

## *Studies in Classic American Literature*

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**D.H. Lawrence**

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~~The text here follows the London edition,  
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# Contents

Introduction <i>by Jon Thompson</i>	7
Foreword	39
1. The Spirit of Place	41
2. Benjamin Franklin	48
3. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur	60
4. Fenimore Cooper's White Novels	70
5. Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Novels	80
6. Edgar Allan Poe	95
7. Nathaniel Hawthorne and <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	111
8. Hawthorne's <i>Blithedale Romance</i>	127
9. Dana's <i>Two Years Before the Mast</i>	136
10. Herman Melville's <i>Typee</i> and <i>Moby Dick</i>	154
11. Herman Melville's <i>Moby Dick</i>	166
12. Whitman	182

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# Introduction

## I

In its commitment to formal inventiveness, stylistic verve and dramatic use of voice, American literature has inspired some of the most idiosyncratic, brilliant criticism of American literature by writers, both American and foreign: classics of this genre include William Carlos Williams' *In the American Grain* (1925), Charles Olson's *Call Me Ishmael* (1947) and Susan Howe's *My Emily Dickinson* (1985). The earliest of these, D.H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), influenced the rest, if only by developing a deeply-felt personal idiom as a way of responding to, indeed reading, American literature.

*Studies in Classic American Literature* refuses easy classification. It is at once a work of cultural criticism, a study and critique of American myths (à la Barthes's *Mythologies*, but *avant la lettre*), a meditation on the relationship between the Old World and the New, a new theory of the self, a theory of textuality (and a fearless demonstration of a radical, self-styled form of psycho-social criticism), a theory of art, a history of America, a critique of the Enlightenment and one of the greatest covert autobiographies. The first of the author's essays and the book represent either versions of Lawrence's self or of himself he felt he had to liberate). And, of course, it is a bravura interpretation of "classic" American texts, one of the most innovative and penetrating critical performances of modern times.

The vocabulary D.H. Lawrence employs in the book—"blood-knowledge," "mind-knowledge," "spirit of the place," "under-consciousness," "upper-consciousness," "passional morality"—is itself highly idiosyncratic, a quasi-Freudian idiom fashioned out of Lawrence's own preoccupations with self, morality and place. While these terms might appear to have very little to do with one another, they are in fact intricately interrelated in Lawrence's approach to literature and life.

## II

In his introductory essay, 'The Spirit of the Place,' Lawrence seeks to identify the qualities that make American literature distinctive as a literature. For Lawrence, literature is understandable only in relation to place, to the physical and cultural context that it is responding to. Hence,

Lawrence's discussion of place becomes an occasion for dispelling myths about America in order to lay bare what he regards to be the reality of America.

Lawrence begins by observing that while American classics are often thought of "children's books" or "childishness" (41), he hears in American literature "a new voice" but one the world receives as "children's stories" (41). For Lawrence, American literature is a new literature with its own voice, different from European literature. Its very newness, its very radicalism, challenges the Old World and its received literary styles, its speech forms, its conventions and conventionality. It *challenges* European literature, European culture, European values—hence the fraught relationship that Lawrence sees between American literature and European literature, a conflict central to his study. It's new because it offers "a new experience," which calls into questions European assumptions of centrality and literary authority, indeed shows them up as timid. In the relations between the Old World and the New, Lawrence sees a reverse Oedipal struggle in which the parent (the Old World) desires to do away with the child (New World literature). Lawrence, that is, sees the relationship between Old and New World literatures in psychoanalytic terms. Additionally, Lawrence presents himself as the official guardian, really the psychoanalyst of this difficult but gifted child. The question of *self*, or selves, thus emerges early on as central to Lawrence's sense of American literature. Not only in that American literature makes the question of the self a central issue, but because American writers themselves "dodge" (41) the radical version of the self dramatized in their writing. This new experience, the experience of the American self, for Lawrence is one in conflict with itself; on the one hand, the American self is iconoclastic and daring and on the other hand, it is afraid of that iconoclasm, pulling back from it, fearful of it. For Lawrence, American literature is a great psychic battleground in which the contests between the old and the new, and the conflicts between the desire to be radical and new, and the contrary desire to be accepted, get staged.

For Lawrence, one of the chief purposes of literature as an art form is that it gives the truth of a particular experience—an experience that is both individual and social. *Seeing* this experience, understanding it, is not something that happens automatically. For Lawrence this involves reading the text against the grain, seeing it as it does not see itself, reading its implied or unsaid or marginalized meanings—in short, Lawrence believes that one must deconstruct the text in order to understand its



full “truth.” “The curious thing about art-speech is that it prevaricates so terribly. I mean it tells such lies [...] And out of a pattern of lies art weaves the truth” (42). Lawrence flatly acknowledges the fact that texts are layered and are burdened with unreliable superficial meanings. For him, texts are less organic wholes than force fields of meaning with conflicting logics: “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” (42). Given that, Lawrence announces the purpose of *Studies in Classic American Literature*: “Now we know our business in these studies; saving the American tale from the American artist” (42). Which is what Lawrence does in the course of each essay: he blows past the superficial “official,” oftentimes conventional logic of the texts he analyzes to discover the repressed, dissident self (or logic) hiding in the shadows.

In the spirit of embracing these dissident logics, Lawrence uses a fair part of ‘The Spirit of the Place’ to clear the field of familiar American myths. Myth 1: that the Pilgrims were motivated by a desire to find “freedom from tyrants and kings and masters does not necessarily translate into greater freedom. To the contrary, individuals in a democracy or quasi-democracy may be *more* hemmed in, more fearful of being different, more circumscribed by one another than by any overlord: “This the land of the free! Why, if I say anything that displeases them, the free mob will lynch me, and that’s my freedom. Free? Why, I have never been in any country where the individual has such an abject fear of his fellow countrymen. Because, as I say, they are free to lynch the moment he shows he is not one of them” (43).

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Myth 2: America is “the land of the free” (42). Lawrence notes that freedom from tyrants and kings and masters does not necessarily translate into greater freedom. To the contrary, individuals in a democracy or quasi-democracy may be *more* hemmed in, more fearful of being different, more circumscribed by one another than by any overlord: “This the land of the free! Why, if I say anything that displeases them, the free mob will lynch me, and that’s my freedom. Free? Why, I have never been in any country where the individual has such an abject fear of his fellow countrymen. Because, as I say, they are free to lynch the moment he shows he is not one of them” (43).

Myth 3: Immigrants to America have been motivated by the search for wealth or opportunity. Why *did* immigrants come to America? For Lawrence the answer is not simple self-interest: “They came largely to get *away*. Away from what? In the long run, away from themselves. Away from everything. That’s why most people have come to America, and still do

come. To get away from everything they are and have been. ‘Henceforth be masterless’” (43). Just as Lawrence sees American literature as a drama in which the conflicted self struggles to find new values, new expression, a new self different from its European forebearers, Lawrence also reads American history as the history of a people who are trying to flee from themselves, from their European conventionality. One of the central conflicts Lawrence will find in *Studies in Classic American Literature* is the drama of which sensibility will ultimately win out—the “escaped slaves” or “the new whole men” (46).

Myth 4: Freedom comes from being “masterless.” Reading classic American literature enables Lawrence to formulate his own idiosyncratic theory of freedom. For him, freedom does not reside in being “masterless.” Rather freedom is achieved in discovering a role for oneself, in discovering a purpose or destiny for one’s life: “It is never freedom till you find something you really *positively want to be*” (43). Freedom is therefore not a breaking away from constraint for Lawrence but a finding of a *raison d’être*:

Men are free when they are most unconscious, not when they are straying and breaking away. Men are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying from within. Men are free when they belong to a living, organic, believing community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose. Not when they are escaping to some willful purpose. Most unfree souls go west, and shout of freedom. Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom. The shout is a rattling of chains, always was (45–46).

For Lawrence, true freedom comes from fulfilling one’s deepest longings, not doing as one likes: “Men are not free when they are doing just what they like. The moment you can do just what you like, there is nothing you care about doing. Men are only free when they are doing what the deepest self likes” (46). Lawrence suggests that American literature is to be seen against the rise of the Renaissance in Europe which undermined traditional sources of authority. “It seems as if at times man had a frenzy for getting away from control of any sort. In Europe the old Christianity was the real master [...] Mastery, kingship, fatherhood had their power destroyed at the time of the Renaissance” (43). Americans inherited this frenzy for getting away from control. But Lawrence believes that masterlessness is impossible. “Liberty is all very well, but men cannot live without masters. There is always a master. And men either live in

glad obedience to the master they believe in, or they live in a frictional opposition to the master they wish to undermine. In America this frictional opposition has been the vital factor. It has given the Yankee his kick” (44). To Lawrence the notion of being without a master, finding freedom in masterlessness is an absurdity, a particularly American form of naïveté. He mocks it, mocks the aspiration as foolish, by referencing Caliban from *The Tempest*:

Ca Ca Caliban  
Get a new master, be a new man.

For Lawrence, the truth is that the obsession with masterlessness has everything to do with a *slave mentality* and he sees America as “a vast republic of escaped slaves” (44). Add to this culture “a minority of earnest, self-tortured people” (44), that is the Puritans, and we can see the cultural influences that for Lawrence produced modern America and its literature.

To Lawrence, the Puritan influence is not to be underestimated:

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What did the Pilgrim Fathers want for themselves, when they came so gruesomely over the black sea? Oh, it was in a black spirit. A black revulsion from Europe, from the old authority of Europe, from kings and bishops and popes. And more. When you look into it, more. They were black, masterful men, they wanted something else. No kings, no bishops maybe. Even no God Almighty. But also, no more of this new ‘humanity’ which followed the Renaissance. None of this new liberty which was to be so pretty in Europe. Something grimmer, by no means free-and-easy (44–45).

Lawrence's historiography provides the armature for the organization of ideas in *Studies in Classic American Literature*. He sees the Pilgrims as refugees of the new humanism sweeping Europe after the Renaissance. They fled the Enlightenment because for Lawrence the Pilgrims *wanted* a world grimmer than that of the Enlightenment, which with its emphasis on secular reason, liberty and equality, was a world that emphasized light and possibility. Lawrence's tone indicates his contempt for Puritan “blackness,” their grimness and insistence on “masterlessness,” their intolerance and refusal to see the world as a place of possibility. America is fatally marked by what he ironically calls “a liberty of THOU SHALT NOT” (45). This darkness was shared by the Spaniards who also refused

“the post-Renaissance liberty of Europe,” (45) so the Puritans and the Spanish become responsible for an anti-humanist darkness in the American soul: “At the bottom of the American soul was always a dark suspense, at the bottom of the Spanish-American soul the same” (45).

Myth 5: The self is self-evident, undivided, whole. In *Studies in Classic American Literature*, Lawrence proposes a divided self made up of the conscious self and “the deepest self,” which for Lawrence is the most authentic self. The most fundamental task, therefore, of the conscious self is to find and unite itself with “the deepest self”: “And there is getting down to the deepest self! It takes some diving. Because the deepest self is way down, and the conscious self is an obstinate monkey. But of one thing we may be sure. If one wants to be free, one has to give up the illusion of doing what one likes, and seek what IT wishes done” (46).

Myth 6: Democracy, liberty and equality are absolute “goods” in themselves. To Lawrence, democratic values are the bastard progeny of the Enlightenment, misunderstood and incorrectly valued: “Perhaps at the Renaissance, when kingship and fatherhood fell, Europe drifted into a very dangerous half-truth: of liberty and equality [...] Liberty in America has meant so far ~~From the English~~ from all dominion. The true liberty will only ~~be gained when Americans discover IT~~, and proceed possibly to fulfil IT, IT being the deepest, *whole* self of man, the self in its wholeness, not idealistic halfness” (46). In response to the naïve, democratic, quintessentially American cry, “Henceforth be masterless” Lawrence counters with his own paradoxical cry for freedom, “Henceforth be mastered.” (47) For him, American literature shows the unfinished project of “the new whole men”: “American consciousness has so far been a false dawn. The negative ideal of democracy. But underneath, and contrary to this open ideal, the first hints and revelations of IT, the American whole soul” (47). It is the task of hastening the birth of IT, “the deepest whole self,” “the new man” that is the ultimate purpose of *Studies in Classic American Literature*. If Lawrence is disappointed in America, it is because it has gone furthest in achieving the whole self Lawrence imagines, but has not yet summoned the will to fully realize.

### III

Lawrence’s reading of Franklin is a critique of the Enlightenment, American-style. In particular, a critique of the American obsession with perfectibility: “The Perfectibility of Man! Ah heaven, what a dreary theme!” (48).

Franklin's *Autobiography* of course is dedicated to Franklin detailing the various ways in which he perfected himself—educationally, financially, politically, morally. The *Autobiography* is the first and most successful American self-help book. Franklin preaches the gospel of self-improvement. But no small part of Lawrence's quarrel with Franklin—and Enlightenment culture in general—is rooted in his sense that the self is not one thing, but many: "The perfectibility of man, dear God! When every man as long as he remains alive is in himself a multitude of conflicting men. Which of these do you choose to perfect at the expense of every other?" (48).

For Lawrence, Franklin represents American capitalism at its self-congratulatory worst. Lawrence is appalled by Franklin's soulless materialism, his tin-horn gospel of money-making: "He knew what he was about, the sharp little man. He set up the first dummy American" (48). Lawrence reads Franklin as a study in cynicism: he established the model for what can be thought of as American success and to justify the model he invented a "God to suit his own ends" (49). God, then, becomes "the supreme servant of men who want to get on, to *produce*. Providence. The providence of the publisher-keeper" (49). For Lawrence, Franklin has the soul of a headstrong, self-interested, bodyful materialism that infuriates Lawrence. He proclaims: "The wholeness of a man is his soul [...] It's the whole of him. Which means it is the unknown him, as well as the known" (49).

Franklin's utilitarianism for Lawrence is an abomination. As opposed to Franklin's gospel of getting on, Lawrence counterposes his own vision: "Why, the soul of man is a vast forest, and all Benjamin intended was a neat back garden" (49). Franklin is the apologist for money grubbing, worldly success, the very model of sterile, middle-class aspirations. Lawrence takes a grim relish in laying into him: he takes all the mystery of life and translates that into a bleak gospel of righteous materialism and financial reward. He embodies the American belief in the importance of being "masterless," which for Lawrence is synonymous with conventionality and a purposeless existence.

Franklin's creation of Poor Richard as a persona embodying Franklin's values of prudence, austerity, probity and self-discipline is one which Lawrence regards as of little value in guiding anyone to a greatness of existence, which for him comes from a largeness of moral vision: "Because, although I still believe that honesty is the best policy, I dislike policy altogether, though it is just as well not to count your chickens

before they are hatched, it's still more hateful to count them with gloating when they are hatched" (52). In Franklin, Lawrence finds a reverence for a constricted way of life that sees as all too commonplace in America—life lived according to a profit motive. But it is not just this unapologetic capitalist ethos that rankles Lawrence; it is his moralizing attitude, the complacency of his settled materialism: "Moral America! Most moral Benjamin. Sound, satisfied Ben!" (53). Lawrence's quarrel with Franklin is a quarrel with a narrow, hypocritical morality that he had to contend with in England. The problem is not that Franklin espouses a morality; it is that it is fraudulent, mechanical and mean. Lawrence puts it thus: "I am a moral animal. But I am not a moral machine. I don't work with a little set of handles or levers. The Temperance-silence-order-resolution-frugality-industry-sincerity-justice-moderation-cleanliness-tranquillity-chastity-humiliation keyboard is not going to get me going" (26). Willing to accept the genocide of Native Americans (although elsewhere Franklin speaks with high regard of Native Americans and the sophistication of their culture), Franklin's morality is notable for everything it leaves out. Lawrence's sense of self is dramatically different:

From the publisher:

*'That I am I.'* Please note that this file offers only  
*'That my soul is a dark forest.'* the first of the author's essays and  
*'That my known self will never be more than a little clearing in the forest.'* a short part of the editor's  
*'That gods, strange gods, come forth from the forest into the clearing of my introduction.*  
*known self, and then go back.'*  
*'That I must have the courage to let them come and go.'*  
*'That I will never let mankind put anything over me, but that I will try*  
*always to recognize and submit to the gods in me and the gods in other men*  
*and women' (54).*

Lawrence's creed, his morality, is mystical, non-rational, non-Christian, paganlike in its sense of the unknown within and without, "passional," committed to discovering the dark, latent potentialities of the individual. "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 or Chicagos" (56). Against this vision of life as one of journeying, uncertainty, spiritual questing, Franklin preaches the gospel of freedom through work, a sermon that would have fallen on deaf ears, given Lawrence's first-hand knowledge of the soul-destroying work of the English working-class: "

*'Work, you free jewel, WORK!'* shouts the liberator, cracking his whip. Benjamin, I will not work. I do not choose to be a free democrat. I am absolutely a servant of my own Holy Ghost" (57).

Franklin's unashamed, unabashed materialism allows Lawrence to offer his own version of an authentic life, *his* lived not according to the standards of a bank account or public regard, but according to what he calls the "passional impulse": "Either we are materialistic instruments, like Benjamin, or we move in the gesture of creation, from our deepest self, usually unconscious. We are only the actors, we are never wholly the authors of our own deeds or works. IT is the author, the unknown inside us or outside us. The best we can do is to try to hold ourselves in unison with the deeps which are inside us" (58).

While Franklin is often lauded for his Enlightenment values, his humanism, and is seen as one of the quintessential Enlightenment figures in America in the eighteenth-century, Lawrence finds just the opposite. For him, Franklin ushers in an America that is the death of the humanist ideal: "The pattern American, this dry, moral, utilitarian little democrat, had done more to ruin the old Europe than any Russian nihilist" (58). In this sense, Franklin is only a famous figure in Lawrence's history of America. Please note that this file offers only the first of the author's essays and a short part of the editor's introduction. From the publisher: Please note that this file offers only the first of the author's essays and a short part of the editor's introduction. Lawrence argues that the humanism sweeping Western Europe and America in the late eighteenth-century. Like the European immigrants before him, who Lawrence argues came to America precisely to escape the humanism of Europe, Franklin possesses this same anti-humanist, contracted worldview. What makes Franklin different from his forebears, however, is the influence of his thinking on America. In following Franklin's soulless, schematic guide to morality and success, America has undone itself; it has cut itself off from its own potential, and it has destroyed its own greatness. In accepting Franklin's template for individual and national success, America has abandoned a higher humanism for a lower, mechanized materialism: "All this Americanizing and mechanizing has been for the purpose of overthrowing the past. And now look at America, tangled in her own barbed wire, and mastered by her own machines. Absolutely got down by her own barbed wire of shalt-nots, and shut up fast in her own 'productive' machines like millions of squirrels running in millions of cages. It is just a farce" (58).

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## STUDIES IN CLASSIC AMERICAN LITERATURE

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## Foreword

LISTEN to the States asserting: 'The hour has struck! Americans shall be American. The U.S.A. is now grown up artistically. It is time we ceased to hang on to the skirts of Europe, or to behave like schoolboys let loose from European schoolmasters—'

All right, Americans, let's see you set about it. Go on then, let the precious cat out of the bag. If you're sure he's in.

*Et interrogatum est ab omnibus:  
'Ubi est ille Toad-in-the-Hole?'*  
*Et iteratum est ab omnibus:  
'Non est inventus!'*

Is he or isn't he inventus?

If he is, of course, he must be somewhere inside you, Oh American. No good chasing him over all the old continents, of course. But equally no good *asserting* him merely. Where is this new bird called the true American? Show us the homunculus of the new era. Go on, show us him. Because all that is visible to the naked European eye, in America, is a sort of recalcitrant European. We want to see this missing link of the next era.

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Well, we still don't know the only thing to do is to have a look for him under the American bushes. The old American literature, to start with.

'The old American literature! Franklin, Cooper, Hawthorne & Co.? All that mass of words! all so unreal!' cries the live American.

Heaven knows what we mean by reality. Telephone, tinned meat, Charlie Chaplin, water-taps, and World-Salvation, presumably. Some insisting on the plumbing, and some on saving the world: these being the two great American specialities. Why not? Only, what about the young homunculus of the new era, meanwhile? You can't save yourself before you are born.

Look at me trying to be midwife to the unborn homunculus! Two bodies of modern literature seem to me to have come to a real verge: the Russian and the American. Let us leave aside the more brittle bits of French or Marinetti or Irish production, which are perhaps over the verge. Russian and American. And by American I do not mean Sherwood Anderson, who is so Russian. I mean the old people, little

thin volumes of Hawthorne, Poe, Dana, Melville, Whitman. These seem to me to have reached a verge, as the more voluminous Tolstoi, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Artzibashev reached a limit on the other side. The furthest frenzies of French modernism or futurism have not yet reached the pitch of extreme consciousness that Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman reached. The European moderns are all *trying* to be extreme. The great Americans I mention just were it. Which is why the world has funk'd them, and funks them to-day.

The great difference between the extreme Russians and the extreme Americans lies in the fact that the Russians are explicit and hate eloquence and symbols, seeing in these only subterfuge, whereas the Americans refuse everything explicit and always put up a sort of double meaning. They revel in subterfuge. They prefer their truth safely swaddled in an ark of bulrushes, and deposited among the reeds until some friendly Egyptian princess comes to rescue the babe.

Well, it's high time now that someone came to lift out the swaddled infant of truth that America spawned some time back. The child must be getting pretty thin, from neglect.

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## CHAPTER 1

### *The Spirit of Place*

We like to think of the old-fashioned American classics as children's books. Just childishness, on our part. The old American art-speech contains an alien quality, which belongs to the American continent and to nowhere else. But, of course, so long as we insist on reading the books as children's tales, we miss all that.

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.

It is hard to hear a new voice, as hard as it is to listen to an unknown language. We just don't listen. There is a new voice in the old American classics. The world has declined to hear it, and has babbled about children's stories.

Why?—Out of fear. The world fears a new experience more than it fears anything. Because a new experience displaces so many old experiences. And it is like trying to use muscles that have perhaps never been used, or that have been going stiff for ages. It hurts horribly.

The world doesn't fear a new idea. It can pigeon-hole any idea. But it can't pigeon-hole a real new experience. It can only dodge. The world is a great dodger, and the Americans the greatest. Because they dodge their own very selves.

There is a new feeling in the old American books, far more than there is in the modern American books, which are pretty empty of any feeling, and proud of it. There is a 'different' feeling in the old American classics. It is the shifting over from the old psyche to something new, a displacement. And displacements hurt. This hurts. So we try to tie it up, like a cut finger. Put a rag round it.

It is a cut too. Cutting away the old emotions and consciousness. Don't ask what is left.

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. And that is all that matters. Away with eternal truth. Truth lives from day to day, and the

marvellous Plato of yesterday is chiefly bosh today.

The old American artists were hopeless liars. But they were artists, in spite of themselves. Which is more than you can say of most living practitioners.

And you can please yourself, when you read *The Scarlet Letter*, whether you accept what that sugary, blue-eyed little darling of a Hawthorne has to say for himself, false as all darlings are, or whether you read the impeccable truth of his art-speech.

The curious thing about art-speech is that it prevaricates so terribly, I mean it tells such lies. I suppose because we always all the time tell ourselves lies. And out of a pattern of lies art weaves the truth. Like Dostoyevsky posing as a sort of Jesus, but most truthfully revealing himself all the while as a little horror.

Truly art is a sort of subterfuge. But thank God for it, we can see through the subterfuge if we choose. Art has two great functions. First, it provides an emotional experience. And then, if we have the courage of our own feelings, it becomes a mine of practical truth. We have had the feelings *ad nauseam*. But we've never dared dig the actual truth out of them, the truth that concerns us, whether it concerns our grandchildren or not.

The artist usually ~~the first of the author's essays and~~ moral and adorn a tale. The tale, however, ~~a short part of the editor's~~ 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.

Now we know our business in these studies; saving the American tale from the American artist.

Let us look at this American artist first. How did he ever get to America, to start with? Why isn't he a European still, like his father before him?

Now listen to me, don't listen to him. He'll tell you the lie you expect. Which is partly your fault for expecting it.

He didn't come in search of freedom of worship. England had more freedom of worship in the year 1700 than America had. Won by Englishmen who wanted freedom, and so stopped at home and fought for it. And got it. Freedom of worship? Read the history of New England during the first century of its existence.

Freedom anyhow? The land of the free! This the land of the free! Why, if I say anything that displeases them, the free mob will lynch me,

and that's my freedom. Free? Why, I have never been in any country where the individual has such an abject fear of his fellow countrymen. Because, as I say, they are free to lynch the moment he shows he is not one of them.

No, no, if you're so fond of the truth about Queen Victoria, try a little about yourself.

Those Pilgrim Fathers and their successors never came here for freedom of worship. What did they set up when they got here? Freedom, would you call it?

They didn't come for freedom. Or if they did, they sadly went back on themselves.

All right then, what did they come for? For lots of reasons. Perhaps least of all in search of freedom of any sort: positive freedom, that is.

They came largely to get *away*—that most simple of motives. To get away. Away from what? In the long run, away from themselves. Away from everything. That's why most people have come to America, and still do come. To get away from everything they are and have been.

'Henceforth be masterless.'

Which is all very well, but it isn't freedom. Rather the reverse. A hopeless sort of conservatism. It is never freedom till you find something you really *positively* like. The first of the author's essays and a short part of the editor's introduction.

And after all there is a positive side to the movement. All that vast flood of human life that has flowed over the Atlantic in ships from Europe to America has not flowed over simply on a tide of revulsion from Europe and from the confinements of the European ways of life. This revulsion was, and still is, I believe, the prime motive in emigration. But there was some cause, even for the revulsion.

It seems as if at times man had a frenzy for getting away from any control of any sort. In Europe the old Christianity was the real master. The Church and the true aristocracy bore the responsibility for the working out of the Christian ideals: a little irregularly, maybe, but responsible nevertheless.

Mastery, kingship, fatherhood had their power destroyed at the time of the Renaissance.

And it was precisely at this moment that the great drift over the Atlantic started. What were men drifting away from? The old authority of Europe? Were they breaking the bonds of authority, and escaping to

a new more absolute unrestrainedness? Maybe. But there was more to it.

Liberty is all very well, but men cannot live without masters. There is always a master. And men either live in glad obedience to the master they believe in, or they live in a frictional opposition to the master they wish to undermine. In America this frictional opposition has been the vital factor. It has given the Yankee his kick. Only the continual influx of more servile Europeans has provided America with an obedient labouring class. The true obedience never outlasting the first generation.

But there sits the old master, over in Europe. Like a parent. Somewhere deep in every American heart lies a rebellion against the old parenthood of Europe. Yet no American feels he has completely escaped its mastery. Hence the slow, smouldering patience of American opposition. The slow, smouldering corrosive obedience to the old master Europe, the unwilling subject, the unremitting opposition.

Whatever else you are, be masterless.

Ca Ca Caliban

Get a new master, be a new man.

Please note that this file offers only

Escaped slaves, we might say, the first of the author's essays and Liberia or Haiti. Liberia enough! Are we a short part of the editor's same way? A vast republic of escaped slaves. When you look out, the hordes from eastern Europe, you might well say it: a vast republic of escaped slaves. But one dare not say this of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the great old body of idealist Americans, the modern Americans tortured with thought. A vast republic of escaped slaves. Look out, America! And a minority of earnest, self-tortured people.

The masterless.

Ca Ca Caliban

Get a new master, be a new man.

What did the Pilgrim Fathers come for, then, when they came so gruesomely over the black sea? Oh, it was in a black spirit. A black revulsion from Europe, from the old authority of Europe, from kings and bishops and popes. And more. When you look into it, more. They were black, masterful men, they wanted something else. No kings, no bishops maybe. Even no God Almighty. But also, no more of this new



'humanity' which followed the Renaissance. None of this new liberty which was to be so pretty in Europe. Something grimmer, by no means free-and-easy.

America has never been easy, and is not easy today. Americans have always been at a certain tension. Their liberty is a thing of sheer will, sheer tension: a liberty of THOU SHALT NOT. And it has been so from the first. The land of THOU SHALT NOT. Only the first commandment is: THOU SHALT NOT PRESUME TO BE A MASTER. Hence democracy.

'We are the masterless.' That is what the American Eagle shrieks. It's a Hen-Eagle.

The Spaniards refused the post-Renaissance liberty of Europe. And the Spaniards filled most of America. The Yankees, too, refused, refused the post-Renaissance humanism of Europe. First and foremost, they hated masters. But under that, they hated the flowing ease of humour in Europe. At the bottom of the American soul was always a dark suspense, at the bottom of the Spanish-American soul the same. And this dark suspense hated and hates the old European spontaneity, watches it collapse with satisfaction.

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places have different vital effluence, different vibrations, different polarities, different stars: call it introduction. But the spirit of place is a great reality. The Nile valley produced not only the corn, but the terrific religions of Egypt. China produces the Chinese, and will go on doing so. The Chinese in San Francisco will in time cease to be Chinese, for America is a great melting pot.

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?

Men are less free than they imagine; ah, far less free. The freest are perhaps least free.

Men are free when they are in a living homeland, not when they are straying and breaking away. Men are free when they are obeying some deep, inward voice of religious belief. Obeying from within. Men are free when they belong to a living, Organic, *believing* community, active in fulfilling some unfulfilled, perhaps unrealized purpose. Not when

they are escaping to some wild west. The most unfree souls go west, and shout of freedom. Men are freest when they are most unconscious of freedom. The shout is a rattling of chains, always was.

Men are not free when they are doing just what they like. The moment you can do just what you like, there is nothing you care about doing. Men are only free when they are doing what the deepest self likes.

And there is getting down to the deepest self! It takes some diving.

Because the deepest self is way down, and the conscious self is an obstinate monkey. But of one thing we may be sure. If one wants to be free, one has to give up the illusion of doing what one likes, and seek what IT wishes done.

But before you can do what IT likes, you must first break the spell of the old mastery, the old IT.

Perhaps at the Renaissance, when kingship and fatherhood fell, Europe drifted into a very dangerous half-truth: of liberty and equality. Perhaps the men who went to America felt this, and so repudiated the old world together. Went one better than Europe. Liberty in America has meant so far the breaking away from *all* dominion. The true liberty will only begin when Americans discover IT, and proceed possibly to fulfil IT. It being the deepest of the author's essays and its wholeness, not idealistic halfness. a short part of the editor's

That's why the Pilgrim Fathers came to America, then; and that's why we come. Driven by IT. We cannot see that invisible winds carry us, as they carry swarms of locusts, that invisible magnetism brings us as it brings the migrating birds to their unforeknown goal. But it is so. We are not the marvellous choosers and deciders we think we are. IT chooses for us, and decides for us. Unless, of course, we are just escaped slaves, vulgarly cocksure of our ready-made destiny. But if we are living people, in touch with the source, IT drives us and decides us. We are free only so long as we obey. When we run counter, and think we will do as we like, we just flee around like Orestes pursued by the Eumenides.

And still, when the great day begins, when Americans have at last discovered America and their own wholeness, still there will be the vast number of escaped slaves to reckon with, those who have no cocksure, ready-made destinies.

Which will win in America, the escaped slaves, or the new whole men?

The real American day hasn't begun yet. Or at least, not yet sunrise. So far it has been the false dawn. That is, in the progressive American consciousness there has been the one dominant desire, to do away with the old thing. Do away with masters, exalt the will of the people. The will of the people being nothing but a figment, the exalting doesn't count for much. So, in the name of the will of the people, get rid of masters. When you have got rid of masters, you are left with this mere phrase of the will of the people. Then you pause and bethink yourself, and try to recover your own wholeness.

So much for the conscious American motive, and for democracy over here. Democracy in America is just the tool with which the old master of Europe, the European spirit, is undermined. Europe destroyed, potentially, American democracy will evaporate. America will begin.

American consciousness has so far been a false dawn. The negative ideal of democracy. But underneath, and contrary to this open ideal, the first hints and revelations of IT. IT, the American whole soul.

You have got to pull the democratic and idealistic clothes off American utterance, and see what you can of the dusky body of IT underneath. Please note that this file offers only

From the publisher:  
the first of the author's essays and  
a short part of the editor's  
introduction.