AMERICAN LITERATURE AND AMERICAN IDENTITY

A COGNITIVE CULTURAL STUDY FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Patrick Colm Hogan

Employing the findings of contemporary narratology and cognitive science to explain the psycho-social dynamics of national identity, this book analyzes how American literature since the Civil War has represented, and also intervened in, the efforts to define and salvage an American identity plagued by contradictions between its radically egalitarian core and its often brutally exclusionary dynamics that marginalize certain racial, gender, and sexual identities. In the current (post?) Trump era of rampant American nativism, systemic racism, white supremacism, and toxic masculinism, it is hard to imagine a more timely and important work of literary analysis. More generally, the conceptual tools provided by this book make it a valuable resource for understanding the varying ways in which different narrative prototypes contribute to the construction and reconstruction of any social identity.

Mark Bracher, *Director, Neurocognitive Research Program for the Advancement of the Humanities, Kent State University, USA*

Exhaustively researched, *American Literature and American Identity* is a smart and timely book that draws on cognitive and affective studies as tools for understanding the ways in which understandings of national identity are imbricated into narrative structure. In his sensitive reading of widely read literary works, Hogan demonstrates how authors promoted a vision of American identity as universal and egalitarian in spite of the nation's glaring inequalities. This is an important book that comes at a critical time in American history, one in which America's past sins and future hopes are falling under increased public scrutiny.

Stella Setka, *West Los Angeles College, USA*

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American Literature and American Identity

In recent years, cognitive and affective science have become increasingly important for interpretation and explanation in the social sciences and humanities. However, little of this work has addressed American literature, and virtually none has treated national identity formation in influential works since the Civil War. In this book, Hogan develops his earlier cognitive and affective analyses of national identity, further exploring the ways in which such identity is integrated with cross-culturally recurring patterns in story structure. Hogan examines how authors imagined American identity—understood as universal, democratic egalitarianism—in the face of the nation's clear and often brutal inequalities of race, sex, and sexuality, exploring the complex and often ambivalent treatment of American identity in works by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Eugene O'Neill, Lillian Hellman, Djuna Barnes, Amiri Baraka, Margaret Atwood, N. Scott Momaday, Spike Lee, Leslie Marmon Silko, Tony Kushner, and Heidi Schreck.

Patrick Colm Hogan is a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor at the University of Connecticut, where he is on the faculty of the English Department and the Program in Cognitive Science. He is the author of over 20 books, including *Literature and Emotion* (2018) and *American Literature and American Identity: A Cognitive Cultural Study from the Revolution through the Civil War* (2020).

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American Literature and American Identity

A Cognitive Cultural Study from the Civil War to the Twenty-First Century

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2022
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hogan, Patrick Colm, author.
Title: American literature and American identity : a cognitive cultural study from the Civil War to the twenty-first century / Patrick Colm Hogan.
Description: New York, NY : Routledge, 2021. | Series: Narrative theory and culture | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2021023145 | ISBN 9781032078953 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032125688 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003211983 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: American literature–History and criticism. | National characteristics, American, in literature. | Identity (Philosophical concept) in literature. | Race in literature. | Sex in literature. |
LCGFT: Literary criticism.
Classification: LCC PS169.N35 H64 2021 | DDC 810.9/35873--dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2021023145

ISBN: 978-1-032-07895-3 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-12568-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-21198-3 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003211983

Typeset in Sabon
by MPS Limited, Dehradun

For Lalita, who helped me to see what is good in America and
for Noam, who helped me to see what isn't (but could be)

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

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Acknowledgments

In teaching American literature, I have benefited from both the insights and quandaries of my undergraduate students. I am deeply grateful to them. Julianna Iacovelli deserves special mention for acquainting me with Heidi Schreck's *What the Constitution Means to Me*. I am also grateful to Jennifer Abbott for her valuable editorial work. As I note in the dedication, my wife, Lalita Pandit Hogan, has constantly sought to make me aware of the value of American literature.

A Note on Terminology

In the following pages, I use "America" to refer to the U.S., with "American" as the associated adjective. The former is clearly in keeping with ordinary usage, which distinguishes "America" (as short for "United States of America") from "the Americas," "North America," and so on. The adjectival form is somewhat ambiguous in ordinary usage. However, in the following pages, I will not use "American" to mean "of the Americas" but only "of the United States." I adhere to this usage because the terms "America" and "American" tend to foreground people along with their cultural principles and practices, which are the chief concerns here. In contrast, "the United States" and "of the United States" would seem to focus our attention more narrowly on governmental and legal topics. To get a feeling for this distinction, one might consider the opening of Allen Ginsberg's poem discussed in the Introduction—"America I've given you all and now I'm nothing." The tone of the poem would have been very different had Ginsberg written, "United States I've given you all and now I'm nothing." For instance, the latter might have been apt had Ginsberg just left the U.S. Marine Corps.

Introduction Celebratory Nationalism, Critical Nationalism, and Disillusion: America After the Civil War

From Walt Whitman to Allen Ginsberg

Imagine that Rip van Winkle was a professor of poetry who fell asleep in, say, 1881, after reading Walt Whitman's recently published "Song of Myself" and awoke to find that poem replaced by Allen Ginsberg's "America" (written in 1956). Tayson points out that Ginsberg is, arguably, "Whitman's primary 20th century inheritor" (24).[1] Nonetheless, our new van Winkle might be struck by changes in the two poems' attitude toward the nation.[2] Indeed, he might imagine this change as not entirely incomparable in tone to the shift from placid loyalism to fervent separatism described in the original story of his namesake. He would be overestimating the difference, but he would definitely be onto something. We might refer to the change as a shift from celebratory nationalism to critical nationalism.

Whitman's relation to America was enthusiastic. It was not chauvinistic; it was not elitist; it was not marred by the usual faults of nationalism. Of course, we might disagree with Whitman on particular issues or occasionally find "imperialistic … bombast" in, say, his early, journalistic writing (Hudder 70). But, as Hudder points out, such bombast does not continue into such poetry as "Song of Myself." More generally, we might say that Whitman's focus was not on beating up enemies. It was on commending friends, and indeed extending the category of friends. Moreover, those friends included all of the downtrodden and despised of the nation. Indeed, one potential problem with Whitman's celebratory brand of national enthusiasm is that it is so universal, egalitarian, and democratic—thus so "American," some would say—that it continually spills over into internationalism and humanism (or even, at moments, pantheism).[3]

In contrast, Ginsberg's attitude does not even appear to be nationally oriented, at first blush. It is discontented, accusatory. At points, it is explicitly internationalist. Even so, a careful reading of the poem suggests that the poet is still identifying as American, and even identifying strongly as such. Moreover, he shares with Whitman a sensitivity to the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003211983-101

downtrodden and marginalized. Indeed, both Whitman and Ginsberg draw on the standard metaphor THE NATION IS A PERSON, further specifying that person as the poem's speaker. But Whitman's poem identifies this speaker with the entirety of the nation. When Whitman stresses the many, diverse individuals and groups that constitute the nation, when he speaks for them in the voice of the poet as nation, he is seeking to recognize the overarching unity of people in the nation; he is stressing that they all make up the U.S., even if elites sometimes forget this. In contrast, Ginsberg draws together excluded voices to highlight and protest their exclusion, to confront the elite who make up the, so to speak, official U.S., the dominant classes that in effect undermine its democratic, egalitarian aspirations.

Consider the 1881 edition of Whitman's poem. In the first canto, Whitman explains that "My tongue, every atom of my blood" is "form'd from this soil, this air" (1313). Here, he is affirming and cherishing a specifically American language ("tongue") and a specifically American disposition ("blood") derived not from literal ancestry but from a connection with the land and atmosphere of the nation itself. He goes on to explain the particularity of this American heritage, where "Creeds and schools [are] in abeyance"—thus, religious and philosophical differences, so prominent and destructive in Europe, are suspended in the universal, egalitarian, democratic, and individualist U.S., where all are "permit[ted] to speak" (1313).

In the sixth canto, Whitman explains the title of the collection that includes "Song of Myself," *Leaves of Grass*. As Lakoff and Turner note, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS is a common conceptual metaphor (223). It is perhaps particularly common in the context of nationhood, since the nation is typically seen as providing the soil in which the individual citizens/plants are "rooted." The connection between Americans and grass develops that metaphor. Specifically, leaves of grass are both individual ("leaves") and collective ("grass"). Moreover, the collective grass spreads across the entire land. Whitman explains that it is a "flag ... Growing among black folks as among white," spreading among congressmen and among ordinary people (1316; interestingly, Whitman includes Canada as part of this land, as U.S. writers sometimes—forgetfully?—do).

In the tenth canto, Whitman introduces the motif of interracial romance, referring to "the marriage of the trapper" whose "bride was a red girl" (1318). (We will return to this motif many times in the following pages.) This is paralleled with the image of "The runaway slave" who arrives at the poet's home in the same canto. Whitman gives him "a room that enter'd from my own" (1319). Though he speaks only of nursing the man's wounds, there may be a hint of intimacy in the sleeping arrangements. In any case, there is tenderness and affection in both scenes, and both affirm a fundamental American unity—even

against the wars between Europeans and Amerindians, even despite slavery. The poet's representation of these scenes clearly opposes the racism of so many white Americans who believed that "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" (see Grumer 141) or who accepted the legitimacy of racial slavery. But the stress of the poem is on affirming the positive act of romantic union, not on criticizing the negative acts of violence.

In other cantos, Whitman presents us with fragments of the nation, displaying its multiplicity of people, all engaged in their individual work or play, separate but simultaneous and constitutive of the various, individualized, dynamic, egalitarian nation—like a field of individual leaves of grass. For example, in the fifteenth canto, he celebrates the "contralto," the "carpenter," the "duck-shooter," the "spinning-girl," the "farmer," the "quadroon girl," the "squaw," even the "lunatic" and the "prostitute" (1321–1323). If the nationalist point was not clear, the poet explains that "it is the fourth of the Seventh-month" (1323), thus the Fourth of July. At the end of the canto, the speaker proclaims that "these tend inward to me and I tend outward to them,/And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,/And of these one and all I weave the song of myself" (1323). These lines make clear that the speaker of the poem is not merely Walt Whitman, but America, the self made of many selves.

Ginsberg's "America" is not so enthusiastic, to put it mildly. The difference is clear from the first line. While Whitman conveys a feeling of superabundance, possibility, and plenitude of life—even if that life is sometimes far from perfect—Ginsberg immediately tells us (or, rather, tells America, which may or may not be us) that he is "nothing" (1126). There is no abundant life, no teeming source of possibilities in this assertion. In the second line, he spells out his nothingness. It is not so much Existential as fiscal. He is worth two dollars and change. The suggestion is that, in America today, one's self is reduced to one's economic status. The idea is loosely Marxist, which will fit in with the subsequent development of the poem.

Why is the speaker nothing, a mere two dollars? Because he has "given" everything to America. There are two obvious ways of interpreting this. The first is cultural and bears on attachment. The speaker has committed himself wholeheartedly to the nation, but he has been excluded, not embraced by the society. Perhaps there are problems because he is Jewish—hinted at in later lines about the mistreatment of his uncle, who emigrated from Russia, and in his refusal to say Christian prayers. Perhaps there are problems because he is gay—hinted at in the final line about being "queer" (1228). The other obvious interpretation is that the speaker has committed himself to working for the nation but has not achieved enough financial success to be anything in the society or even to survive. This fits with the Marxism of the poem, as well as the

concluding references to joining the military or working in a factory. Both interpretations seem relevant to Ginsberg's point, and both express a sharp criticism of the U.S.

We need to consider the ways in which Ginsberg develops this criticism. But before doing that it is important to establish why this is still a *nationalist* poem, a poem concerned with being American. Perhaps the most obvious way of reading the poem is as an *anti*-nationalist and even *anti-American* work. In fact, Ginsberg provides us with a number of indications that he is not setting out to reject, but to criticize America, and the criticism is not designed to favor any other nation (e.g., the Soviet Union). It is designed, rather, to reform America and to do so in the usual direction of fulfilling its ideal of universal, democratic egalitarianism.[4]

We might first consider the relation to the U.S.S.R. Ginsberg is not celebrating the Soviet Union. This is made clear from his first allusion to this country in his commendatory reference to Leon Trotsky, who was exiled from the Soviet Union and assassinated by Stalin's government (see, e.g., Daniels). In criticizing Cold War attitudes, Ginsberg is, rather, doing two things. First, he is criticizing the oppressive actions of the U.S. government undertaken in the name of protecting the nation during the Cold War. Second, he is affirming the value of socialist principles (not Soviet practices) and seeking to integrate those with the ideal of equality that has been central to Americans' self-concept. Ginsberg indicates this in several ways, but he does so most clearly in saying that the party was "a great thing" in "1835" (1128). The Communist Party did not exist in 1835, and clearly the Soviet Union did not exist then. In context, from the poem's general focus on America to the naming of American political figures in the rest of this (very long) poetic line, "1835" serves to remind the reader of the long pre-Marxist (and obviously pre-Soviet) history of socialism in America. This history is attested by, for example, John Noyes's 1870 *History of American Socialisms*, Charles Nordhoff's 1875 *The Communistic Societies of the United States*, and Morris Hillquit's 1903 *History of Socialism in the United States*. In other words, it reminds us of the Americanness of socialism—contrary to prevailing opinion at the time Ginsberg wrote his poem. Ginsberg indicates that socialism was a great thing in its hopeful, idealistic youth, the period when it was not even a party but groups of people affirming the possibility of greater equality, a form of equality that went beyond electoral politics to political economy. Indeed, the date suggests that it was probably not so great a century later, during Stalin's rule, when young Allen went to Communist meetings with his mother. Ginsberg mentions these meetings at the beginning of the line, leading the reader to expect a reference to the 1930s, not the 1830s.

Of course, the fact that Ginsberg is not promoting the U.S.S.R. hardly entails that he is committed to the U.S. But he is committed to the U.S.

This commitment is most obviously suggested when he uses "we"—and perhaps "my"—to refer to America, thus identifying himself as part of the nation he is addressing. However, this alternates with "you," at least indicating ambivalence, perhaps suggesting a change of heart, a dissociation from the nation he had formerly identified with and to which he had given everything. Toward the middle of the poem, however, he has a revelation—that "I am America." This claim has at least three meanings. First, it means simply that, as an American, he is in principle as fully addressed in appeals to the nation as anyone else. In fact, it may be that he is more representative of Americans than the national leaders (e.g., the architects of the Cold War). The second meaning is related to this representative quality. Like Whitman, Ginsberg in this poem is taking up the voices of all Americans—in this case, particularly the voices of those who have been excluded from the nation. We see this, for example, when the speaker says that he hopes to be president, even though he is Catholic (1127). A statement such as this is not about the author, Allen Ginsberg. It is, rather, about the religious bias that limits equal democratic participation, even among Christians. The limits on democratic participation are further indicated when he concludes from being America that he is only talking to himself (1127). The line is a sort of pun. If he is America and is talking to America, then he is talking to himself. But, more significantly, he represents part of America (the powerless part) and is addressing another part of the nation (the powerful part). But no one who matters is listening to these marginalized voices. He may as we be speaking to himself.

Finally, there are points at which the poem's "I" could be taken to be allegorical for America. For example, there is a suggestion of this in the third line of the poem, where the speaker protests that he cannot "stand" his "own mind" (1126). This could be a personal statement that, say, Allen Ginsberg does not care for the way that Allen Ginsberg thinks. This is consistent with some of what follows—for example, the later reference to his psychoanalyst. (On the other hand, the speaker claims that his thoughts have received support from the psychoanalyst, which would appear to put his mind in a favorable light.) The broader context of the poem, however, suggests that the mind he cannot stand is, so to speak, "the mind of America," the mind whose "emotional life" is "run" by media corporations. If this is correct, the third line of the poem effectively expresses and specifies the ambivalence of the poem, its *critical nationalism*, as we might call it, for the speaker rejects the American mindset, while simultaneously accepting it as his own.

Indeed, this becomes more plausible when we look at the section treating *Time Magazine*. On the one hand, the speaker rejects it unequivocally, presumably as an outlet for a particular, bourgeois representation of the world, and of America. One important part of the American self-concept is industriousness. For example, in the influential,

"Letter III: What Is an American?," de Crèvecoeur's American farmer explains that "We [i.e., Americans] are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself" (67). Similarly, Benjamin Franklin listed "industry" as one of the primary virtues. The disparagement and marginalization of poor whites—"white trash"—are often justified by reference to their supposed shiftlessness, their lack of industry. There is at least an element of this in Irving's Rip van Winkle, who is sorely lacking in industry. The same criticism could be laid at the feet of at least some poets, such as Ginsberg. In this view, poverty is not a sign that America is not egalitarian. It is, rather, a sign that some people have failed to pursue the opportunities that were open to them. Ginsberg tells us that *Time Magazine* promotes a sense of "responsibility" and of being serious. It lionizes businessmen, who are "serious" (1127). One can almost hear an objection from the peanut gallery, "But aren't artists serious, too?" *Time Magazine* suggests that they can be, but the examples of artists that fit *Time*'s account are "Movie producers" (1127), which is to say, the people who operate the business part of the seventh art. (Though more subdued in expression, Whitman exhibited a similar distaste for industriousness, as he begins his poem with a contented affirmation that he "loaf[s]" [1312].)

Ginsberg himself is "obsessed" with *Time* and "sneaks" into the library to read it, thereby identifying himself with other Americans whose "emotional life" is "run" by the magazine (1127). Even so, his treatment of the magazine and industriousness is more evidently critical than nationalist. A more unambiguous affirmation of the speaker's American identity comes at the end of the poem. In the final lines, the speaker explains that he won't join the army or work in a factory (presumably contributing to the military). In other words, he does not identify with America as a military force against other countries. However, in the final line, he explains that he is putting his "queer shoulder to the wheel" (1128). The idiom of putting one's shoulder to the wheel derives from the effort to dislodge a vehicle that has become stuck and needs to be lifted before it can proceed again on its own (see the entry for this idiom in Siefring). The image is fitting for Ginsberg's poem. The speaker is saying that he will give his fullest effort to freeing the U.S. from the rut into which it has fallen. Once dislodged, American can proceed again toward achieving the ideal that is commonly understood to have inspired its founding. In this way, the speaker clearly considers himself an American. Indeed, he is an active and engaged worker for the nation, still willing to give all, despite the fact that his giving has thus far had no benefits, either for him individually or, what is apparently more important, for the nation as a whole.[5] Indeed, the nation remains stuck in place, no more able to advance than a carriage with its wheels sunk deep in a bog off the side of the road.

But in what sense is the U.S. stuck; just where and how did its wheels become lodged and immobile, in Ginsberg's view? The immediately preceding references to the army and associated industry suggest the "military-industrial complex" (as it was first named not many years after Ginsberg wrote this poem). This fits with the criticisms of America voiced in the course of the poem. Those criticisms may be organized under a few headings, principally militarism and the Cold War, economic inequality, and racism along with other forms of bias. These are all contradictions of the fundamental norms that are central to America's self-understanding.

Ginsberg first takes up militarism. In the fourth line, the speaker suggests that it is possible for the U.S. to put an end to what he calls "the human war" (1126). Ginsberg seems to be suggesting that all military conflicts, though framed in abstract terms of conflicts between nations, actually work out as suffering and death for individual people. The universality of the American project should foster pacificism, as it should entail the recognition of the value of all human lives. The "human war" is also the ongoing conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, which included the threat of a war that would annihilate all of humanity. In keeping with the last point Ginsberg goes on to focus particularly on American development and use of the atomic bomb. He returns to the point later in relation to economic inequality, when he speaks of America's impoverished and homeless, beneath "five hundred suns" (1127). The U.S. can generate the massive energy of atomic weapons to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it cannot house, clothe, and feed its "underprivileged" citizens (1127), except in the prisons mentioned in the same line, or the mental institutions mentioned in the line before that. That is why America's libraries—which house the stories of Americans—"are full of tears" (1127).

Ginsberg quickly shifts to a more general issue. He calls on America to be "angelic" and to take off its "clothes" (1126). The allusion here is to the Judeo-Christian story of the Fall of Humankind. Ginsberg portrays America as having fallen, like Adam and Eve. In Genesis, the result of the Fall was, in part, deprivation of the lush plenty of the garden, thus the difficulty of acquiring one's food through labor on a miserly patch of earth (Genesis 3:17–19). In connection with this, Ginsberg turns to international and national poverty and hunger. First, he urges sending "eggs to India" (1127), sharing the abundance of food with places prone to famine, behavior presumably entailed by egalitarian universalism.[6]

In connection with this, the speaker then asks, "When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks?" (1127). The question may at first seem to suggest an insane sense of personal entitlement. But, if we look at the phrasing carefully, we see that it in effect introduces the topic of socialism. First, while Ginsberg was perfectly passable in appearance, he was (so to speak) no Rock Hudson. I cannot

imagine that he was so deluded as to think he merited special consideration due to unusual personal beauty. The point, rather, is that—as a sort of Everyperson—he has the "good looks" we all share, the good appearance of common humanity. Moreover, he is not asking to be given what he *wants*, but what he *needs*—specifically, what he needs from the *supermarket*, thus what he needs in food (like India). Here, Ginsberg suggests a fundamental socialist principle, articulated famously by Karl Marx as "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (531). Later in the stanza, Ginsberg tells "America" about having been a communist and about reading Marx.

In the final stanza, he develops these points more fully, taking up the issue of racism, as well as equality before the law, while also returning to some of his other themes. Here, Ginsberg recalls political arrests (Tom Mooney) and racist convictions (the Scottsboro boys). He decries American paranoia about the U.S.S.R. He also speaks about the place of poetry in capitalism. He advertises "strophes $2500 apiece" (1128). The suggestion is clear. The capitalist economy of the U.S. values only financial profit. The point of the irony is that poetry does not have price as its primary value. Poetry, rather, stands against the reduction of value to money (hence Ginsberg's own small worth, noted at the outset of the poem).

An America that has these various faults will not be able to fulfill its ethical and political promise. It will not be willing to distribute food according to needs and work according to abilities. This, in turn, tells us again how America has been thrown off track and bogged down. It also tells us what people such as Ginsberg can do to dislodge the sunken carriage of the nation, to return it to the right path. What Ginsberg does for the nation is not to join the military-industrial complex but to oppose it through poetry. That poetry affirms his American identity, but it does so critically. That criticism encompasses a range of inequalities—including sexual inequalities, suggested by the final line's reference to his being "queer," a point consistent with his writing poems that are "all different sexes" (1128).

In sum, Ginsberg may seem at first to be not only anti-national but even anti-American. Looking more closely, however, we see that he is neither. The poem is framed by assertions of his commitment to America in the past and in the future. Moreover, it is punctuated by statements directly or indirectly indicating his identification with America. Of course, it is by no means lacking in complaints—about the military-industrial complex, economic inequality, and racial and other forms of bias. More generally, he articulates a critical nationalism, with the criticism aimed at the ways in which the actual condition of the U.S. does not fulfill its aspiration of universal, democratic egalitarianism.

A National Self-Concept

In my earlier book, *American Literature and American Identity: A Cognitive Cultural Study from the Revolution through the Civil War*, I take up the Declaration of Independence as a way of identifying some of the most pervasive and enduring principles of the American self-concept. Readers unfamiliar with that earlier book will already have gathered that I stress the "universal, democratic egalitarianism" of the American ideal identity. Perhaps the most renowned statement of American ideals, and certainly one of the most often-quoted political statements in American history, occurs in the second and third sentences of that founding document, which read as follows:

> We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.

As I discuss in the earlier book, the reference to "Governments ... deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed" is a clear affirmation of democracy. The point of the word "just" is that some governments are tyrannies, exercising powers that are *un*just, precisely because they are not democratic—or, rather, because they are not *universally* democratic. Much of the Declaration is devoted to a criticism of British government, which is viewed as tyrannical insofar as it does not have the consent of the colonists and is thereby undemocratic in their regard. The universality principle is explicit in the word "all" and in the idea of "Rights" that exist a priori; they embody "Truths" that are "self-evident," thus not contingent on changeable facts of experience. Finally, the principle of egalitarianism is explicit in the word "equal."

In formulating this account of one highly prominent national self-concept, I did leave out part of these, so to speak, foundational sentences. Specifically, I paid little attention to the phrase, "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." I take it that "life" simply states the necessary condition for having and enjoying rights. It is without parallel in importance. However, its generality means that it does not have significant consequences for the particularity of an American self-concept.

"Liberty" is more complex. On the one hand, it refers to the collective right of liberty from tyranny, thus the right to democratic governance. However, it also—and more directly—refers to an individual right. This right is perhaps best phrased as a sort of default presumption that individuals should be able to act as they wish unless there is good reason to constrain that action, typically due to actual or potential harm to others.

This is certainly an important right and it will turn up at some points in the following pages. However, I will not be addressing it at any length. This is for two reasons. First, my focus is principally on the issue of collective identity—or, rather, identities (plural), national identity as well as sub-national identity and trans-national identity. Individual liberty certainly has some bearing on group relations in the U.S. However, these relations are principally a function of group identifications. The second reason I do not seriously examine the issue of individual liberty is that it seems to me to bear less on the topic of national versus non-national identity than on the topic of capitalism versus socialism. People sometimes speak as if individual freedom is a value in capitalism but not in socialism. But that is not true. Different systems of political economy construe individual freedom differently, enabling different forms of individual freedom and constraining individual freedom in different ways.

"The pursuit of happiness" may seem to simply state what motivates individual actions for which they require liberty. Indeed, that is what it states. But the idea of "the pursuit of happiness" is also of particular interest to anyone focusing on literature. Specifically, as I have discussed in *The Mind and Its Stories*, stories are prototypically causal sequences in which agents pursue the achievement of goals, with the goals representing instances of conditions that the agents expect to produce happiness. In other words, the notion of the pursuit of happiness is precisely the notion of a (prototypical) story. Here, one might reasonably respond that this is probably true, but so what? What difference does it make? In that and subsequent works, I have further argued that happiness goals are defined by emotion-motivation systems. For example, hunger establishes one sort of happiness goal; attachment bonding yields another sort of happiness goal; sexual desire, a third, and so on. Thus, the general categories of happiness goal do not vary completely. There is, of course, enormous variability in our particularization of these goals—for example, in the people to whom each of us is attached, and even in the quality of our attachment bonds (e.g., whether we feel secure or insecure [see, e.g., Parkes 13–15 and Mikulincer 28–29]). Variations in attachment target and quality notwithstanding, people from all cultures and all historical periods have attachment-based goals—as well as hunger-based goals, though food preferences vary, and so on.

But, of course, such universality does not in itself indicate how an emotion-system account of stories might bear on national identity. In addition to the preceding points, I have drawn on stories from a wide range of unrelated traditions to argue that the types of happiness goal yield recurring patterns in story genre, such that very similar stories of romantic love, heroic conflict, social devastation and sacrifice, and other genres, recur across different traditions. Finally, in *Understanding Nationalism*, I have argued that these genres serve to structure the ways in which we think about and experience national identity. In my earlier

book on American literature, I touched on the relevance of these cross-cultural genre structures for understanding American identity. However, they figure much more extensively in the present volume.

In this and many other ways, adding attention to the phrase, "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is valuable. However, it does not alter the main point about American identity. Universal, democratic egalitarianism remains just as central to the most widespread and consequential forms of American, national self-definition. Indeed, despite my actual derivation of the formula, it is not by any means confined to the Declaration of Independence. The Constitution clearly points toward this ideal as well. As Bodenhamer notes, "equality and democracy" were "core constitutional values" (64). Smith-Rosenberg explains that the new nation was "built upon the radically new and untried principles of popular sovereignty and universal equality" (2). Moreover, on the extent of the universality, Critchlow points out that "The delegates" to the constitutional convention in 1787 "shared a common belief" that "on their shoulders rested the future of their country and the destiny of the world" (7). They "expressed profound optimism that the American Revolution marked the beginnings of a new epoch in human history" (8). This universality was renewed and rendered less inconsistent with actual practice through the Reconstruction amendments, which—as Eric Foner has powerfully argued—constitute a *de facto* "second founding" of the nation (coinciding with the historical division that also guides the present volume).

But there are obvious problems here, precisely the problems stressed by Ginsberg. In Bodenhamer's words, "The worldview of the framers had no room for women, blacks, Indians, or the poor as citizens worthy of the ballot" (60; see, e.g., Gerber 34 on the history of bizarre laws governing women's citizenship, marriage, and immigration status). The obtrusive contradiction between the lofty ideals of the American self-concept and the reality of American society did not go unnoticed for long. Bodenhamer points out that "Equality for white men only was too much at odds with American ideals to remain unchallenged" (77). On the other hand, not everyone conceded that there was (and is) a contradiction. Smith-Rosenberg interprets the situation in the following terms:

> Throughout our history … two visions of the United States have attracted and challenged us. The first imagines America as a country in which diversity, equality, and inalienable political rights are celebrated. The second refers to the United States' dark history as a white man's republic, jealously guarding its borders, suspicious of any who would darken its racial heritage. (465)

Margulies is more skeptical. He asks, "How does the United States justify the betrayal of its professed values?," answering that

> it doesn't. When Americans come upon a social arrangement they want to preserve, they do not alter their behavior to fit their values; they alter their values to fit their behavior. They change what it means to be an American. (xi)

But it seems clear that this is unfair. A range of American political activists have worked against anti-universal, non-democratic, and inegalitarian practices, upholding the ideals and opposing the reality that is far from ideal. (For a detailed and illuminating history of these contradictions and the various responses to them, see Lepore.)

For our purposes, the most important critiques of America's inadequate implementation of its core identity principles come in literature. Literary authors deal with the issue so frequently that it is perhaps the most common thematic concern in American literature. Authors seek to cultivate empathy or respect across identity group divisions through such techniques as perspective shifting (from in-group to out-group), the alteration of standard metaphors (e.g., the ideologically debilitating identification of out-groups with children), and the adoption of particular narrative motifs (such as interracial romance). Unsurprisingly, these critiques are usually to some extent ambivalent; they work against some group prejudices, but they often do so in such a way as to presuppose other prejudices. Few if any authors fully embody the ideals they advocate. I do not wish to overstate this. There is a tendency among literary critics to be highly censorious regarding past authors. One sometimes has the sense that some critics' self-esteem rests on feeling morally superior to the authors they are discussing. However, it is equally important not to falsely idealize authors, twisting their words in order to make them appear closer to our current norms than they were—another common critical tendency.

A Note on Identity After the Civil War

Of course, a critique of racial, sexual, or other discrimination in the U.S. need not address the issue of American identity, either directly or indirectly. However, it is clear that a great deal of American literature in the first century of independence did just that. Things begin to change after the Civil War and Reconstruction, then increasingly after subsequent wars. There is an apparent decline in concern over American identity in literature and elsewhere. Popular concern with the topic appears to have abated generally, though with variations, such as an uptick in connection with the Second World War. (Epstein writes that "This was a time when being patriotic didn't require a second thought …

America was in a righteous war against true barbarians" [57].) Some would contend that this was a period in which subnational, ethnic identities became more prominent. The purpose of this book is not to explain such apparent changes, or even to determine the extent to which there were real changes of these sorts. The purpose of this book is to look at some significant attitudes toward national identity during the period, whether or not that topic was of pervasive literary or popular concern. Even so, it is worth briefly considering some factors that might have played a role in this apparent change.

There are some fairly obvious causes. The first is simply that the country had been around for a long time. As the decades passed, fewer and fewer Americans had any connection with the pre-independence colonial, British period (e.g., fewer people even knew, say, a grandparent born in the region before 1776). In contrast, there was a significant group of Americans that had some direct connection with another country due to immigration. In this way, identity issues tended not to focus on, say, "How am I different in being American, rather than British?" but became more likely to include such questions as, "How am I American, in relation to being Irish [or Italian, or Chinese]?" This is also related to the increasing interconnectedness of the entire globe, which encouraged internationalism or cosmopolitanism among some Americans, including some writers.

Another significant difference was that the nation itself appeared differently on the world stage. Rather than being a potentially insecure upstart, it became increasingly well-established, even dominant; rather than a struggling colony, it became an imperial power. As Smith-Rosenberg puts it, the U.S. could be considered "the world's first post-colonial nation" or "the world's most powerful empire" (5). The possibly protective concern over the identity of the former may be very different from critical attention to the identity of the latter. Of course, the two concerns could be related and were related in critical nationalism. Thus, Paul Boyer explains that "An Anti-Imperialist League, including Jane Addams, Andrew Carnegie, Mark Twain, and the philosopher William James, passionately warned that imperialist expansion betrayed the nation's founding principles and marked a troubling new turn in America's role in the world" (75). Indeed, the list of critical nationalists came to include, not only Ginsberg but Whitman. Boyer points out that

> In 1900 … some 40 percent of Americans lived in poverty, and U.S. troops were battling freedom fighters in the Philippines. If present trends continued, wrote the poet Walt Whitman in 1879 [obviously prefiguring these developments], 'then our republican experiment, notwithstanding all its surface successes, is at heart an unhealthy failure'. (74)

Another historical difference concerns just what opinions were preserved and disseminated. In the second century of the nation's independence, the marketplace of ideas increasingly included the writings of women, non-whites, and sexual minorities. Moreover, the publication of those writings was less likely to be filtered through uniformly white, straight, male publishers. Though public discourse no doubt remained skewed toward European American men, more diverse American voices were heard in public venues, and they were speaking to a more diverse audience; thus, minority speakers were less likely to tailor their content to white addressees or to worry about offending members of dominant groups. To some extent, then, the apparent change in national orientation is merely a matter of more openly expressing discontent with national identity, discontent that was present but unacknowledged previously.

Other factors are less self-evident. Somewhat paradoxically, it sometimes appears as if achieving basic goals of legal equality produced less sense of national unity. The enfranchisement of African Americans, Native Americans, and women did give rise to temporary lulls in activism regarding the status and treatment of these groups. But it did not put an end to that activism, which returned with renewed force, and sometimes a newly invigorated separatism, thus a rejection of American identity.

I suspect that this was largely the result of disillusion. It must have seemed that the end of slavery and the enfranchisement of blacks would institute democratic equality for African Americans. The disappointment of that hope could easily plunge one into despair, or rage. The period after the Civil War saw, in effect, a renewed disenfranchisement of African Americans in many states through Jim Crow laws, a disenfranchisement given broadly national approval by the Supreme Court (in *Plessy v. Ferguson* [1896]). Speaking of the final thirty years of the nineteenth century, Paul Boyer explains that, "Belying the promise of the Civil War era, these decades saw an ugly upsurge of racism" (60). The problem did not stop in 1899. Consider some key points of twentieth-century American history. After the First World War, "White hostility to southern blacks seeking new opportunities in the North hardened. The number of lynchings surged, including some of black veterans still in uniform" (89). The 1920s "saw a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan" (91). In the 1930s, even Franklin Roosevelt disheartened racial minorities. As Boyer notes, "Roosevelt sidestepped racial issues, including NAACP pleas to make lynching a federal crime" (97–98). Moreover, "In 1942, some 120,000 West Coast Japanese-Americans were uprooted and imprisoned in remote camps—an action supported by the Roosevelt administration and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court" (104). Similar points could be made about women's rights. After the war, "festering

inequities of race, gender, and social class roiled the deceptively bland surface of 1950s America" (106).

There were other areas of disillusion also, not entirely unlike the disillusion experienced by newly independent former British colonies in Africa and elsewhere in the middle of the twentieth century. For example, Critchlow points out that "corruption characterized politics after the Civil War" (74), to the extent that "middle-class Americans" became "fed up with corruption" (75). This too did not end with the nineteenth century. For example, "Corruption overwhelmed Harding's administration" (93). After the Watergate investigations, "Any notions of politicians as 'men of honor' had become a forgotten memory in American politics" (Critchlow 118). Individual freedom—a putatively paramount American value—also suffered. For example, "The 1918 Espionage Act and the Sedition Amendment (1919) banned socialist and radical publications and criminalized speech critical of the government or the war" (Paul Boyer 88).

What Follows

Even with these changes, however, American identity has remained an important concern in American literature. The recognition of contradictions between principles and practices may be particularly sharp, and the nationalism more often overtly critical. But the interest remains. Like my previous book, this volume focuses on literary treatments of American identity particularly as they address the issue of subnational identity divisions. More precisely, early American manifestations of identity developed substantially in relation to three different sorts of exclusion, three types of restriction on the universality of democratic egalitarianism. The first sort of exclusion was based on what later came to be called "ethnic cleansing," the physical removal of a group, either through killing or expulsion. This was a standard European American relation to Amerindians, who—in colonial ideology—were frequently associated with demonic forces. The second sort of exclusion was internal dehumanization or animalization, the reduction of a group within the nation to subhuman status. This was a common European American relation to Africans. The third type of exclusion reduced a group to a dependent and inferior status, often drawing on the model of children. This was a recurring, male American relation to women. All of these subnational dissociations have been crucial to the literary treatment of American identity from the beginning. I therefore stressed them in the prior volume and continue to do so in this volume. (Due simply to lack of space, I have not taken up other racial and ethnic subnational exclusions, such as Asian American or Latinx, though they are clearly important now and are likely to increase in importance. Unfortunately, one cannot cover everything in a single book.[7])

In the earlier volume, I also touched on a fourth form of exclusion. On the surface, this exclusion deprives a group of universal rights because of their putatively criminal activity rather than some identity category. However, in some cases, criminality does indirectly function as an exclusion of a subnational identity group, as when African Americans are disproportionately disenfranchised due to felony convictions (see Robinson, and Fellner and Mauer). Moreover, in other cases, the criminal activity itself comes down to little more than another way of phrasing the identity category. This is the case with sexual preference. Though sexual preference was something of a concern in nineteenth-century American literature, it became a topic of focal interest in the twentieth century in both literature and social and political activism. I have therefore treated sexual preference and American identity more extensively in the present volume.

Formally, then, the book is divided into four main sections. The first and second treat subnational divisions based on race—Native American, then African American. The third considers sexual preference. The final large section addresses sex, the struggle of half the population to be included in the imagination of American identity. Generally speaking, each section includes both "outsider" and "insider" views, in other words works by authors who would not be classed as members of the excluded group and authors who would be so classed. For example, the African American section includes Eugene O'Neill, along with Amiri Baraka and Spike Lee.

More precisely, the first chapter is an overview of the main theoretical principles that I will be drawing on and developing in subsequent chapters. These are primarily of two sorts. First, because we are dealing with characters—thus (fictional) persons—they include principles drawn from psychology, in this case social psychology treating the nature and consequences of group identification. Second, because we are dealing with stories, they include principles developed out of cognitive and affective science that account for cross-culturally recurring narrative genres and the way these genres affect our thought about nationalism broadly and American nationalism specifically.[8]

A fundamental tenet of this study is that subnational exclusion—racial or sexual—presupposes difference. No white person considers black people inferior to whites because they are the same as whites. One justifies disenfranchisement of a group because one takes the group to be different. Moreover, that difference is profound, bearing on important aspects of cognition and emotion. A further tenet of this study is that such a presupposition is both pervasive in the U.S. and mistaken. As Margulies puts it,

> A public commitment to the idea that people ought not be judged by the color of their skin exists along-side a widely held private belief

> that racial and ethnic differences are not only deep and wide, but a perfectly sensible way to distinguish one group from another. The powerful stigma against giving voice to overtly racist sentiments is matched by an equally powerful conviction on the part of a great many people that racial differences are genuine and should be taken into account by policy makers. (66–67)

Moreover, this affirmation of difference is mistaken whether held by a dominant or subordinated group. Harrison rightly argues that "identities ostensibly 'different' from one another are often remarkably similar" (344); there is frequently "a pronounced disjunction between imagined difference and objective similarity" (344). He goes on to maintain convincingly that "ethnicity and nationalism" are perhaps best "conceptualized as relationships, not of difference or perceived difference, but of denied or disguised resemblance" (345). This all results from "attempts to counteract, diminish, or repress an awareness of shared identity" (358).

The first chapter of the Native American section treats four film adaptations of Cooper's very influential *The Last of the Mohicans* (variously characterized—not necessarily with approval—as the "founding text for America" [Doris Sommer, qtd. in Hutson] and "the official US origin story" [Dunbar-Ortiz 103]). These adaptations were made at different times and have different political orientations, but they also exhibit some consequential and enduring similarities, such as the association of Native Americans with nature. This chapter serves in part to establish relations with my earlier volume, which begins with Cooper's novel. The alterations in the adaptations serve to suggest some of the historical changes and continuities in European-American ideas about and attitudes toward Native Americans, and to some extent other excluded groups as well.

The third chapter turns to N. Scott Momaday, "the Kiowa and Cherokee author ... who is credited with inaugurating ... a contemporary 'renaissance' for American Indian literature" (Allen 207). The chapter considers the ways in which Momaday comes to identify himself as Amerindian and how he emplots Amerindian identity in a way that largely puts aside American identity.

Leslie Marmon Silko takes this process of Amerindian identification further in *Ceremony*, a novel that, I argue, suggests that there is a natural relation between ancestry, culture, and geography. This natural relation defies socialization into non-Amerindian traditions, such that attempts at inter-cultural assimilation may lead to physical and mental illness. (This view is, of course, very much at odds with my own, though I entirely agree with Silko on the value of preserving Amerindian culture and on the racism of American society that, directly or indirectly, produces physical and mental illness.) This chapter focuses particular attention on

Silko's use of various cross-cultural narrative genres in developing her account of Amerindian social identity in the U.S.

The section on African Americans and American Identity begins with Eugene O'Neill's controversial play, *The Emperor Jones*. Though initially viewed as anti-racist, the play is now more commonly condemned for racism.[9] The most reasonable view appears to be that it is both. It often draws on what are at best problematic cognitive models and implicit associations for understanding and responding to African Americans. (Indeed, the very idea of responding to African Americans—or any other large, diverse group—is problematic.) But this already ambiguous and ambivalent work becomes still more complex—and possibly more revealing—once we come to recognize that one model for Africans in O'Neill's play is his own ethnic, sub-national group, the Irish. Indeed, this tacit modeling partially underlies some of the more obviously disturbing aspects of the play, such as its emphasis on (O'Neill's version of) black English vernacular speech.

The biases in *The Emperor Jones* are in part mitigated by the fact that O'Neill understood that he should hardly have the last word on African Americans. As Dowling explains, O'Neill "recognized that he was writing as an outsider and saw the need for the black experience to be written from within" (219). In the sixth chapter, I turn to two plays by LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka—*Dutchman* and *The Slave*. The former has "become the de facto example of the Black Arts Movement" (Zygmonski 139), consonant with that movement's radical rejection of white literary domination, particularly in the representation of black people's personal and political lives. It takes up the common motif of interracial romance. That motif often operates to suggest the possibility of overcoming racial antagonism and joining blacks and whites (or other racial groups) in a personal union that represents a national reconciliation. But, in Baraka's version, the apparent romance is simply a conduit for the expression of white supremacism and the subordination, even murder, of black people. Thompson suggests that such a view extended well beyond Baraka. As he puts it, "The play dramatically captured the cultural moment of a radical shift in black identity and politics, and in interracial relations, in the U.S." Specifically, "The late 1950s and early 1960s ... were a time when interracial relationships shifted in the U.S. cultural imagination from being radical and progressive to being reactionary and regressive." Thompson's claim is over-general, but it does capture Baraka's skepticism, and presumably that of some of his compatriots (such as Malcolm X, during his separatist, black nationalist period).

Whereas *Dutchman* concerns romantic relations—or, more accurately, seduction—*The Slave* takes up a different, standard narrative genre. O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* treated African American political ascendency in a loosely heroic—or perhaps mock-heroic—narrative. *The Slave* is also in part a heroic—or perhaps anti-heroic—emplotment of the

place of African Americans in the U.S. The heroic genre is often closely connected with anger. Banks argues that racial anger is so prominent and pervasive that being angry about virtually anything is likely to bring out racial anger as well. Such anger is clear in Baraka's play as are some of the reasons for it. But there is a political difficulty with both plays. I am not blaming Baraka for this. The problem may be simply taken over from the real world. In any case, neither work seems to hold out much hope for the future of America in general or African Americans in particular. Both plays are suggestive of despair.

One common response to despair with regard to the possibility of long-term well-being is "future discounting" (see Dunning 260), living for today, following the slogan, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may be killed by the police or by a white mob." This is roughly the attitude that we find in the young Malcolm X, as depicted in Spike Lee's film biography—though Malcolm is more self-confident than the reference to despair might suggest. Lee's film takes us through Malcolm X's short-sighted, narcissistic youth, through his separatist, black nationalism, to a more nuanced sense of African American identity that at least allows for the possibility of inter-racial reconciliation in a future America.

The eighth chapter begins the section on sexual orientation. Given the religious commitments of many early American colonists—commitments that were not anything we might be tempted to class as, say, tantric—we might anticipate some national issues with sexuality. As Alan Simpson pointed out, "everyone who inspects the national consciousness of … Americans today finds Puritanism a part of its makeup" (99). Perhaps the most consistent and destructive form of sexual intolerance—Puritan or otherwise—bore on same-sex desire. It is important to note that the effects of such intolerance were not confined to a tiny minority. For example, Reumann points to studies showing that, "when same-sex erotic response that did not lead to orgasm was counted, as many as 50 percent of men and 28 percent of women might be termed homosexual" (166; note that Reumann includes occasional as well as exclusive same-sex desire in the category of "homosexual"). Nor was prejudice against gay men and lesbians simply implicit; "experts often articulated the fear that modern American culture was becoming permeated with homosexuality," even going so far as to ask if homosexuality constituted a "new national disease" (Reumann 167). After the Second World War, sexual orientation became an important aspect of social identity (see Reumann 170). Reumann goes on to explain how sexual orientation became a key topic in reflections on and responses to American identity. As she rightly states, "The nation's treatment of its minorities, including homosexuals, would support or condemn its democratic claims" (190).

Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* is, to my mind, a deeply affecting tragedy that cultivates the audience's empathy for a young woman who is driven to suicide by the homophobic society in which she

finds herself. Some readers object to that suicide, perhaps on the grounds that it suggests a just punishment for her same-sex desire.[10] But this seems to me a serious misreading of the play. First of all, it is at odds with the emotional response that Hellman cultivates. Second, it ignores the ways in which the play strongly suggests the ubiquity of homoerotic feelings, and thus the hypocrisy (as well as the cruelty) of the society that ostracizes someone for her sexual preference.

On the other hand, there is something to the objections raised against the play. Specifically, Hellman is clearly addressing a heterosexual audience. She is not appealing to lesbian readers, who need a sense of hope and "empowerment," as they presumably already have empathy for the plight of sexual minorities. Moreover, as Vorauer discusses (see, e.g., 5–6), the cultivation of empathy in a dominant group can actually reduce the sense of empowerment felt by a dominated group. Thus, a work that promotes empathy in straight readers may decrease the sense of empowerment felt by gay men and lesbians. This is not really a criticism of Hellman as such; it is, rather, an indication that the sort of project undertaken by Hellman, with its orientation to a heterosexual audience, is not sufficient to treat the place of sexual minorities in American identity, which is to say, identity both as self-concept and as practical activity in daily life.[11]

A key part of the integration of sexual minorities into the larger, U.S. society is a matter of establishing communities—first, communities of the sexual minorities themselves. The suicide depicted in Hellman's play is committed by a woman who is ostracized from the mainstream community. A critical factor in her death is that she had no communal support to work against that homophobic ostracism. The function of such alternative communities is taken up in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, the topic of Chapter 9. Barnes considers the constitution of an expatriate community for sexual minorities, addressing both homosexuality and transgender experience. She considers the formation of such communities in part through their relation to American identity and the psychological deformations of a society that denies a significant and common part of its sexuality.

The tenth chapter takes us to Tony Kushner's widely lauded *Angels in America*, "Winner of the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for drama and two Tony Awards for best play" (Hutchinson-Jones 5). In 1995, Savran noted that, "Not within memory has a new American play been canonized by the press rapidly as *Angels in America*" ("Ambivalence" 207). Writing in 2008, Ken Nielsen expressed the view of many critics that "*Angels in America* is arguably the most important American play to be produced in the past 20 years" (1). Clearly, Kushner provoked a strong response in his audiences.

Kushner takes us to a time when sexual minorities have well-established communities, providing mutual support and a degree of

autonomy relative to the larger society, from which they remained excluded or marginalized. The AIDS epidemic made clear that this situation was not viable, just, or consistent with America's self-concept. The reception of Kushner's play seems almost certainly related to the timeliness of an explicit meditation on American identity and its relation to sexual minorities. I believe that Savran is onto something when he writes that Kushner aims "to produce a counterhegemonic patriotism" ("Queering" 216) and that "by tapping into a number of diverse and contradictory narratives about the constitution of the nation, *Angels* manages to reinvigorate a fantasy of America that reaches back to the early nineteenth century" ("Queering" 211). Moreover, as Hussein writes, Kushner's "perception of the American Dream is reverent and completely non-ironic" (72). In some ways, the play may be viewed as continuing the celebratory nationalism of the nineteenth century, but with a post-Stonewall understanding of gay rights and their place in American society.

The final section of the book treats sex and gender—specifically, the place of women in American identity. It was clear from the time of the Revolution that there was something deeply wrong with a society that claimed to be the beacon of universal, democratic egalitarianism, but that disenfranchised its entire female population. Thus, we find Abigail Adams admonishing her husband, the revolutionary leader and future president, John Adams, in March of 1776 as follows (qtd. in Ware 29):

> [I]n the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

Abigail Adams was not alone. There has been a long history of women's activism in the U.S., with some striking achievements, such as the 1848 Women's Rights convention in Seneca Falls, with its statement of what rights women were denied. Ware rightly points out that this movement was continuous with the founding principles of the nation. As she puts it, "Thus did the political and intellectual ferment originally unleashed by the American Revolution continue to deepen and grow" (49).

Despite these seemingly obvious connections, early literary treatments of women did not generally highlight their citizenship rights as implied by American national identity. In the twentieth century, that changed, at least in the sense that we begin to see prominent works treating national identity from a feminist perspective. In this section, I consider three

works that take different, but closely related approaches to this topic. The first, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, is a feminist utopia, presenting the reader with a society that Gilman imagines as perfect for women, one that corrects the patriarchal inequalities of the U.S. at the time. The crucial context for Gilman's novel is "first wave" feminism, with its struggle for political rights, particularly suffrage (see Ware 74). Daniel maintains that Gilman's 1898 *Women and Economics* "established [her] as the leading intellectual of the feminist movement, and she remained so for the next two decades" (17). *Herland* extends Gilman's feminist analysis and vision to literary narrative. Women's right to the vote was finally recognized in 1920, with the passage of the 19th Amendment. Gilman's novel was published only five years earlier, in the expanding movement that soon led to enfranchisement.

The second work I consider in this section is Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, a feminist dystopia. In contrast with the Suffragist context of Gilman's utopia, Atwood's dystopia has "second wave feminism" as its context. As Ware explains, the "revival of feminism (often called 'second wave feminism' to distinguish it from the first wave of suffrage) had its roots in the 1960s and found its fullest flowering in the first half of the 1970s" (103). There were "two different strands of feminism fuel[ing] this revival. The first was women's rights activism" (103). This strand was concerned with such legislation as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the "addition of 'sex' to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964" (103), as well as Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, and the legalization of Abortion. Despite the importance of abortion, the focus of this strand was largely economic. The second strand was "women's liberation," which was "younger and more radical" and stressed that "the personal is political" (104; on these strands, see also Lepore 651–652). This strand may be broadly characterized as more cultural in orientation.

There was considerable backlash against second wave feminism, sometimes from religious groups, including conservative and religious women. Lepore points out that "The 'women's movement' of the 1960s and 1970s was really three movements: radical feminism, liberal feminism, and conservative antifeminism" (651). Conservative leaders "mobilized masses of grassroots women, especially from evangelical churches and right-wing groups" (Ware 107). Indeed, "Women have supplied a key constituency, especially at the grassroots level, for conservative initiatives ever since" (Ware 108). In *The Handmaid's Tale*, published in 1986, Atwood takes up patriarchal inequities in then-contemporary U.S. society and in other societies around the world and enhances them in keeping with "conservative" religious tendencies in the U.S. By intensifying patriarchal subordination, and connecting that intensification with religious trends in America, Atwood does not try to set out a realistic or plausible vision of America's future. Rather, she seeks to

render more salient the patriarchal relations that already exist in the U.S. and the ways in which they undermine egalitarianism. Atwood highlights the violation and loss of American ideals, in part by drawing on American slave narratives as a model.

Before going on, I should pause to consider a possible objection here. Some readers may balk at the idea of including Atwood in this book. She is, after all, a Canadian author who has been very concerned with Canadian identity (see, e.g., Cooke's *Critical Companion*, 9–11). However, in her 2017 "Introduction" to *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood emphasizes the Americanness of the dystopia that she imagines. Thus, she writes that "the Republic of Gilead is built on the foundation of the seventeenth-century Puritan roots that have always lain beneath the modern-day America we thought we knew" (xiv). Moreover, somewhat reminiscent of Nathaniel Hawthorne in his preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, she stresses her own "New England ancestors," and her research regarding those ancestors, as well as the Salem witchcraft trials (xiv).[12] As the echo of Hawthorne suggests, Atwood is self-consciously writing in an American literary tradition that focuses on race- and sex-based identity divisions. Indeed, Atwood clearly draws on several of the works discussed in the first volume of the present study—most obviously, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and the autobiographies of Frederick Douglass. *The Handmaid's Tale* has particular relevance in the present context insofar as it may be viewed as a response to *Herland*. For example, it criticizes what is sometimes called "sex-negative feminism" and the reduction of women's value to motherhood, which are both prominent in Gilman's utopia. Atwood repeats Gilman's maternalistic treatment of men in Gilead's paternalistic treatment of women, indirectly suggesting that any form of such group infantilization is wrong. Finally, far from Gilman's idealized image of women as benevolent dictators, Atwood presents us with a set of female invigilators who range from misguided "true believers," through "sadists" to "opportunists"—all of which, she connects with "real life" (xvi of Atwood's "Introduction").

The final chapter of the book turns from these hypothetical and counterfactual imaginations to a consideration of the U.S. as it is today, as represented in Heidi Schreck's *What the Constitution Means to Me*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in drama for 2019.[13] It also shifts our attention from the more narrowly psychological focus of the other chapters to a concern for what is arguably the most important structural feature of society—the legal system. On the other hand, Schreck's play clearly suggests that, to a far greater extent than we might initially imagine, societal structures are malleable, subject to the psychological biases and desires, fears, and rationalizations of the people who enact, oppose, or interpret them. The point is not without practical consequences.

The Afterword, mindful of Gramsci's distinction between "pessimism of the intellect" and "optimism of the will" (see Antonini), turns very briefly to current prospects for reconciling the ideals of American identity with its far from ideal practice today. With the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and his attempts to subvert democracy in 2020, the possibilities for the future seem more grim than they have been in decades. But there are also indications that such pessimism may not be fully warranted.

Notes

1 Tayson is focusing on same-sex love, but the point applies more generally.

2 Though addressing different concerns, Rounds too points out that Ginsberg is close to Whitman in many ways, but "pushes back against a Whitmanian perspective" in others (35). The relation between Ginsberg and Whitman varies with what works we focus on. Schmidgall points out that Ginsberg was particularly influenced by Whitman's later, more critical assessment of the U.S. in *Democratic Vistas*.

3 I should note that this is not a problem for me, since I share this internationalism. It is, however, a problem from the perspective of nationalism.

4 In the earlier volume of *American Literature and American Identity*, I argued that universal, democratic egalitarianism functions as a core ideal of American identity. This does not mean that it is adopted by everyone, even in principle. (It is central to both the previous and present volumes that it is not adopted by everyone in practice.) For example, Schildkraut proposes "four notions of what being American means—liberalism, civic republicanism, ethno-culturralism, and incorporationism" (859). Universal, democratic egalitarianism is, in effect, a version of her liberalism. However, I would argue that, even in Schildkraut's scheme, liberalism and civic republicanism (which emphasizes citizens' duties rather than general rights) concern the ideals for national identity, whereas ethno-culturalism and incorporationism concern just who can embody or fulfill those ideals and how they might do so. Moreover, I would see liberalism as more fundamental than civic republicanism. This is borne out by the stronger popular support for principles associated with liberalism, as reported by Schildkraut (860–861). Moreover, the deep incompatibility of ethno-culturalism with (liberal) ideals of universal, democratic egalitarianism is itself suggested by the limited (explicit) support for the former in the same survey data (even if one suspects that implicit support is higher). In short, liberalism—thus, universal, democratic egalitarianism—appears to be the most important form of American self-definition in Schildkraut's list, as my analysis in the earlier volume would suggest.

5 I obviously take this conclusion more seriously than critics such as Raskin, who characterizes it as "mock enthusiasm" (38). But this seems to me to trivialize the politics of the entire poem, rejecting the political commitment that would appear to give the poem its entire thematic purpose. In part, this is a matter of the degree to which one thinks of Ginsberg's poetry as political and the degree to which one thinks of it as more purely personal or confessional (see, e.g., Mortenson on the latter).

6 At the time, India was associated with famine, such as the Bengal famine in which between one million and three million people died a little over a

decade before Ginsberg wrote his poem (Wolpert 336; for some other famines, see 267). Of course, this had more to do with colonialism than with the land or people of India (as Wolpert indicates), but that does not affect Ginsberg's point.

7 In the case of Latinx literature, this gap is partially compensated for by previous work by other scholars. Specifically, there has been limited work on American literature drawing—like the present work and its precursor—on cognitive and affective science. However, due largely to the pioneering work of Frederick Aldama, the one exception to this is in Latinx studies. In addition to many books and articles by Aldama, this includes work by Christopher González, Patrick Hamilton, Doug Bush, and Stephanie Fetta.

8 As pointed out in the preceding note, there has been relatively little use of cognitive and affective science in the study of American literature (outside of Latinx studies). Two noteworthy exceptions to this are Alexa Weik von Mossner and Mark Bracher. Though their focus is very different from mine (e.g., Weik von Mossner has devoted particular attention to internationalism), their studies have contributed greatly to my understanding of American literature and I believe our different concerns and approaches are mutually complementary and our publications may be read together—along with those of Aldama and others—for a fuller picture of American literature.

9 There is, however, dissent from this evaluation. Shaughnessy acknowledges stereotyping in the play, but argues that O'Neill gives the characters complexity that contradicts the stereotypes. In keeping with this, Diggins maintains that "O'Neill himself perceived blacks struggling with the same human condition as whites, the same tormenting desires" (138), and Dowling contends that he reverses stereotypes at times. For example, the English character, "Smithers is greedy, treacherous, and lazy, not coincidentally, in O'Neill's reversal of the widely held racial beliefs of his time, the characteristics associated with blackness by American white supremacists" (Dowling 205). Others seem to construe the entire issue differently. For example, Steen puts forward the somewhat obscure claim that "the black body becomes a site on which the sense of alienation characteristic of modern experience is projected" (348)

10 While I think it is seriously mistaken to view the play as at all homophobic, I also cannot follow critics such as Cuenca and Seguro, who view the play as affirming "the positive potential of same-sex desire for women" (126).

11 Even so, some writers have seen particular value in Hellman's play. For example, Shedd goes so far as to argue that aspects of the play can make it more valuable than more recent lesbian works for the politics of sexual minorities today.

12 As Cooke explains in her biography, Atwood's forebears included Loyalists who migrated north at the time of independence, but she also has relatives in the U.S. (44).

13 See https://www.pulitzer.org/finalists/heidi-schreck (accessed 22 June 2020).

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