and pro-colonial statements can be found in D. H. Lawrence's writing," he can also be found interrogating Western attitudes toward the Other in his postwar

¹ I have capitalized Other when using the term in the sense of racial or cultural others; I have done this simply for semantic clarity; using quotes denaturalizes the term unnecessarily, in my opinion, yet leaving the term alone can lead to confusion.

works:

Between 1917 and 1925 Lawrence developed the view that engaging with other cultures and peoples could renew the self and Europe. He pursued this theory in extended travels and in writing, oscillating between insisting on his position and, increasingly, doubting it...He worked through a range of positions while other major modernist writers (Pound and Eliot) drifted into the racist and reactionary positions they held for many years. Few writers take us further into the shaping of thought and language in the modernist period than Lawrence, however uncomfortable it might sometimes be to follow his thinking. (Booth 197)

Lawrence biographer Mark Kinkead-Weekes writes that Lawrence was a rare author who was able to “decolonise his vision” and make a prescient and under-acknowledged contribution to postcolonial discourse (*Companion* 71, 83). Margaret Storch agrees, applauding Lawrence’s “wish to encounter the true spirit” of the Taos Indians, whom he encountered during his stay in New Mexico, and his “continuing understanding of cultural relativism” (Storch 50), although she qualifies Lawrence’s anti-colonialism as being “very often synonymous with anti-feminism” (Storch 54). Wayne Templeton, while finding that Lawrence “never overcame a certain prejudice” against “both native and white” Americans, credits Lawrence with trying “to move beyond rather than simply confirm colonialist European convictions concerning Native Americans” (Templeton 15). Ronald Granofsky takes a psychologically-determined approach to “untangling”

Lawrence’s views on race:

At the very time when Lawrence was frequently crossing national boundaries in his life, there is in his writing an ongoing exploration of the boundaries that serve to protect the vulnerable self’s integrity, alongside a defensive aggression in the form of misogyny or racism when the boundaries of the self are threatened. (Granofsky 209)

However, this thesis argues that, in *Studies*, it is *not* in Lawrence’s supposed engagement with a racial Other that he makes his contribution post-colonial literature; his encounters

with Others *per se* are superficial at best and unconsidered racism at worst.² Lawrence's treatment of Indians as subjects never quite arrives at biographical historicity, to use Walter Benjamin's term; rather, his recurring use of the Indian is, particularly in "Benjamin Franklin," a metaphor for the soul of the white, Western, metropolitan subject. Yet despite his shortcomings, Lawrence is able to dissect his subject authors insightfully and presciently in this area, arriving at a critique that was, in a post-colonial sense, ahead of its time.

Chapter II looks at the ways in which Lawrence interrogates Crèvecoeur's and Cooper's employment of Indians, whether as fictional antagonists or metaphorical figures in the service of morality or "Nature." It also investigates Lawrence's identification of his subject authors' use of Indian images in the service of their construction of an American identity, and their employment of Indians as fantasy constructions upon which their own Euro-American identity relies. Yet even as Lawrence identifies, and satirizes, Crèvecoeur and Cooper's use of "noble savagery," he employs Indian imagery himself in constructing a theory of art; Chapter II examines the ways in which Lawrence engages in that for which he satirizes Crèvecoeur and Cooper.

Much of Lawrence's satire on these tropes is aimed at rescuing the individual (white, Western) soul from the cogs of a soulless modernity, like Chaplin in *Modern Times*. Lawrence's view of modernity, or the American version of it (which is, conceivably, a tautology in Lawrence's view), is of a force that is, in itself, imperial, colonizing everything it touches. Chapter III looks at Lawrence's view of modernity and

² This perceived engagement with the Other is undercut repeatedly with instances of gratuitous anti-Semitism, such as "if Mr. Pierpont Morgan or Mr. Nosey Hebrew...manages to scoop in my bit, along with their lump, why, never mind, I shall get my wages HEREAFTER" (*Studies* 25). It is problematic to consider any writer capable of such unconsidered racism against one group to be truly engaging with another at the same time.

its interplay with American identity and, again, with race and imperialism; Lawrence critiques Benjamin Franklin as the seeming embodiment of these issues. It is in his engagement with the giant machine of American modernity that tells “the truth of his day”; despite his shortfall in understanding of one Other, the Indian, he displays deep understanding of a different Other: it is in its critique of the dominant culture of the United States, and its own cultural *narrative about* Indians, that *Studies* makes its mark. For although Lawrence was unable, ultimately, to conceive of Indians as anything other than figures in an extended metaphor, his metaphor can be read as a pre-Gramscian critique that grapples with a burgeoning American cultural hegemony. Lawrence insightfully dissects elements of American culture that he perceives to be engaged in constructing an “ideal” mythology; this mythology reinforces a highly contingent identity which, in order to survive, constantly seeks to destroy that which is outside it.

Finally, Lawrence was true to his own conceit of an unreliable *teller* telling a trustworthy *tale*: in his various versions and revisions of his essays, despite his uneven style and unenlightened shortcomings, with *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence made a lasting contribution to the corpus of American literary and cultural criticism, one that his contemporary Edmund Wilson described thus:

To an American, American literature is a part of his native landscape, and so veiled with associations that he cannot always see what the author is really saying. D. H. Lawrence has here tried to do what it would be difficult for an American to do: read our books for their meaning in the life of the western world as a whole...*Studies in Classic American Literature*...remains one of the few first-rate books that have ever been written on the subject. (Lawrence, *Studies* Viking, back matter)

Chapter I

Cornwall, Taos, Paris: Exile and Art-speech

There is no such thing as “the text”—other than the whole history of its development, in which the marks made on paper by (in Lawrence’s case) a constantly revising author are the crucial element, before it ever reaches the relativities of critical interpretation, over time and “political” change. (Kinkead-Weekes, *Rereading* 275)

Lucky Coleridge, who got no farther than Bristol. Some of us have gone all the way. I think this wild and noble America is the thing that I have pined for ever since I read Fenimore Cooper, as a boy. Now I’ve got it. (Lawrence, Penguin 28-29)

One of the sharpest distinctions between the final *Studies* essays and their originals is in Lawrence’s treatment of exile in the essays on Franklin, Crèvecoeur and Cooper. The fact that Lawrence wrote his first version of *Studies* while living in Britain, and subsequently wrote a second, sharply contrasting version while in exile in the United States, permits the reader to investigate the possible impact of that exile upon Lawrence’s writing, and upon his thinking about key themes, such as race-relations and questions of identity, within *Studies*. In the Taos versions, exile becomes a central theme of Lawrence’s critique, while it is marginal in the *English Review* versions; it is clear that the fact of his own exile allowed Lawrence to conceive his critique of an “ideal” American identity-myth, and the ways in which his subject authors had contributed to it.

Lawrence’s engagement with America began years before his ship docked in San Francisco Bay. John Worthen, noting that *Studies* was a “distinctly odd book for an Englishman to write,” describes Lawrence’s conception of the project as arising from a combination of circumstances, including his pseudo-exile in Cornwall, his social contact

with “a couple of young Americans,” his difficulty getting published in England, and his recent reading list: Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Dana’s *Two Years Before the Mast*, and Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*, the last of which was a fortuitous gift. Lawrence had read Cooper years earlier; he would refer to himself in his essay “Indians and an Englishman” as “born in England and kindled with Fenimore Cooper” (*Phoenix* 94). Lawrence’s reading of American authors provided relief for his frustration at his unsuccessful efforts to go to the United States between 1916 and 1921; in essence, Lawrence conceived of *Studies* as a proxy for exile. Lawrence, a deracinated figure whose true home was always elsewhere, seemed to be looking for a paradise wherein he could realize his ambitions for the evolution of the human self into a higher state; he often wrote to correspondents of his ideas of an imagined utopia he called “Ranim” (Patterson 557). Reading the likes of Whitman, Hawthorne, and Benjamin Franklin in Cornwall provided an escape for Lawrence, as well as a constructive, forward-thinking project during a time of personal and national crisis. This multi-layered project comprised not only *Studies in Classic American Literature*, but also, perhaps, the renewal of Lawrence’s own identity, as he took refuge in the literature and myth of a far-off land.

Lawrence was preceded by generations of English thinkers and writers who had looked to the Americas as an earthly paradise. An imagined, wild American space has characterized English culture and literature since (at least) the first production of *The Tempest*, a fact upon which Lawrence riffs: “Ca Ca Caliban/Get a new master, be a new man” (Penguin 11). W.K. Buckley writes, “British literature has always described America as more of an idea than a place: a New World, a Land of Freedom, a Garden of Eden,” where anything is possible, including material success, romantic fulfillment, the

rehabilitation of one's reputation, and even the reinvention of oneself. In 1908 Robert Louis Stevenson wrote that America was a place "full of dark possibilities," saying, "the minds of young men in England turn naturally at a certain period of their age...It seems to them as if, out west, the war of life was still conducted in the open air, and on free barbaric terms" (Buckley 36).

As the nineteenth century advanced, there emerged a new sub-genre in British writing: the American travelogue, sparking "the imaginations of the British people for the 'wilds' of the American west." Buckley describes the "flood" of British writing about America in the nineteenth century: "the list of Victorian novelists who wrote about their visits to America reads like a Who's Who: Dickens, Trollope, Kingsley, Stevenson, Collins, Kipling, and others" (36). These writers, together with another two to three hundred of their lesser-known colleagues, created an imagined frontier for British popular culture to colonize.

Lawrence was evidently influenced by this tradition; and indeed, he repeatedly wrote of his vision of America as a place of renewal and fresh possibility in his correspondence in the years before he traveled to North America:

I must see America: here the autumn of all life has set in, the fall: we are hardly more than ghosts in the haze, we who stand apart from the flux of death. I must see America. I think one can feel hope there. I think that there the life comes up from the roots, crude but vital. Here the whole tree of life is dying. It is like being dead: the underworld. I must see America. I believe it is beginning, not ending. (Worthen 92)

Lawrence's twin projects, those of *Studies*, and of life in exile, could only be completed in tandem; his exile was incomplete until he reached America. He had staked so much on his eventual American utopia that he delayed his arrival, seemingly, as long as possible, spending far more time than strictly necessary in transit to America. After

traveling for nearly two years, Lawrence approached America from the Pacific in order to avoid New York, to which he had developed an aversion, perhaps partially through his dealings with the publishing world. Implicit in these arrangements is the assumption that Lawrence would find the western United States more welcoming, more suited to his own disposition.

By the time he came to the final *Studies* rewrite, Lawrence's life had changed considerably. He had spent nearly three years abroad, successfully escaping from an environment he found stifling; he had won the freedom to live as he pleased, not bound by any particular identity. Yet Lawrence's first days in Taos, after a bracing arrival in the "shove or be shoved" (*Letters* 296) world of San Francisco, were characterized by profound culture shock, accompanied by a complicated sense of dislocation. In the final accomplishment of his goal, Lawrence found disappointment: not "Rananim," not even a place he could retreat in restful contemplation, but rather a vexingly alien environment (Buckley 35-39). Perhaps most vexing of all was Lawrence's personal relationship with his Taos host, Mabel Dodge Sterne. Once Lawrence was installed in Mabeltown, as he came to call Sterne's ranch, he began almost immediately to feel beholden to her and to resent her generosity, having initially felt grateful to her for this "American" quality (*Letters* 289). It is worth noting that when Lawrence performed his revision of *Studies*, his total experience of America consisted of a brief stay in a San Francisco hotel, a train journey to New Mexico, and a month's stay on the Sterne estate. Yet a deep sense of shock at finding exile in America, to which, for years, he had only dreamed of escaping, to now be hostile and holding only shallow promise, was registered in Lawrence's revisions.

One key difference between the versions of *Studies* can be summed up as Lawrence's reversal of his "textual" attitude, a phenomenon first described by Edward Said in *Orientalism*:

It may appear strange to speak about something or someone as holding a *textual* attitude, but a student of literature will understand the phrase more easily if he will recall the kind of view attacked by Voltaire in *Candide*, or even the attitude to reality satirized by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*. What seems unexceptionable good sense to these writers is that it is a fallacy to assume the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books—texts—say; to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin...It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientation of direct encounters with the human. (92-93)

By the time he arrived in the United States, Lawrence was already alert to the ways in which books had let him down. In his travels Lawrence had cleaved mainly to his own kind, living in a border-less, endlessly morphing imagined community of Anglophone expatriates, rather than becoming acquainted with the local inhabitants of the places he visited. Leaving behind the quasi-familiar, "classical" environment of Italy, he lived within the confines of the first-class cabins of a passenger ship, associating almost exclusively with upper-middle-class Britons. Arriving in Ceylon, he stayed with friends and had little to do with the locals; his few encounters with local people left him to conclude they were nothing like the people he had been led to expect in his literary encounters with Melville, whose *Typee* had made him imagine the South Pacific as "Edenic":

Lawrence was repelled in 1922 by his first actual encounters with 'dark' people, and was too habitually honest to pretend otherwise. Admittedly he had fallen ill in Ceylon and the exotic colours, sounds, tastes and smells of the tropics proved too much for someone feverish and nauseous—but this hardly accounts for his sense of the local people 'swarming,' 'soft,' 'boneless,' with 'black bottomless hopeless eyes.' ...After calling at Tahiti

on his way to New Mexico...a postcard to Compton Mackenzie put an end to their old dream of sailing the South Seas: 'If you are thinking of coming here, don't. The people are brown and soft.' (Kinkead-Weekes, *Companion* 68)

This experience, contrasted with his reading of Melville, provided Lawrence with a dawning understanding of his textual apprehension of the places he was seeing at last with his own eyes. One of Lawrence's responses to the culture shock that his textual attitude had encouraged, in addition to writing caustic letters to his correspondents, was to dismantle authors he had previously admired in the *Studies* rewrites; for it was they, and not anonymous travel-guide writers, who had authored the texts from which he had derived his textual attitude. *Typee*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, the *Letters from an American Farmer*: these were the "travel books" to which Lawrence had looked to form his idea of America.

By contrast, Lawrence held no textual attitude with regard to Benjamin Franklin: his views on Franklin, and Franklin's *Autobiography*, do not appear to have been altered in any way by his American experience. This contrast provides insight into the precise nature of Lawrence's textual attitude, and the ways in which Lawrence's trip to the United States changed his view of it. In order to assess the aspects of Lawrence's altered view, let us examine the fruits of his revision, by comparing short passages from the first versions, with the final versions of three of the *Studies* essays: "Benjamin Franklin," "Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Novels," and "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur." Here the effects of Lawrence's "Americanizing" process will be evident, as well as his reversals of opinion, and his ultimate rejection of the textual attitude.

“Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur”

Lawrence’s tone in the Crèvecoeur essay, as in the Franklin and Cooper essays, shifts from measured and pedantic to aggressively satirical. As Lawrence himself contends in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, “even satire is a form of sympathy”; however, here the tone transforms Lawrence’s original *discovery* of American literature to a *dismantling* of it, doing violence to American literary icons. Crèvecoeur, in particular, suffers from this reversal; he was little-known at the time of Lawrence’s writing and is even less so today.

The crucial distinction in the Crèvecoeur essay can be found toward the end of each version. Lawrence not only cuts and completely revises the Crèvecoeur essay, he also reverses his opinion about the possibility of Indians and whites finding cultural commonality.

In the *English Review* version, he finds that “The truth remains the same, as another century has proved it—it is easier to turn white men into Indians than Indians into white men” (Cambridge 203), while in the Taos version he concludes, “I have seen some Indians whom you really couldn’t tell from white men. And I have never seen a white man who looked really like an Indian” (Penguin 38). In *The Symbolic Meaning*, Armin Arnold attributes Lawrence’s reversal to “his experiences with the Indians at Taos” chiefly because “Mabel Dodge’s husband Toni Luhan was an Indian” (Arnold 49). Here is where Lawrence’s textual attitude toward Indianness becomes apparent: before encountering actual Indians, Lawrence posited a theory that he would abandon after a few encounters with Indian people in New Mexico. Yet, while Lawrence’s change of opinion may, at first glance, appear an insignificant, autobiographical coda to an essay in literary

criticism, it is not an afterthought; the entire revised essay, in its changed tone, drives inevitably toward this ultimate reversal of position. Consider the following:

From the *English Review* version:

Thus the *Letters from an American Farmer*, affecting a naïve simplicity, are in reality most sophisticated. They tell of Crèvecoeur's struggles to establish his farm in the wilderness, of the beneficent help of his "amiable spouse," the joy of seating his infant son on the shafts of the plough, the happiness of helping a neighbor build a barn, the supreme satisfaction of finding himself a worthy and innocent member of a free community. But none of it is spontaneous emotion. It is all dictated from the head. "Now," says Crèvecoeur to himself, "I am a pure child of Nature, Nature sweet and pure." So he proceeds to luxuriate in his *rôle*, to find everything sweet and pure. "This is my spouse," he says, "amiable, sweet, and pure, a deep-breasted daughter of Nature, fountain of life." Thus she is a kind of living image of Crèvecoeur's own intention. That she was a woman, an individual, a being by herself could never occur to the American Farmer. She was an "amiable spouse," just as an oaken cupboard is an oaken cupboard. Likewise a little boy is a healthy offspring, and when this same healthy offspring is seated on his father's plough, the whole picture represents the children of Nature—sweet and pure—toiling in innocence and joy. (Cambridge 195)

From the Taos version:

Crèvecoeur's *Letters* are written in a spirit of touching simplicity, almost better than Chateaubriand. You'd think neither of them would ever know how many beans make five. This American Farmer tells of the joys of creating a home in the wilderness, and of cultivating the virgin soil. Poor virgin, prostituted from the very start. The Farmer had an Amiable Spouse and an Infant Son, his progeny. He took the Infant Son...to the fields with him, and seated the same I. S. on the shafts of the plough whilst he, the American Farmer, ploughed the potato patch. He also, the A.F., helped his Neighbors, whom he no doubt loved as himself, to build a barn, and they labored together in the Innocent Simplicity of one of Nature's Communities. Meanwhile the Amiable Spouse, who likewise in Blakean simplicity has No Name, cooked the dough-nuts or the pie, though these are not mentioned. No doubt she was a deep-breasted daughter of America, though she may well equally have been a flat-bosomed Methodist...And so these Children of Nature toiled in the Wilds at Simple Toil with a little Honest Sweat now and then. You have the complete picture, dear reader. The American Farmer made his own Family Picture, and it is still on view. Of course the Amiable Spouse put on her best apron to be *Im Bild*, for all the world to see and admire. (Penguin 29-30)

There is little change in the content of ideas between the two passages. Lawrence is critical in the first version of what he sees as Crèvecoeur's idealization and commodification of his family for the purposes of writing an appealing story. The change in tone is the real difference between the versions, but it is not *simply* a change in tone: the later, deeply ironic, Initial-Capital-Letter-Style drives inevitably toward a reversal of his conclusion: by ridiculing Crèvecoeur in this way, reducing his autobiographical sketch to a caricature, Lawrence has left himself nowhere to go *but* to conclude that it is impossible for a white man to "look like an Indian," an Indian, in this construct, being a person who lives according to "Nature." In the first version, Lawrence capitalizes only "Nature," simply borrowing a romantic convention. While critiquing the Romantic Movement and Crèvecoeur's engagement with it, Lawrence still admits the possibility of a "simple" American life, one that is "natural," even if Crèvecoeur himself appears to merely play a role. Post-exile, in Taos, Lawrence capitalizes not only Nature, but dozens of words: Amiable Spouse, Infant Son, Simple Toil, Honest Sweat. Lawrence's critique has become a lampoon. Here Lawrence questions the validity of the entire *American Farmer* project, implying that Crèvecoeur has fused the Romantic Movement with an "American" mercantile sensibility, in which "savage" qualities and ideals can be marketed and sold in a modern marketplace. Lawrence finishes the final Crèvecoeur essay with his indictment of the author, giving it a distinctly modern twist: "Crèvecoeur wanted to be an *intellectual* savage, like a great many more we have met...[w]hite savages, with motor-cars, telephones, incomes and ideals! Savages fast inside the machine; yet savage enough, ye gods" (Penguin 38-39).

“Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking Novels”

‘In short,’ he says in one of his letters, ‘we were at table two counts, one monsignore, an English Lord, an Ambassador, and my humble self.’ Were we really! How nice it must have been to know that one self, at least, was humble. And he felt the democratic American tomahawk wheeling over his uncomfortable scalp all the time...In actuality, Fenimore loved the genteel continent of Europe, and waited gasping for the newspapers to praise his WORK. In another actuality, Fenimore loved the tomahawking continent of America, and imagined himself Natty Bumppo. (Lawrence, Penguin 53-54)

One gets the impression, when comparing the versions of the two Cooper essays, that Lawrence felt almost personally betrayed by Cooper in light of his experience in exile. Even in the revised version, it is clear that Lawrence reveres the Cooper books; therefore he is forced to find his most stringent line of attack in Cooper’s biography, the facts of which, apparently, he gleaned from the introduction to the Everyman’s Library edition of *The Prairie* (Axelrad 565).

The second Cooper essay is so radically altered in form and import that one must take great care in choosing passages to compare. The following comparison has been anchored to the phrase “under the wigwam,” a key Lawrencean trope in these essays.

First, the *English Review* version:

Crèvecoeur imagines himself under the wigwam. Cooper goes much further. He spends a whole lifetime, imaginatively, in the backwoods. He has a passion for the aboriginal life, the aboriginal scene, and the native savage. His innermost desire is polarized all the time by the primitive America of the Red Man and the Red Man’s ways of life. His whole soul embraces the dark aboriginal soul with unceasing, fertile love. (Cambridge 216)

Now, the Taos version:

They seem to have been specially fertile in imagining themselves ‘under the wigwam,’ do these Americans, just when their knees were comfortably under the mahogany, in Paris, along with the knees of

4 Counts
 2 Cardinals
 1 Milord
 5 Cocottes
 1 Humble self

You bet, though, that when the cocottes were being raffled off, Fenimore went home to his WIFE. (Penguin 53)

In the first version, the phrase “under the wigwam” is thoroughly naturalized, allowed to stand unquestioned and unexamined. Here Lawrence accepts Cooper’s “innermost desire” as a natural consequence of an understandable attraction to “aboriginal life”; he describes Cooper as constructing an identity founded on an unquestioned and, again, naturalized idea of Indians, incorporating an “aboriginal soul” effortlessly into his personality. However, by enclosing the phrase in quotations in the second version, Lawrence denaturalizes it; in doing so, he questions its validity. By further juxtaposing it with “under the mahogany,” he renders the notion of Cooper imagining an “aboriginal soul” for himself ridiculous. Here we can see how definitely Lawrence’s view of Cooper has altered in his American rewriting. He no longer views Cooper as the author of haunting, beautiful and nostalgic visions of a departed “savage” paradise; in the final analysis, Lawrence finds Cooper to be the purveyor of a shabby species of “wish-fulfillment” worthy of satire.

In addition to his frequent use of satiric capital letters and ironic exclamation points, Lawrence makes use of the summary table repeatedly in the Cooper essay; the following table carries on immediately from the preceding passage:

<i>Wish Fulfillment</i>		<i>Actuality</i>
THE WIGWAM	vs	MY HOTEL
CHINGACHGOOK	vs	MY WIFE
NATTY BUMPPPO	vs	MY HUMBLE SELF

Whereas in the first version, Lawrence portrays Cooper quasi-romantically, as one who is

“polarized” by his life being in one place while he lives imaginatively in another, held there by “unceasing, fertile love,” in the second version, Lawrence makes Cooper ridiculous, and his critique little more than a lampoon. By using a table, Lawrence visually reduces the heretofore irreducible qualities of imagination and “innermost desire” to a cold, stark, “scientific” comparison of “actuality” with the imaginative world of the novel. In this way, Lawrence is able to have his literary cake and eat it too: he can still love, and praise, Cooper’s tales, while excoriating their teller.

“Benjamin Franklin”

In contrast with the Crèvecoeur and Cooper essays, in both versions of “Benjamin Franklin,” the content remains essentially the same; only the authorial voice changes.

Lawrence begins his original version in a measured, if mildly ironic, tone:

The idea of the perfectibility of man, which was such an inspiration in Europe, to Rousseau and Godwin and Shelley, all those idealists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, was actually fulfilled in America before the ideal was promulgated in Europe. (Cambridge 180)

This tone is obliterated in the revision, which transforms the opening sentences beyond recognition:

The Perfectibility of Man! Ah heaven, what a dreary theme! The perfectibility of the Ford car! The perfectibility of which man? I am many men. Which of them are you going to perfect? I am not a mechanical contrivance. (Penguin 15)

Here the authorial voice more closely resembles that of a tabloid newspaper—more Brock’s “blear-eyed bar-room bum” than that of literary criticism. Yet it is an arresting opener: jaunty, audacious, neatly satirizing with a pair of capital letters the entire Enlightenment project, with which it handily juxtaposes a reference to that most dreaded

of modern innovations, the assembly line.

Yet the Taos revision involves more than a simple change of voice. The Whitmanesque cadence of “The perfectibility of which man? I am many men” points toward a highly deliberative process to produce the essays in a self-consciously “American” vernacular. In the first version, the opening paragraph is just that: the beginning of a line of inquiry and discussion, a teaser for the argument to come. In the final version, this fancifully didactic opening is transformed into a radically distilled summary of Lawrence’s entire argument, delivered in a style straight from Madison Avenue, thus rendering its prose into a meta-comment upon his subject. Lawrence employs capital letters, either of the first letter of a word, or throughout a word, as a satirical device repeatedly in the final *Studies*. “He uses more capital letters than a Hearst editorial,” quipped Brock in the *Times* review. In “the Perfectibility of Man” rather than the mere “perfectibility of man,” Lawrence has given us, not only a phrase, but also a modern *product* that can, presumably, like the Ford car with which it is twinned, be put upon an assembly line and tweaked endlessly until it resembles some sort of mechanized “perfection.” Thus, here in the opening paragraph of “Benjamin Franklin,” Lawrence’s art-speech has summed up the better part of his critique of Franklin.

The Impact of Exile

Lawrence’s original view of American culture and literature, even if it did contain a textual attitude, was by no means simplistic; while writing in Cornwall and London, Lawrence held a nuanced vision of a culture that embraced perhaps, a harsh strain of Puritanism and a dehumanizing tendency toward materialism, yet at the same time it

offered the possibility of mystical evolution to those who sought it. What Lawrence found, in his brief experience of America, was that Franklin-style rationalist materialism was ubiquitous in American life, but a Cooperesque mystical element was sadly lacking. The essays are a study in the impact of exile upon experience and writing: Lawrence's original essays posed a hypothesis, conceived in a remote laboratory; Lawrence then went into the field, where he found that many of his theories weren't supported by his experience. He therefore jettisoned ideas that no longer worked, and, rather than construct more theories in a new laboratory, in their place he wrote a field report of his experience. Because he had engaged with America for so long before arriving in it, he quickly ascertained his true, firsthand view of America; he could discern the outlines of the myth that he had unwittingly consumed. In the crucible of experience, apparently, Lawrence found the American identity-myth at large to be unpalatable, and an untrue representation of its creator.

In Britain, Lawrence's physical distance from his subject matter, and his overall textual attitude, created the necessary conditions for the quasi-philosophical, esoteric ramblings of his first essays. When he traveled to the place of origin of his subject texts, however, he developed what might be called an "experiential attitude" with which he contrasted the views of subjects such as Cooper and Crèvecoeur. Lawrence's own exile formed the basis for much of his critique in *Studies*, while he viewed the exile of Crèvecoeur and Cooper as the "opposite" of what they were writing, thus, their exile was, in effect, anti-experience; thus, he, Lawrence, was writing *his experience*, while they were writing the *opposite*: writing what they had *not* experienced, but had, rather, merely wished for. In Lawrence's view, Crèvecoeur and Cooper were *creating* a "textual

attitude,” an identity-myth, about the meaning of America, and the meaning of being American. They were putting ideals into text, in effect; this is the inverse of the process that Said describes. The fact that Lawrence underwent no reversal of opinion regarding Franklin sheds light upon Lawrence’s original view of America, and his subsequent disappointment. In holding fast to his original idea of Franklin, while reversing his opinion of Crèvecoeur and Cooper, Lawrence appears to have viewed American culture as hopelessly materialistic and automated, too reified and machinelike to ever provide the setting for Ranim.

Chapter II

Playing Indian in Crèvecoeur and Cooper

‘MY GOD, how like it is to a young Mohawk warrior!’
—Benjamin West, upon viewing the Apollo Belvedere in the Vatican.

‘It was a matter of course,’ says Mrs. Cooper, ‘that he should dwell on the better traits of the picture rather than on the coarser and more revolting, though more common points. Like West, he could see Apollo in the young Mohawk.’...As if ever any Indian was like Apollo...But men see what they want to see: especially if they look from a long distance, across the ocean, for example. Yet the Leatherstocking books are lovely. Lovely half-lies. They form a sort of American Odyssey, with Natty Bumppo for Odysseus. (Lawrence, Penguin 55)

There is a quasi-mythical tale, first told by the painter himself to his biographer John Galt, in which the American artist Benjamin West is taken to see the classical statue known as the Apollo Belvedere; however, West sees, not the marble embodiment of “civilized” perfection, but, rather, a representation of the “savage” qualities of a Mohawk warrior. In this story, West is freshly arrived in Italy from the wilds of Pennsylvania, a neophyte about to be schooled in the ways of European culture and civilization, as well as in painting. When confronted with an icon of classical artistic achievement, West responds by asserting his difference, his equal cultural footing: he declares his Americanness, framed in terms of his ability to prize Indianness, or the “natural” beauty and grace inherent in the figure of a Mohawk, as the rival of “civilized” accomplishment. West then relates this story to John Galt, whose biography of West would become a “public relations effort of enormous consequence” (Sienkewicz 1). Here, then, in this small story, is an American artist simultaneously asserting his identity and rejecting

European cultural supremacy, by means of invoking a quasi-Indian identity. The artist himself then packages his gesture as a morsel of American identity-myth and sells it to a mass audience. At the heart of this activity is the generalized, mute figure of the Indian. This tale, deployed in the Lawrence essay as a referential palimpsest, epitomizes both Lawrence's critique of American authors' use of Indians, and also his ideas about what makes an American author a true artist (or not) by virtue of his degree of aboriginality.

Nowhere in *Studies* is Lawrence's engagement with Indians and Indian imagery more explicit than in his essays on Crèvecoeur and Cooper, in which he interrogates the uses to which both Crèvecoeur and Cooper put Indian figures and characters. According to Lawrence, Crèvecoeur uses Indians as figures in a pastoral tale that is thoroughly romantic (which is to say, hollow and untrue) and distastefully mercantile; Lawrence identifies, in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, a neatly packaged utopian-American vision created for export. In his essays on Cooper, Lawrence finds that Cooper constructs Indian characters that fulfill his deep personal wish for a "savage" alter-ego, as part of a yearning American myth that speaks to a deep longing in the white psyche to absorb qualities of Indianness into itself, and to incorporate aspects of Indian identity into its own, white American identity. Yet, while Lawrence criticizes this practice of identity-related myth-making, his art-speech in the same essays can be read as a fervent hope for, or endorsement of, the potential of this syncretic or evolutionary myth to become reality. Lawrence's critique is further complicated, and enriched, by Lawrence's tendency to play with "Indian" tropes similar to those of his subject authors. The construction of an Indian alter-ego, which Lawrence identifies particularly in Cooper's writing, can be read as part of a broader cultural pattern of opposites and others, a pattern that exists, in some form,

in every society, according to Edward Said:

The construction of identity...while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction of opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us.” Each age and society re-creates its “others.” Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of “other” is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies. (*Orientalism* 331-332)

Yet this construction is complicated in Cooper, and in American culture at large, by the simultaneous desire of the white American to define the Indian not only as Other, but also as *self*, and, consequently, both employs the symbol of the Indian as a foil, and appropriates desirable elements of Indian culture into a broad American identity.

Historian Philip Deloria discusses American cultural practices around Indian identity in depth in *Playing Indian*, in which he contends that ritualistic performances of Indianness form a fundamental aspect of white American identity: white Americans desire to define themselves as, in the first place, not-Indian, and yet, at the same time, to incorporate Indian identity into an identity that is not-European. Deloria points to Lawrence as a pioneering critic in this arena; in fact, he opens *Playing Indian* with a discussion of Lawrence’s insights in this area:

In his most significant work of literary criticism, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence focused on the issue of American identity, suggesting that American consciousness was essentially “unfinished” and incomplete. An unparalleled national identity crisis swirled around two related dilemmas: First, Americans had an awkward tendency to define themselves by what they were not. They had failed to produce a positive identity that stood on its own...Second, Americans (and he did not hesitate to generalize) had been continually haunted by the fatal dilemma of “wanting to have their cake and eat it too,” of wanting to savor both civilized order and savage freedom at the same time...Savage Indians served Americans as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized national Self. Coded as freedom, however, wild Indianness proved equally attractive, setting up a “have-the-cake-and-eat-it-too”

dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion. (3)

According to Deloria, Lawrence was most successful in analyzing the “ambiguous but important place of Indians in the national psyches [that his subject writers] sought to bring to life”; it was Lawrence, and not the earlier writers, who was able to describe this ambiguity in explicit terms.

Furthermore, Lawrence was one of the first authors to reach a broad audience with a critique of “the familiar contradiction we have come to label noble savagery.” Yet Lawrence, with his “reckless prose and layering of unresolvable dualisms,” was trying to articulate a deeper meaning in noble savagery, as were Crèvecoeur and Cooper before him:

Indians, it is clear, are not simply useful symbols of the love-hate ambivalence of civilization and savagery. Rather, the contradictions embedded in Noble Savagery have themselves been the precondition for the formation of American identities. (4)

Deloria credits Lawrence with seeing that the “indeterminacy of American identities” is contingent upon America’s “inability to deal with Indian people”; wanting to understand and feel an affinity with their home, yet rejecting, even eliminating, the native people who could have helped them achieve closeness with the land, because their need for control was more profound than their need for affinity: “The nineteenth-century quest for a self-identifying national literature that Lawrence took as his subject...[spoke] the simultaneous languages of cultural fusion and of violent appropriation” (4-5).

The Introduction to this thesis discussed the contemporary critical reception of *Studies*, which was rather violently ambivalent in its appraisal of the work. Yet one oft-repeated refrain in the body of *Studies* criticism was that Lawrence had put his finger upon an almost unnamable, yet profound truth about America. It is possible to conclude

that one of the phenomena to which the critics responded positively was Lawrence's identification of the Indian aspects of the American identity-myth, of the noble savagery inherent in the story of America. Seen in this light, *Studies* can be added to a list of writers chronicling American abuses of native peoples and misuses of their cultures, a list spanning decades and including, for instance, Helen Hunt Jackson (*A Century of Dishonor*, 1881), and, nearly a century later, Dee Brown (*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, 1970); Lawrence's contribution to this field is his critique of the literary culture that helped make such abuses possible.

Indian as Alter-Ego in Cooper

Of all the authors covered in *Studies*, Lawrence was perhaps most familiar with Cooper, including two essays on him in both published versions. The essays, which bear interpretation as a single essay in two parts, divide Cooper's oeuvre between Cooper's most celebrated tales, those of the five "Leatherstocking" novels, and the rest of his more than thirty works of fiction. In the first essay, Lawrence sums up his view of modern race-relations between Native American peoples and Euro-Americans, saying "the Red Man died hating the white man" while as far as "we" are concerned, Indians are "subtly and unremittingly diabolic," "dispossessed," and "unforgiving." "He doesn't believe in us and our civilization, and so is our mystic enemy, for we push him off the face of the earth." As far as Euro-Americans are concerned, a continent-wide genocide is at the root of an "Orestes-like frenzy of restlessness in the Yankee soul" that accounts for, among other things, Benjamin Franklin's feeling that Providence intended the "extirpation of these savages" and Crèvecoeur's "sentimental desire for the glorification of the savages";

furthermore, nothing has changed in modern society, there is still the “desire to extirpate the Indian. And the contradictory desire to glorify him. Both are rampant still, today.” For the Indians’ part, reconciliation is impossible: “Malice! That is the basic feeling in the Indian heart, toward the white. It may even be purely unconscious.” Lawrence completes his assessment by at last introducing Cooper into the essay, saying, “Fenimore Cooper has probably done more than any writer to present the Red Man to the white man. But Cooper’s presentment is indeed a wish-fulfillment. That is why Cooper is such a success still” (Penguin 40-43).

Lawrence’s judgment that Cooper’s literary fame rested upon his portrayal of Indians was perceptive: when Lawrence wrote *Studies*, many of Cooper’s works, a body of over fifty novels and travel essays, enjoyed a wide readership; today, close to a century after the publication of *Studies*, the five “Leatherstocking” novels far outstrip all others in popularity, with *The Last of the Mohicans*, in particular, enjoying numerous editions and providing material for multiple film adaptations. Despite his evident, enduring affection for Cooper, Lawrence regrets Cooper’s portrayal of Indians as inauthentic, writing, “[m]odern critics begrudge Cooper his success. I think I resent it a little myself. This popular wish-fulfillment stuff makes it so hard for the real thing to come through, later” (Penguin 43). For Lawrence, then, a realistic understanding of the relationship between white Americans and Indians is critical for “the real thing,” that is, an authentic culture and mode of living, to be realized; however Cooper is merely pandering to the public taste for fantasy rather than truthfully engaging with the Other.

Lawrence draws parallels between Cooper the author, who was “a rich American of good family” and “a gentleman of culture” and his “refined, genteel Americans”

(Penguin 43) in two novels, *Homeward Bound* and its sequel, *Eve Effingham* (or *Home as Found*). Lawrence presents the protagonists of these novels as incomplete or decadent Europeans who are transfixed by deadly American ideas about equality and sentimentality, unable to see their own true natures as Americans; rather, they “buzz,” like insects impaled upon a scientific card, with a “democratic pin” through them (Penguin 49-50), limiting their own potential to achieve personal or collective greatness. Lawrence does not find fault with the authenticity of Cooper’s white characters in these novels; indeed, he finds that they illustrate perfectly some of the deepest flaws in nineteenth-century American culture. In its decadence, says Lawrence, American society created a set of ideals and fictions, among them an idealistic notion of democracy, in which the given political equality of individuals necessarily translates into intellectual and spiritual equality, an idea that Lawrence rejects: “Class, education, money won’t make a man superior. But if he’s just *born* superior, in himself, there it is. Why deny it?” (Penguin 48). Although Lawrence does not make this connection explicitly, he has married two overarching themes in this essay: firstly, that white Americans insist upon a fantastic conception of Indians and of the relationship between the two broad groups, rather than acknowledge the realities of each, which undermines the accuracy of their perception of reality; secondly, that white Americans have also constructed an unrealistic conceit of democratic ideals, which has stunted their potential to develop a culture that is mature, rather than rotten:

Truly, European decadence was anticipated in America and American influence passed over to Europe, was assimilated there, and then returned to this land of innocence as something purplish in its modernity and a little wicked...Cooper quotes a Frenchman, who says, ‘*L’Amérique est pourrie avant d’être mûre.*’ (Penguin 43)

Clearly, there is a strong connection in Lawrence's thinking between "wish-fulfillment" and decadence; the difficulty white Americans have in coming to terms with Indians is at the root of their difficulty in achieving a complete identity.

"Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Novels*" is a study in ambivalence, in which Lawrence expresses simultaneous condemnation of Cooper's supposed personal Indian-play fantasies and the grand and noble mythic quality inherent in the "Leatherstocking" series. Lawrence writes, "One gets irritated with Cooper because he never once snarls at the Great Ideal Pin which transfixes him. No, indeed. Rather he tries to push it through the very heart of the Continent," which is to say, Cooper's novels themselves are a contribution to the very cultural decadence to which Lawrence so strongly objects; here Lawrence anticipates Said's "Western cultural archive." Yet Lawrence is ambivalent about Cooper's work, unable to condemn it: "But I have loved the *Leatherstocking* books so dearly. Wish-fulfillment!" (Penguin 52). Lawrence contends that Cooper entertained personal fantasies of a "tomahawking" alter-ego in the form of Natty Bumppo, the white protagonist of the "Leatherstocking" stories, a backwoodsman who lives as an Indian, fully integrated into Indian culture. Yet while he is unenthusiastic about Cooper's supposed fantasies of Natty Bumppo, Lawrence himself is drawn to the figure of Natty. He posits Natty as a noble and true mythic hero, the corrective for the hyper-civilized decadence of the Effinghams: he is "hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer," in essence, "the very intrinsic-most American" (Penguin 68). The "lovely half-lies" of the "Leatherstocking" books, then, form a "sort of American Odyssey, with Natty Bumppo for Odysseus" (Penguin 55). In order to fashion his Cooper-myth, Lawrence rearranges the *Leatherstocking* books and presents them, not in the order in which they were written,

nor in the order in which Cooper's narrative moves through imagined history, but in an order that permits him to recreate Cooper's extended tale as "the myth of America":

And they go backwards, from old age to golden youth. That is the true myth of America. She starts old, old, wrinkled and writhing in an old skin. And there is a gradual sloughing of the old skin, towards a new youth. It is the myth of America. (Penguin 60)

Lawrence arranges the novels in this order:

1. *The Pioneers*, which is set in a fictionalized Cooperstown, New York;
2. *The Prairie*, set in the Great Plains, in which "crime-tinged" pioneers drive into the heart of the continent, pushing the Indians ever westward;
3. *The Last of the Mohicans*, in which the tribe of the Delawares becomes extinct as its last member dies a noble death;
4. *The Pathfinder*, in which Natty Bumppo courts a woman;
5. *The Deerslayer*, in which Natty Bumppo is a young man in the prime of life.

In this order, Lawrence takes the books out of their internal chronology, which reads *Deerslayer*, *Pathfinder*, *Mohicans*, *Pioneers*, *Prairie*, and also varies slightly their publication order (*Pioneers*, *Mohicans*, *Prairie*, *Pathfinder*, *Deerslayer*). Thus, Lawrence's version of Cooper's myth reads as follows: American pioneers pushed westward, from the forests of the east through the plains; the Indians died out naturally, or at any rate, nobly; finally, the white man came into his own. The final book, the *Deerslayer*, is about the future of white America, a Nietzschean future superman, a cold, hard killer who has appropriated the best elements of Indian "blood" for his own.

Here, again, Lawrence, who rejected ideas he perceived as romantic, can be read as holding substantial romantic ideas of his own: the "youthening" myth of America is a variation of what Said describes as a "very influential Romantic idea," that is, the

possibility of a wholesale regeneration of the West by other cultures in post-Christian cycle of death, rebirth and redemption. Said illustrates this idea with a quote from Flaubert's unfinished novel *Bouvard et Pécuchet*: "Modern man is progressing, Europe will be regenerated by Asia. The historical law that civilization moves from Orient to Occident...the two forms of humanity will at last be soldered together" (*Orientalism* 113-115). Although Said is specifically discussing European ideas about "the Orient," the parallels with Lawrence's ideas about the evolution/rejuvenation of the West are evident:

What did Cooper dream beyond democracy? Why, in his immortal friendship with Chingachgook and Natty Bumppo he dreamed the nucleus of a new society...It asks for a great and cruel sloughing first of all. Then it finds a great release into a new world, a new moral, a new landscape. (Penguin 59-60)

It isn't simply the Indian and the white man who will form a new society; the American landscape itself will ultimately "be at one" with the white man in an evolutionary process of "oneing":

The American landscape has never been at one with the white man. Never. And white men have probably never felt so bitter anywhere, as here in America, where the very landscape, in its very beauty, seems a bit devilish and grinning, opposed to us.

Cooper, however, glosses over this resistance, which in actuality can never quite be glossed over. He *wants* the landscape to be at one with him. So he goes away to Europe and sees it as such. It is a sort of vision.

And nevertheless, the oneing will surely take place—some day. (Penguin 61)

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *oneing* as "the action of one; v. an instance of this; union, fusion; unity, peace," with the etymological note: "Unlike the verb on which it is formed, the verbal noun appears to have become obsolete in the 15th or 16th cent. and to have been consciously revived in the 19th, esp. in Christian theological contexts."

Lawrence's nonreligious use of "oneing" is, apparently, exclusively his own; in fact, his usage is rare enough that Lawrence himself is included in the OED's quotation history. The employment of a modern, self-consciously Christian mystical term here suggests a strong link with Said's "secular post-enlightenment myth whose outlines are unmistakably Christian" (*Orientalism* 115).

In reading Lawrence's apparently contradictory opinions about Cooper's deliberate attempts at Indian-play and his "myth of America," one may discern a version of Lawrence's own "truth" about American identity, which may be described thus: the Euro-American will become "native," and, therefore, complete, at some point in the distant future. While the white man cannot *deliberately* take over the Indian identity now or in the future, the American continent itself will infuse its inhabitants with a new aboriginal spirit and, in the process, absorb, and, finally, put to rest the unappeased "demons" of the original inhabitants. Thus, Lawrence, while consciously critiquing his subject authors for their perceived wish-fulfillment in Indian-play, simultaneously performs an act of literary Indian-play when he suggests that a new American identity will one day emerge, consisting of characteristics that had previously belonged to Indians. Lawrence is, on the level of his art-speech, essentially agreeing with Cooper: it will be possible, "one day," to fulfill the wish and become Indian. It is his own literary wish-fulfillment, entirely consistent with his personal interest in the evolution of the human.

Romantic Indians in Crèvecoeur

Today, on the grounds of the palace of Versailles, the tourist can visit the "hamlet"

of Marie Antoinette, a picturesque approximation of a rustic farm village, consisting of gardens, pastures, a few cottages, a dairy, and a mill. The visitor can conjecture how little resemblance there might have been between life in the queen's cottages and the life of the genuine eighteenth-century French peasant. In the Crèvecoeur essay, Lawrence seizes upon Antoinette's experiment as a tangible example of the disparity between meditated and unmediated experience,³ drawing a parallel between the village Antoinette built and the *Letters* of Crèvecoeur: "Marie Antoinette got her head off for playing dairy-maid," writes Lawrence, "and nobody even dusted the seats of [Crèvecoeur's] pants, till now, for all the lies [he] put over on us." The "lies" that Crèvecoeur tells are, according to Lawrence, essentially romantic notions of the primacy and sublimity of nature, and of the nobility of "savage" man:

Hazlitt, Godwin, Shelley, Coleridge, the English romanticists were, of course, thrilled by the *Letters from an American Farmer*. A new world, a world of the Noble Savage and Pristine Nature and Paradisal Simplicity and all that gorgeousness that flows out of the unsullied fount of the ink-bottle. (28)

In Crèvecoeur's *Letters*, then, Indians are figures in a schema of "Nature," a wholly fictive landscape springing from the mind of the author, with no basis in experience. Yet, according to Lawrence, Crèvecoeur's idealization of rustic American life is not merely authorial fancy; Lawrence intimates that it was manufactured in order to sell a vision of a "simple" utopian life to, and to promote a particular political agenda among, a European audience; the *Letters* "enjoyed great vogue in their day...among the new reformers like Godwin and Tom Paine." The *Letters* are full of "blarney" about Indians that willfully

³ Marie Antoinette, among other historical French figures, is invoked repeatedly throughout *Studies*. Lawrence frequently implies the "tinge of France" (Said 86) to highlight morally dubious writerly pursuits. Throughout *Studies*, France, Paris, and the French crown all function as metonyms for decadent luxury, opposed to the values Lawrence espouses; having chosen to spend large amounts of time in France appears to render Franklin, Cooper and Crèvecoeur, themselves, decadent in Lawrence's eyes.

misrepresents them:

Behold him, then, trotting of importantly and idealistically to France, leaving his farm in the wilds to be burnt by the Indians, and his wife to shift as best she might. This was during the American War of Independence, when the Noble Red Man took to behaving like his own old self. (Penguin 28-31)

Again, as with Cooper, Lawrence centers his sharpest criticism of Crèvecoeur upon biographical details and the dichotomy of the message and its mediator. Chapter I discussed Lawrence's reversal of opinion about the possibility of white men "becoming" Indians; implicit in his final conclusion is an assertion that Crèvecoeur's depiction of life among the Indians is an unforgivable form of playing Indian, a dilettantish appropriation of another's identity.

Yet, while Lawrence disapproves of Crèvecoeur's overt attempt to dabble in identity-switching, and of the manufacturing of unreal images of America and of Indians, in this essay, again, as in the Cooper essays, he engages in some literary Indian-play of his own. Once Crèvecoeur leaves behind his portrayal of life-among-the-Indians and begins simply describing his natural surroundings, he reveals himself, according to Lawrence, to be a true and gifted artist. Lawrence here retains some of the mysticism of the *English Review* essays, as he draws a sharp distinction between Crèvecoeur, whom he esteems as an artist, and Benjamin Franklin, whom he does not. Lawrence describes two ways of being an American writer: the first, in which one writes with "the voice of the artist," by virtue of absorbing certain characteristics that are native to the American continent; the second, in which one writes, ploddingly, as an "ideal turtle," having absorbed nothing of native ways. This is a deeply personalized iteration of "spirit of place." A quality of Indianness, which Crèvecoeur possesses, is requisite in the making of

a real American artist; Crèvecoeur's portrait of wildlife is sufficient evidence of this:

It is the rudimentary American vision. The glimpsing of the king-birds in winged hostility and pride is no doubt the aboriginal Indian vision carrying over. The Eagle symbol in human consciousness. Dark swinging birds of hawk-beaked destiny, that one cannot help but feel, beating here above the wild centre, of America. (Penguin 32)

The fact that Crèvecoeur is able to describe quails in a "beautiful" way, says Lawrence, is due to his "blood-knowledge"; later, writing about snakes, Crèvecoeur is able to write passages that are as "handsome" as "that coiled Aztec rattlesnake carved in stone." In critiquing Crèvecoeur's writing about Indians, Lawrence describes perfectly a white settler's desire to play Indian; yet he, Lawrence, performs a similar act of cultural appropriation in the following paragraphs and throughout the text:

He wanted, of course, to imagine the dark, savage way of life, to get it all off pat in his head. He wanted to know as the Indians and savages know, darkly, and in terms of otherness. He was simply crazy, as the Americans say, for this....For the animals and savages are isolate, each one in its own pristine self. The animal lifts its head, sniffs, and knows within the dark, passionate belly. It knows at once, and in dark mindlessness. (Penguin 35-36)

Lawrence asserts that Crèvecoeur, although an artist, ultimately rejected his artistry; Crèvecoeur didn't want to go "too near the wigwam," which is to say, he preferred to retain his intellectual ideals, his cultural mythology, rather than enter fully into the life of an artist: "He wanted his ideal state. At the same time he wanted to know the other state, the dark, savage mind. He wanted both. Can't be done, Hector. The one is the death of the other" (Penguin 36-37). Thus, Lawrence, deriding Crèvecoeur for his depiction of Indians that thrilled "Hazlitt, Godwin, Shelley, Coleridge, the English romanticists" constructs a romantic conceit of Indianness as ultimate knowledge, or artistic vision. It is possible to conjecture that Lawrence anticipated coming into contact with the American spirit of

place, and hoped to absorb some of its “aboriginal salt” himself; he appears to have been disappointed, however: “I think this wild ad noble America is the thing that I have pined for most...Now I’ve got it” (Penguin 28).

Chapter III

The Monstrousness of Benjamin Franklin

I admire him. I admire his sturdy courage first of all, then his sagacity, then his glimpsing into the thunders of electricity, then his common-sense humour. All the qualities of a great man, and never more than a great citizen. Middle-sized, sturdy, snuff-coloured Doctor Franklin, one of the soundest citizens that ever trod or 'used venery'.

I do not like him. (Lawrence, Penguin 19)

In “Benjamin Franklin,” Lawrence repeatedly deploys a metaphor in which wild animals and Indians (Lawrence draws no distinction between the two) represent, not artistic vision, as in Crèvecoeur, but, rather, the individual soul. Lawrence then extends the metaphor to encompass the American continent itself; while commenting upon the effect of colonialism upon indigenous cultures, he also denounces the effects of modernity upon the individual, and the effect of materialism upon wisdom, in a radically comprehensive critique of American culture; this critique is in support of Lawrence’s assertion that Franklin is a monster. Lawrence incorporates Franklin himself into his metaphorical landscape as the very embodiment of inhuman mechanization, the representative of a “civilizing” force that flattens, confines, and kills indiscriminately in the name of progress.

As comparison between versions of the essay revealed, Lawrence's views on Franklin and his work do not appear to have been altered by his time abroad. Lawrence certainly does not “like” Benjamin Franklin: he compares Franklin to Mary Shelley's Romantic creation, Frankenstein, in both versions of the essays. Lawrence does not

approve of Franklin's late-Enlightenment reification of life, seemingly meting out the whole of life in shillings and pence, and he does not approve of Franklin's measured, pedantic authorial tone; he makes his dislike of Franklin clear in the *English Review* version of his essay, and remains true to it even in the radically revised final version. Lawrence *never* liked Franklin; he didn't need a trip to America to persuade him on this point.

Nor does Lawrence consider Franklin to be an artist, a point makes twice, in both the Franklin and Crèvecoeur essays. This consideration raises the question: why did Lawrence include Franklin in his work on “classic American literature”? There was considerable scope for the exercise; Lawrence was not working with a pre-existing American literary canon. Why include a writer whose work is *not* a work of art in a discussion of American works of literary art? Franklin is exceptional for being the only author in *Studies* whom Lawrence does not appear to respect. Clearly, Lawrence has included him for some other reason; Lawrence uses the Franklin essay, which appears second in *Studies*, after the introductory “The Spirit of Place,” to set forth his view of American culture at large, as a framework upon which to build his critiques of individual American authors and their respective works of art. In the Franklin essay, Lawrence sets the tone for what will follow and gives readers a cultural landscape in which to place the individual works.

Although Lawrence espoused an anti-romantic position throughout *Studies*, his work is “frequently cited as an outstanding example of twentieth-century romanticism,” and he devoted several paragraphs in the *English Review* version of the Franklin essay to a “decidedly romantic” (Cowan 24- 25) theory of the philosophical and moral

development of the United States and how it differed from Europe's. Briefly, the argument runs thus: while, in Europe, the Romantic Movement (albeit excessive in its own ways) flowered as a tonic for the rationalist excesses of the Enlightenment, the United States, having parted ways with Europe, bypassed Romanticism, moving straight from an Enlightenment philosophical framework to a Modern society characterized by a mechanical, soulless materialism. Although Frankenstein survived Lawrence's edits, Lawrence cut the rest of his philosophical musings, leaving in their place a rather sparse, essentialist argument:

Benjamin, in his sagacity, knew that the breaking of the old world was a long process...he hated England, he hated Europe, he hated the whole corpus of the European being. He wanted to be American...Like a son escaping from the domination of his parents...

So with the American. He was a European when he first went over the Atlantic. He is in the main a recreant European still. From Benjamin Franklin to Woodrow Wilson may be a long stride, but it is a stride along the same road. There is no new road. The same old road, become dreary and futile. Theoretic and materialistic. (Penguin 25-26)

Thus, Lawrence effectively elides his theory of the Enlightenment degenerating into modern materialism, rendering it an "American" value system with which he takes exception; Benjamin Franklin becomes the figure in which Lawrence vests the whole of American culture. Lawrence's essential critique of Franklin has to do with the kind of culture Franklin represents: a mechanistic, materialistic, rationalist society that subsumes the individual soul. Lawrence describes the soul as an untamable forest, and modernity as the machine that kills the soul; if it is truly *his* soul, Lawrence's, in question, then it appears that Lawrence felt personally persecuted by America's cultural hegemony. Lawrence engages with Franklin at an intensely personal level, at the intersection of individual freedom and morality, while also interrogating the essence of each

phenomenon; Lawrence at the same time expands the critique to embrace broader cultural phenomena:

...It has taken me many years and countless smarts to get out of that barbed wire moral enclosure that Poor Richard rigged up. Here I am now in tatters and scratched to ribbons, sitting in the middle of Benjamin's America looking at the barbed wire, and the fat sheep crawling under the fence to get fat outside, and the watch-dogs yelling at the gate lest by chance anyone should get out by the proper exit. Oh America! Oh Benjamin! And I just utter a long loud curse against Benjamin and the American corral. Moral America! Most moral Benjamin. Sound, satisfied Ben! He had to go to the frontiers of his State to settle some disturbance among the Indians. On this occasion he writes:

...and, indeed, if it be the design of Providence to extirpate these savages in order to make room for the cultivators of the earth, it seems not improbable that rum may be the appointed means. It has already annihilated all the tribes who formerly inhabited the sea-coast...

This, from the good doctor with such suave complacency, is a little disenchanting. Almost too good to be true. But there you are! The barbed-wire fence. 'Extirpate these savages in order to make room for the cultivators of the earth.' Oh, Benjamin Franklin!...Cultivate the earth, ye gods! The Indians did that, as much as they needed. And they left off there. Who built Chicago? Who cultivated the earth until it spawned Pittsburgh, Pa? (Penguin 21)

Here the vision that Lawrence conjures is that of the United States as a vast metropolitan agribusiness, as well as anticipating Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil," in describing Franklin's "suave complacency." By reference to this passage alone, Lawrence might justify his assertion that Franklin is a monster. Franklin is seen here, in a passage taken wholesale from his *Autobiography*, calmly contemplating genocide as part of a larger plan to expand and entrench the interests of the Anglo-American colonies; within the selfsame text Franklin describes how, in his youth, he had written a list of virtues and kept a daily diary, a kind of moral accounting ledger. Lawrence savages Franklin's list of Temperance, Silence, Order, et cetera, an ethical worldview which makes possible the

“extirpation” of the Other while simultaneously adhering to a rigid personal morality. Franklin, as conceived by Lawrence, is a historical predecessor of Joseph Conrad's narrator Marlowe in *Heart of Darkness*: like Marlowe, he is a product of his age: he is concerned with the fine points of his own moral choices, yet secure in the knowledge that “[t]he conquest of the earth, which mostly means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves” (Conrad 10) is a fixed condition of life, and does not bear or require closer scrutiny. Lawrence takes issue with this moral framework as a near-inhuman strain of rationalism. It is a kind of compartmentalization tantamount to moral schizophrenia; it is part of the dark side of the duality that Lawrence saw in all of life.

Eunyoung Oh argues that, in Lawrence’s writing, he describes *colonists*, as well as the *colonized*, as suffering under the imperial system; this is an interesting, if problematic, post-colonial argument:

For Lawrence, Western colonialism was a matter of the expansion of a mechanical way of life, rather than one of a social, political struggle between the West and its others. Lawrence transcodes the issue of colonialism as a matter of “being” or a matter of the modern “soul.” Lawrence breaks the conventional codes of politics, even if viewed in the context of postcolonial politics that challenge the traditional paradigm of the Western epistemology. Post-colonialists persistently have questioned and tried to unsettle the hierarchical relationship between Western colonizers and their colonized people, but they will hardly accept the view, as Lawrence did, that they both are victims of Western civilization. But his work significantly contributes to revolutionizing the conventions in our way of thinking, including postcolonial perspectives, about self and other, or subject and object. (58)

Oh argues that Lawrence constructs an anti-colonial argument, in which there is space for rank and file white colonizers to be victims, alongside nonwhite, colonized groups. In this construct it is the individual, whether Indian or English, who is prey to forces beyond one’s control. This places Lawrence in an interesting and complicated position, yet it is a

position from which he can empathize and identify with the Other, a feat he essentially fails to accomplish when setting out to do so explicitly.

Thus one may conclude that the force of Lawrence's post-colonial argument was made unconsciously, and occurs at the level of art-speech; in striving for a cultural theory of empire, he succeeded in the Franklin essay because he describes here a cultural space which enlists, endorses, and outlines a program for becoming an "American." According to Lawrence, this American mythos, embodied by Franklin, defines a framework for anyone (including Lawrence) arriving in the United States: how they should behave, how they should work, what values they should espouse, so that they can become productive members of the American machine. In so doing, the individual must accept, and therefore become part of, a cultural—and physical—displacement, which leads, ultimately, to genocide. This is made possible through the individual's acceptance of the "barbed wire fence," acceptance simply to *cultiver son jardin*, a "quietist option" (Rushdie 3) that is unacceptable:

And now I, at least, know why I can't stand Benjamin. He tries to take away my wholeness and my dark forest, my freedom. For how can any man be free, without an illimitable background? And Benjamin tries to shove me into a barbed-wire paddock and make me grow potatoes and Chicagoes. (Penguin 24)

Conclusion

The foundation of Empire is Art and Science. Remove them or degrade them and the Empire is No more. Empire follows Art and not vice versa as Englishmen suppose.—William Blake (Said *Culture* 12-13)

Literature is, among other things, the creation of mythic worlds, fabrications, composed of elements of “actuality” or truth. Lawrence, when not working as an incendiary critic, was himself a novelist, and, as such, was a creator of fictive worlds which could easily be called, as Lawrence himself called Cooper’s works, “lovely half-lies.” It appears that, before traveling to America, Lawrence had staked much of his personal happiness—his belief in a personal utopia—upon finding the works of the American authors he read (Cooper, in particular) to be authentic and *true* in essence, although reason may have told him to do otherwise. Lawrence's disappointment at the seeming untruth of Crèvecoeur’s *Letters* and Cooper's novels demonstrate how very important Lawrence found literature to be: it was intimately involved with his own identity and connection to the wider world, just as it was central to the national culture of Britain or the United States. By virtue of his stay in North America, Lawrence became “in some measure an adoptive American writer just as his American émigré contemporaries ...became European” (Bell 180); he was drawn to the *Studies* project by a complicated attraction to an idea of America, and to certain aspects of American culture. Yet he was also repelled by other aspects of American culture: its drive toward cultural hegemony, its conscious myth-making and identity construction, the contingency of that identity, and what he perceived as its need to constantly bolster that identity by devaluing anything

outside it. In certain respects, it was Lawrence's attraction/repulsion to his idea of America that formed the basis for *Studies*, and which was at the heart of his critique.

Lawrence opens *Studies* by describing a connection between culture and empire:

One wonders what the proper high-brow Romans of the third and fourth or later centuries read into the strange utterances of Lucretius or Apuleius or Tertullian, Augustine or Athanasius. The uncanny voice of Iberian Spain, the weirdness of Old Carthage, the passion of Libya and North Africa; you may bet the proper old Romans never heard these at all. They read old Latin inference over the top of it, as we read old European inference over the top of Poe or Hawthorne. (Penguin 7)

Here Lawrence glosses the United States as a far-flung territory of a European imperium; however, Lawrence, as a British subject, was a citizen of an empire facing its own end, in the face of a newly-dominant cultural force:

There was a tremendous polarity in Italy, in the city of Rome. And this seems to have died. For even places die. The Island of Great Britain had a wonderful terrestrial magnetism or polarity of its own, which made the British people. For the moment, this polarity seems to be breaking. Can England die? And what if England dies? (Penguin 12)

This passage, from the Taos version, is a fragmentary legacy of the first version, in which Lawrence elaborated at length about the "polarity" of various nations, and about the fate of the Roman empire. There is a great deal of explicit discussion of empire in both versions of "The Spirit of Place," which indicates that Lawrence may have been attempting to come up with a unified cultural theory of empire, seeking to draw analogies between the material manifestations of colonialism, and empire's hegemonic power. For a writer of Lawrence's generation, it was something of a leap of imagination to try and comprehend what he saw, and disliked, in the United States in terms of a colonial project. Which is to say, Lawrence sought to understand colonialism not simply as a resource-extraction exercise, but also as a project of identity-construction and exportation. *What if*

England dies? Lawrence, as a British subject, grasps the American expansionist project with a clarity he never managed to attain when regarding the British empire; he was never able to get “outside the whale,” to see clearly the outlines of the empire of which he, as a British subject, was very much a beneficiary. However, Lawrence writes of the American “whale” clearly and incisively.

In *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence anticipates the field of post-colonial criticism by several decades, anticipating insights such as this:

The American experience...was from the beginning founded upon the idea of an *imperium*...Curiously, though, so influential has been the discourse insisting on American specialness, altruism, and opportunity that 'imperialism' as a word or ideology has turned up only rarely and recently in accounts of United States culture, politics, history. But the connection between imperial politics and culture is astonishingly direct. American attitudes to American 'greatness', to hierarchies of race...have remained constant, have dictated, have obscured, the realities of empire. (Said *Culture* 7)

Lawrence seized upon his theory of “polarity” several decades before Said wrote *Orientalism*, and a decade before Gramsci conceived of hegemony. In describing polarity, Lawrence (whether he intends it or not) describes the legitimating narrative of empire and its eventual breakdown, wherein discontinuities appear in empire’s mythos, collective consciousness (both colonial and metropolitan) is achieved, and empire loses legitimacy.

Much of the critical force of *Studies* is derived from its anti-colonial critique; much of the strong critical reaction to *Studies* originates in its reaction to a critique of the United States as an empire. This is a novel, interesting, and prescient evaluation for a critic of Lawrence’s generation. Yet the purpose of post-colonial reading in this thesis is not merely to rehabilitate Lawrence, resurrecting him from the cultural burial plot occupied by the likes of D.W. Griffith and Charles Lindbergh; a post-colonial reading of

Studies provides a framework for understanding the essence of Lawrence's critique of America, the basis upon which Lawrence has made an important contribution to American literary criticism. It is through a post-colonial lens that it becomes possible to see clearly a particular contribution of Lawrence's, which is his commentary upon the interaction of American literary production and the complicated matrix of active American identity-forming, indigenous culture, modernity, and imperialism. Flawed though his writing and worldview may have been, Lawrence worked to understand difficult phenomena; he wrestled with elusive ideas, and, occasionally, touched upon, as Henry Irving Brock declared, the "truth—or very near it.

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