

In Ideology We Trust: Creating Landmarks in American Literature (Part One)¹

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I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom Cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large and without mercy. It is geography at bottom, a hell of a wide land from the beginning.

Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael*²

Most literary landmarks, like geographical and territorial landmarks, are imagined, coerced and manipulated based on cultural concepts, ideology or belief. In due course literary landmarks become many foci that create a national literary web. Generally speaking we use literary texts to determine important landmarks in literature. However, most literary texts find prominence because of dominant literary concepts and psychological paradigms that govern the significance of certain kind of literature to the exclusion of others. The American literature that we receive today also has similar origins though it has gone through a few interesting transformations in the latter half of the twentieth century as a consequence of minority politics and development in the methodology of American literary studies itself. In this paper I have attempted to highlight seven ideological concepts that have shaped the course of American

literature and created various literary landmarks around it. These concepts are:

1. writing as historical representation,
2. transforming America as a sacred place,
3. eugenics and fitter families,
4. possessing America and William Carlos Williams,
5. changes in literary studies,
6. culture wars or multiculturalism and,
7. the rise of the American Empire and American Democracy.

Since ‘writing as historical representation’ and ‘transforming America as a sacred place’ are interconnected I would like to explain how European writing appropriated the New World and then talk about ‘eugenics,’ claiming the land, changes in literary studies and ‘culture wars.’ Since much has been said about culture wars or multiculturalism I will quickly go over it and get into the muddy waters of neo-conservative politics of today that has a strong bearing on American literature. Is it possible to still endorse the values enshrined in the Latin motto on the US one dollar bill—*e pluribus unam*—or, a time has come for a redefinition? Is America still a pluralistic society propelled by pluralistic and enlightened values, or is it a nation under siege?

1. Writing as Historical Representation

Hayden White distinguishes between discourse and narrative on the basis of their grammatical features by arguing that the former is objective while the latter is subjective which can be gauged by the “linguistic order of criteria.” A discourse has an explicit or an implicit ego while a narrative is distinguished by the absence of the narrator. In a narrative the events speak for themselves. However narratives also face a problem as they can represent real events and imaginary events; and

both, the real and the imaginary, can speak for themselves. It is here that narratives become problematic “when we wish to give to real events the form of story. It is because real events do not offer themselves as stories that their narrativization is so difficult.” It is therefore difficult to say what is the real story and what is fantasy behind the events that come to us as “historical accounts.” Indeed historical representation itself comes under attack when we see the enigma of desire enacted and gratified in the act of claiming the land. Still these “imperfect histories” are also possible conceptions of the New World that modern history fully realizes. The fact these conceptions are narrated gives them the characteristic of the ‘real’ howsoever ‘imaginary’ they might be at times.³

Right from the start American literature had to encounter the spellbinding and harsh presence of the New World—to reckon with an enormous space—and if possible to transform it into a place.⁴ The attempt to transform, from the European conquest of the continent to the present, took different and diverse forms, which now represents the diversity of American literature itself. David Hollinger defends the notion of “a national culture” that enables diverse Americans to come together. It also protects the United States from the “dangerous conceit” that it is a “proto-world-state”⁵ The sense of a national American culture also permeates its literature that is at once ethnically diverse yet distinctively American. Courses in American literature select representative texts from six different cultural traditions—White, Latino/a, American Indian, African American, American Jewish, and Asian American—and understand what connects them to and differentiates them from each other. Why are the texts by American writers such as Mark Twain, Cabeza de Vaca, Zitkala-Sa, Harriet Jacobs, Emma Lazarus, Langston Hughes, Saul Bellow, Maxine Hong Kingston, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Ana Castillo American?⁶ And why are they celebrated as literary-cultural landmarks? Apart from other issues represented in

the texts they are about exploration, appropriation, topology, space and the relationship of that space with the self.

When we talk of American literature we talk of the exploration narratives of white Europeans from the sixteenth century that have included imagined and often prejudiced histories of the land and its people. These histories or grand narratives as they were called, often marginalized and erased the oral literatures of the Native Americans. The Europeans has a linguistic advantage of sorts. They had already developed a written form of communication, which the native Indians had not. The Europeans such as the English, Italians and Germans used the written language to their advantage by keeping written records of their experiences. These records were quite meticulous howsoever prejudiced they might have been. The English documented the Americas in great detail even before the 1600 and appropriated the new world through their language. Writers like Sir Walter Raleigh, Richard Hakluyt, Thomas Harriot, and John White wrote details of European life and adventures in the new world as part of their attempt to chart its history and also claim the land for the English Crown. Raleigh for example not only wrote about Venezuela, but also founded the first English colony in America in 1585 called Roanoke Colony, North Carolina. In 1616 Captain John Smith not only wrote a historical account of his observation of American colonial life in *A Description of New England* but also claimed a part of native Indian land, calling it Jamestown.

Even when the intention was not so overt, Europeans did keep detailed accounts of their travels and travails which were passed on to later generations and in the process were authenticated as the true history of the new world. The Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci for example kept detailed accounts of his expeditions of 1499 and 1500, which were later published in 1505. Similarly the German

cartographer Martin Waldseemuller collected detailed maps, documents and letters that were published under the title *Cosmographiae Introductio* in 1507. The book contained documents and letter from Christopher Columbus to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain apart from other accounts of the new world cosmology.

By and large tales of exploration concentrated on the difficulties of travel while historical accounts narrated the actual experience of settled life. Governors William Bradford of Plymouth Colony and John Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay Colony wrote histories—*History of Plymouth Plantation* (1630-1647) and *History of New England* (1630 to 1649) respectively—though both were published centuries later. Since most histories gave religious explanation to events, religious writings of John Cotton, Thomas Hooker, Roger Williams, and Cotton Mather dominated literature in the seventeenth century. The indigenous people were mostly ignored except in the work of Roger Williams, *Key into the Language of America* (1643) that tried to understand the language and cultures of the Native Americans. In other words the personal experiences of Europeans, often colored by religious and racist beliefs, wrote the history of the Americas, mapping its geography and creating cultural and literary landmarks.

The word landmark originally meant an “object set up to mark the boundaries of a kingdom, estate etc.,” and was, therefore, used as a physical marker of the topography of a land. The figurative meaning of a landmark as an “event considered a high point in history” emerged around 1859. So before the mid-nineteenth century the word “landmark” was not commonly employed to refer to a “high point” or watershed in history. The meaning of landmark as an invention or a discovery marking something is also of recent origin. Therefore it would be improper to look for a literary landmark in textual form. Rather it would be wise

to see landmarks as an ideological position that helped create the literature of the United States. And since the King always financed expeditions to the new world, explorers were required by law to keep separate books for both expenditures and everything that they experienced, found or did. The European narratives became not only a hagiographical account of religious conversion but also a justification of both triumphs and failures in the New World.

Imperial European civilizations—whether French, Spanish or English—not only “crushed,” “scorned” and “neglected” the Indian civilization but at times also romanticized them.⁷ Unlike the Spanish and the English who sought the extermination and displacement of the Indians, the French “embraced” them, not because they valued Indian civilization but because they needed the Indian allies to continue the fur trade and attack their Spanish and English rivals. But like the Spanish and the English the French too kept careful record as the history of Rene Goulaine de Laudonniere fl., (1562-1582) and the journal of geographer Samuel de Champlain (1567-1635) journals reveal. Spanish explorer Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca (1490-1556) was entrusted by Emperor Carlos V to explore the Gulf Coast in 1528. Cabeza de Vaca not only kept encyclopedic account of his explorations but also employed the medieval genre of hagiography, the life of a saint, which helped him to narrate the story of Christian conversion and explain failures as God’s grand plan for his chosen hero. Before Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) set sail to seek an empire he wrote the *Diario*, a narrative of global exploration that established a strong link between writing and colonization; a link that helped Europeans appropriate the New World and expropriate “millions of prior inhabitants.”⁸

Through the fifteenth century and until the nineteenth century writing was seen as personal representation creating texts that wrote the history of Europe’s

discovery of America.⁹ So, most early nineteenth century American writers, like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, saw landmark as geographical space to be identified and appropriated through language.¹⁰ The literary discourse as it developed in America signified how lived experience and subjectivity could create an inexorable image of power and at the same time leave the center nebulous without the certainty of closure.¹¹ Throughout the colonial and early post-colonial period European/American writers felt that since the Indians lacked a system of writing they did not possess the right to the land. This helped the Europeans to identify themselves with the continent. In this way the “word” was made the “land.”¹²

2. Transforming America as a Sacred Place

The early beginnings of American literature attempted to create a sense of place, which could be used as a location to enact the human drama of exploration, settlement and appropriation. Before the mid-nineteenth century America lacked the literary tradition of appropriating place, though much of the works by William Bartram and H. Hector St., John de Crevecoeur were place-centered works. Henry David Thoreau is perhaps the first writer who directed his literary abilities to assimilate the wilderness within the boundary of human habitation. In creating Concord, Thoreau brought together the diverse resources of sociological fieldwork, autobiographical observation, environmental history and European land ethic.¹³

Most nature writing either falls in the category of describing travel through a region or residence in a particular place.¹⁴ It is the second category, which acquires significance both in creating a sense of place in literature and providing emotional attachment to a place. Thoreau’s heightened awareness of the wilderness as home gives a special meaning to its topography, historical and

cultural significance by wresting it away from the mythic dimensions of Native American narrative into the domains of English language.

Dwelling in a place creates a space within which, according to Martin Heidegger, “something comes into its own and flourishes.” Obviously settlers come to cherish the wilderness they call home and endeavor to preserve its pristine simplicity by introducing their exemplary living in symbiosis with nature. Both in *Walden* and his *Journals* (1837-1862) Thoreau provides us with detailed accounts of understanding human life through a study of home topography. By doing this he not only explores American wilderness as an intimate phenomenon but also transforms the geographical exploration of Massachusetts into a psychic exploration of the self. In other words by identifying the nineteenth century landscape of Massachusetts as home, developing a strong emotional attachment with the place, Thoreau transforms the alien American landscape into a sacred place, both Europeanizing and appropriating it—creating a new concord.¹⁵ According to his *Journal* entries Thoreau walked anytime of day or night. He took nocturnal walks to observe moonlit wilderness or conducted “fluvial walks” naked in the Concord River. On December 1860 he caught a cold while examining tree stumps, which led to his demise.¹⁶

Thoreau’s *Journal* reveals how human beings can make a strong resolution when their objective becomes clear. In one of his entries Thoreau announces that he will go to Beck Stow’s Swamp about a mile northeast of Concord to study a small species of European cranberry (9:35) but his resolution dissipates. Quickly he resolves again in the hope of gathering some fresh information or learning a moral. This ability to transform a near defeat into total victory follows an ideal of self-transformation. According to Joseph Campbell, Thoreau’s walks establish an archetypal pattern in American nature writing—separation, transformation

and return.¹⁷ The separation from society allows Thoreau to forget the sordid debate about slavery raging at the time or the economic benefits of farming. Disgusted by the “restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century” Thoreau’s feels a superior sense of rejoice in ascertaining “the flavor of a cranberry” (9:37).¹⁸ This prepares the way for his philosophical assertion that the American wilderness in its transcendental and pure simplicity can be a worthy corollary to human civilization. Thoreau writes: “I see that all is not garden and cultivated field and crops, that there are square rods in Middlesex County as purely primitive and wild as they were a thousand years ago, which have escaped the plow and the axe and the scythe and the cranberry-rake, little oases of wildness in the desert of our civilization” (9:44). Many environmental historians believe that the development of national parks in America can be attributed to Thoreau’s exhortation to preserve the wilderness in order to reinvigorate rural community life. In *Walden* he makes this claim rather boldly: “Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wilderness.”¹⁹ This “tonic of the wilderness” can be extracted from anywhere even from plots of lands as small as 16.5 square feet and even from lands that have been commercially cultivated. The only thing we need is to transform or recreate the place by our own imaginative awakening. Thoreau harnesses the typical nineteenth century homesteading attitude of living against the land and transforms it with his transcendental version of coexisting with the land. By recasting the greedy pioneer as an unworldly transcendentalist Thoreau introduced the moral and spiritual content in American literature.

A new worldview required the ability to see the world from a new perspective. Perception was a phenomenon “of deep perplexity to the nineteenth century romantic mind.”²⁰ Thoreau realized as he sojourned in the wilderness that it was

impossible to find the wilderness outside unless it already existed within. Thoreau argued: “It is vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bog in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires that dream. I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wildness than in some recess in Concord, i.e., than I import into it” (9:43). By implication Thoreau extends the boundaries of American physical space, the *terra cognita*, to the psychological and linguistic space, the *terra incognita* thereby expanding the canon of American literature to include not only place but also the perception that went along with it. While describing the wildness of Concord Thoreau dehistoricizes it; he argues that the swamp of Concord lacks apparent human history and therefore possesses only a natural history. He inquires: “Has any white man ever settled on it? Does any now frequent it? Not even the Indian comes here now” (9:42). This superb quality to destroy time transforms the place into “other places.”²¹ The attempt to imagine a new place not only erases the past literature and history of Native Indians but also the Anglo-Americans and cranberry traders who were present in the country around Concord.

Thoreau will not rest here. The wilderness and the swampland is transformed under the pressure of Thoreau’s imagination into a sacred place where man can recreate himself upon entry: “When I would recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp. I enter the swamp as a sacred place, a *sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength, the marrow of Nature” (9:45).²² Apart from other things Thoreau was fascinated by Emerson’s belief to discover the marvelous in the commonplace, something that American literary anthologies incorporated as part of early classics or nature writing.²³

3. Eugenics and Fitter Families

It has been amply illustrated through the writings of Edward Said that works of literature signify “concepts of nation, nationality, and even race.”²⁴ By the nineteenth century as the American nation space is clearly established the difference is turned from the “boundary outside” to the “finitude within.” As Homi Bhabha points out the “threat of cultural difference is no longer a problem of ‘other’ people. It becomes a question of the otherness of the people-as-one.”²⁵ Since exploitation has been the hallmark of the history of the West most European and American cultural practices are colored by imperialism. But imperialism is one thing and nationalism is another. Within the domain of nationalism certain discursive and representational practices are employed that valorize specific individuals as ideal members of the nation state.²⁶ In the early twentieth century eugenics attempted to create an ideal Anglo-Saxon America and American literature dominated by white writers.²⁷

Eugenics developed as early as 1850 and was a covert attempt to apply Mendelian pea-plant genetics to improve the human race. American eugenicists like Charles Davenport—funded by Rockefeller and Carnegie dollars—argued that society should be scientifically engineered to bring out the best genetic traits among its citizenry.²⁸ With this view in mind they divided eugenics into two broad categories—positive eugenics that encouraged breeding desirable traits and negative eugenics that prevented undesirable traits. Obviously researches in eugenics were backed by a racist ideology and the “science” was both anti-Black and anti-immigrant. Though primarily right-wingers and conservatives like Lucien Howe supported it, social radicals and progressive thinkers such as Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Woodrow Wilson, H.G. Wells, Emma Goldman, and Margaret Sanger (the founder of Planned Parenthood) and English psychologist Havelock Ellis were no less

enthusiastic about the science. Both Sanger and Ellis felt that the widespread use of eugenics would promote birth control and hence liberate women. Socialists felt that eugenics prevailed the interests of society over those of the individual and therefore was good. Eugenics-inspired rhetoric of improving the human race was reflected in the popular literature from the late 1800s to the 1930s. State-sponsored sterilization was an effective weapon to improve American genes, but it was the underclass, poor, immigrants, criminals and mentally ill who suffered eugenics sponsored sterilizations.²⁹ Inspired by the U.S. eugenics movement, Hitler introduced the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, a national program to sterilize the undesirables. Hitler beat the Americans at their own game. And by the end of World War II as the horror of the holocaust unfolded support and funding for the eugenics movement in America was gone.³⁰

4. Possessing America and William Carlos Williams

Upon reading Columbus's writings it is possible to conclude that his essential motives in discovering the new world were to tell "unheard of stories, like Ulysses," spread Christianity and to become rich. And one or all of these motives in varying shades have also guided many who came after him.³¹ In 1939 Williams Carlos Williams wrote that from his "earliest childhood" he felt it was his "first business" to "possess" America in order to know where he "stood."³² Williams' claim to appropriate America within his poetic sensibility was in line with Ralph Waldo Emerson's belief that the poet is the "true land-lord" of the American landscape whereas "others are only tenants and boarders."³³ Emerson was suggesting more than self-reliance; he was advocating "economic self-interest."³⁴ Thoreau translated Emerson's self-reliance into a real estate usurper when he asserted in *Walden*: "Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly."

Though both the eighteenth and nineteenth century American writers realized with regret that they have arrived somewhat late in America when the project of appropriation was already over, they nevertheless appropriated the emotional territory through figurative language paralleling the physical expansionism of Euro-American settlement into Native Indian territory. In his long poem *Paterson*, Williams not only attempts to repossesses America as a part of a belated Columbian experience but also wishes to mark the landscape for “proprietorship.”³⁵ During a startling revelation in *Paterson* he confesses:

Language

Is not a vague province. There is a poetry
Of the movements of cost, known or unknown³⁶

Like Walt Whitman in *Song of Myself*, Williams in *Paterson* seeks the center of American experience by creating a strong self; but unlike Whitman loses the centrality of self by acknowledging the historical past of appropriation and control. Unable to possess America Paterson “stammers in his speech” when he discovers that language itself “stutters” (Book I, ii.22). As language lacks the ability to allow the poet to achieve “radiance” independent of “symbols” he can only gain a “partial victory” (Book III, i.10B and Book I iii.30). Williams tries to bring the individual and the world together but somehow fails to reconcile the two:

The rock
Married to the river
Makes
No sound

And the river
Passes—but I remain
Clamant
Calling out ceaselessly
to the birds
and clouds
(listening)
Who am I?
(Book III, i.107)

In a comment on Poe's works Williams remarks that: "Either the New World must be mine as I will have it, or it is a worthless bog. There can be no concession. His attack was from the center out... It was a wish to HAVE the world or leave it."³⁷

Even if Williams fails in his attempt to figuratively claim America, most twentieth century American writers continue to make the material and symbolic acquisition of America their "first business." Obviously the business of representation in Christian and egalitarian terms on the one hand and the injustice of the American conquest per se on the other plague the twentieth century writer more than his predecessors. Both Jay Gatsby and Ike McCaslin fail in their endeavor to restore the "fresh, green breast of the new world" as they ignore their historical responsibility. As the twentieth century writer mutes the images of virgin land and the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and other expansionist ideas it nevertheless resurfaces either as eternally available whore or eternally unavailable virgin.³⁸ As recent ethnographic studies like of Johannes Fabian deconstruct the hegemonic or imperialistic epistemology of representation we

have come to understand better the process of transforming and creating the other according to the power the American writer wields.³⁹

NOTES

- 1 The paper was originally presented at the MELUS International Conference at the English Auditorium, University of Chandigarh, India on March 28, 2005. The theme of the conference was “LANDMARKS ON THE AMERICAN SCENE—THEN AND NOW,” and the paper was titled “Space as Landmark in American Literature.” This is a somewhat revised version of the original paper.
- 2 Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael*, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1947), pp. 11-12.
- 3 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 3-6.
- 4 Commenting on the term the “New World” Jose Rabasa writes that: “The term *New World* should be understood, not solely as that imaginary geographic space that emerged in the European wish-horizon of ideal landscapes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also as the constitution of the modern conception of the world that results from the exploration of the globe—and, by extension, the metaphorical use of ‘new world’ among such philosophers and painters as Francis Bacon and Jan Vermeer to speak of new fields of vision and inquiry.” Jose Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism*. (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), p. 3.
- 5 David Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 14-15.
- 6 Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America*; Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; Emma Lazarus, *Selected Poems and Other Writings*; Langston Hughes, *Selected Poems*; Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March*; Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey*; Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*; Ana Castillo, *My Father Was a Toltec, and Selected Poems*.
- 7 See Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York: Bison Book, 1997). Parkman believes that “Spanish civilization crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him (while); French civilization embraced and cherished him.”
- 8 Myra Jehlen, “The Literature of Colonization: The Papers of Empire,” in *The Cambridge History of American Literature Volume One: 1590-1820*, 1997 rpt., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 13. Also see Christopher Columbus, *Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America*.
- 9 Myra Jehlen, “The Literature of Colonization: The Papers of Empire,” in *The Cambridge*

History of American Literature Volume One *ibid.* Jehlen establishes a link between personal representation and the literature of the New World as follows: “Columbus’s *Diario* thus represents writing as a kind of action, and action as a form of personal representation. The literature of the New World—the literature of discovery, exploration, and colonization—is composed of just such books. The literary history of Europe’s discovery of America is the story of a literature that sought to shape history. The texts depicting the first European landings and early settlements in the Americas are almost always self-conscious participants in the events they represent.” p. 19.

- 10 Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1986). Claude Lefort calls this complex process—“The enigma of language—namely that it is both internal and external to the speaking subject, that there is an articulation of the self with others which marks the emergence of the self and which the self does not control—is concealed by the representation of a place’ outside—language from which it could be generated.” pp. 212-14.
- 11 See Homi K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation” in *Nation and Narration*, *ibid.*, pp. 297-98.
- 12 See Jehlen, “The Literature of Colonization,” *The Cambridge History*, Vol One, p. 14. Also see Richard R. Bernstein, *The New Constellation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press Ingram pubnet, 1992). Bernstein places the problem of “otherness” as central to a theory of knowledge. He argues that self must willingly risk its assumptions and convictions in order to encounter something new and different. Our knowledge and, therefore, our understanding are always possible when we encounter the alien, the other (p. 4). The only problem in this encounter, as Emmanuel Levinas points out, is that the alterity of the other gets incorporated through understanding into “sameness.” The other is always at risk of losing his identity that he so diligently wants to preserve. Furthermore, Levinas argues that since self is ethically formed it is difficult to understand how the “other” in an encounter manages to retain his alterity. Jacques Derrida has the answer to this question. He believes that the other preserves his alterity by acting as an alter ego. In other words Levinas develops the narrative of self and other as a reciprocal trope capable of functioning through themes of enmity, estrangement, abjection and violence. Mikhail Bakhtin sees self and other interacting from different positions and areas of reference; their interaction is never transparent. The other can never be completely understood as understanding takes place from the locus standi of the self. Bernstein, unlike Isaiah Berlin, believes that when self invokes an ethical obligation to the other, it can either understand the “other” or understand self in relation to the “other.”
- 13 It is rather difficult to slot the different methodologies employed by Thoreau in creating the sense of place in American literature as no clear definition of his method is available. For more details see Don Scheese, “Thoreau’s Journal: The Creation of a Sacred Place,” in *Mapping American Culture* ed., Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992) pp. 139-151; Philip Marshall Hicks, *The Development of the Natural History Essay in American Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

- 1924); Joseph Wood Krutch, *Introduction to The Best Nature Writing of Joseph Wood Krutch* (New York: Williams Morrow, 1969), pp. 13-27; Ann Ronald *Introduction to Words for the Wild: Sierra Club Trailside Reader*, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1987), pp. xi-xviii; Thomas J. Lyon, *Introduction to This Incomperable Lande: A Book of American Nature Writing*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), pp. 3-91; Don Scheese, "Nature Writing: A Wilderness of Books," *Forest and Conservation History* 34 (1990) pp. 204-8.
- 14 Both Gilbert White in *The Natural History of Selbourne* and Annie Dillard in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* describe in detail the place they inhabit.
- 15 Don Scheese, "Thoreau's Journal: The Creation of a Sacred Place," in *Mapping American Culture* ed Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992) p. 141.
- 16 For Thoreau's night walks see Walter Harding, *Introduction to the Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, 2:vii, and the *Journal*, 2:234-39, 2:248-61. On his fluvial walks see Harding, *Introduction to the Journal*, 4:vi, and the *Journal*, 4:211-15, 3:7-9, and 4:320-21. For events related to Thoreau's death see Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau*, (New York: Dover, 1982), p. 441.
- 17 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949). Campbell suggests that Thoreau's walk to Beck Stow's Swamp takes him away from society to the wilderness where he experiences an awakening or a transformation. And when he returns to Concord he is a different person. Thoreau's daily walks are a quest for the transforming encounter with self and nature.
- 18 Henry David Thoreau, *The Illustrated "Walden,"* ed. J. Lyndon Shanley, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 329. Looking for European cranberry, which is hard to find, and not the American variety, which is ubiquitous, Thoreau underscores the sharp eye of the naturalist that looks for minute details in obscure things and places. Also his heroic self-concept forged in alienation from society that criticized him for not finding a proper occupation and ridiculed him as a "woodsburner" for accidentally setting fire to large tract of local wilderness. For more details see Henry Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau*, (New York: Dover, 1982), pp. 160-62. To understand Thoreau's alienation from Concord see Leon Edel. *Stuff of Sleep and Dreams: Experiments in Literary Psychology*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 47-65.
- 19 Henry David Thoreau, *The Illustrated "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,"* ed. Carl F. Hovde, William L. Howarth, and Elizabeth Hall Witherell, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 54.; *The Illustrated 'Walden'*, p. 317. In his essay "Walking" he makes the famous proclamation: "In wildness is the preservation of the World." See "Walking" in *The Natural History Essays*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer, (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1980), p. 112.
- 20 H. Daniel Peck, *Thoreau's Morning Work: Memory and Perception in "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," The Journal and "Walden"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 104

- 21 Don Scheese, "Thoreau's Journal: The Creation of a Sacred Place," in *Mapping American Culture* ed. Wayne Franklin and Michael Steiner, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992) p. 146.
- 22 The quotation is from his lecture "The Wild" later combined with another entitled "Walking" and published posthumously in the *Atlantic Monthly* 1862. See Harding, *The Days*, pgs., 315 and 469.
- 23 See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson's "Nature": Origin, Growth, Meaning*, ed. Merton M. Sealts, Jr., and Alfred R. Ferguson, 2nd. Ed. (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1979), p. 15. Looking for the marvelous in the commonplace Thoreau writes, "When we are lifted out of the slime and film of our habitual life, we see the whole globe to be an aerolite (meteor), and reverence it as such, and make pilgrimages to it ..." (9: 45).
- 24 Edward Said, "Reflections on American 'Left' literary criticism," in *The World, the Text, the Critic*, (London: Faber, 1982), p. 169. Some modern critics like Simon During beg to disagree with this view and believe that "literary criticism canonizes those texts which do not simply legitimate nationhood" (p. 138). See Simon During, "Literature—Nationalism's other? The Case for revision," in *Nation and Narration*, *ibid.*, pp. 138-153.
- 25 See Bhabha, "DissemiNation," *ibid.*, p. 301.
- 26 Simon During, "Literature—Nationalism's other? The Case for revision," in *Nation and Narration* *ibid.* During writes, "Nationalism attaches to the modern state, revealing itself fully in subjects whose being is saturated by their nationality" (p. 138).
- 27 Annual state fairs in the US in the early twentieth century for example in Kansas city (1928) showed not only a Ferris wheel, corn dogs, cotton candy, horses, cattle and hogs but also a blue-eyed blonde family of four or five on elevated platforms under the banner Fitter Families Contest. This was an attempt to identify Aryan facial characteristics as models of godly living, something that the burgeoning eugenics movement was doing surreptitiously.
- 28 Charles Davenport spearheaded the American eugenics movement under the aegis of the Eugenics Record Office, a consortium funded largely with Rockefeller and Carnegie dollars. He advocated the prevention of birth amongst genetic undesirables such as the "feeble-minded," paupers, alcoholics, criminals, epileptics, the insane, the constitutionally weak, people predisposed to specific diseases, deformed persons, and those born deaf, blind, or mute. Davenport's negative eugenics found widespread acceptance amongst middle and upper class Americans.
- 29 The U.S. Department of Agriculture was closely aligned with the American Breeders Association, a prominent supporter of eugenics. And in 1907, states began sterilizing citizens they considered a problem. Indiana was first, followed by Washington, Connecticut, Virginia, and California.
- 30 Daniel Kevles published what may be the best history of eugenics to date in 1985, *In the Name of Eugenics* (Harvard University Press). Kevles is also the author of *The Physicists: The History of a Scientific Community in Modern America* (Harvard), *The Baltimore Case: A Trial of Politics, Science, and Character* (W.W. Norton); and co-author of *The Code of*

- Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project* (Harvard) and *Inventing America: A History of the United States* (W.W. Norton). In addition, Kevles has written for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, among other publications.
- 31 Tzvestan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), pp. 8-13.
- 32 William Carlos Williams's letter to Horace Gregory dated 22nd July 1939 in *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, ed. John C. Thirlwall, (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1957), p. 185. Williams wrote, 'I felt from earliest childhood that America was the only home I could possibly call my own. I felt that it was expressly founded for me, personally, and that it must be my first business in life to possess it, that only by making it my own from the beginning to my own day, in detail, should I ever have a basis for knowing where I stood.'
- 33 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet" in the *Heath Anthology of American Literature* *ibid*, p. 1581. In the same essay Emerson writes, "The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is sovereign, and stands on the centre. For the world is not painted, or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe. Therefore the poet is not any permissive potentate, but is emperor in his own right" (p. 1568).
- 34 Kinereth Meyer, "Possessing America: William Carlos Williams's Paterson and the Poetics of Appropriation," in *Mapping American Culture*, *ibid*, p. 153. Myra Jehlen posits that the American self-reliant individualist was not just a poet but also a capitalist, as he believed that "a man's value manifests itself in material possession." See Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation: the Individual, the Nation, and the Continent*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 4.
- 35 Kinereth Meyer, "Possessing America," *ibid.*, p. 153.
- 36 William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, (New York: New Directions, 1963), III.i.p. 109.
- 37 William Carlos Williams in *In the American Grain*, rpt 1933, 1966 (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1925), pp. 219-220.
- 38 Kinereth Meyer, "Possessing America," *ibid.*, p. 154. Meyer draws attention to speeches of Teddy Roosevelt especially before the 1898 war against Spain where Roosevelt connected the "queer lack of imperial instinct" in the American people with notions of "manliness" (pp. 165-66). Also see Alfred Kazin, *A Writer's America: Landscape and Literature*, (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. 101. Meyer's points out that landscape poems written by American women writers do not make any attempt to "possess" the landscape. See Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).
- 39 Johannes Fabian, "Presence and Representation: The Other and Anthropological Writing," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (1990), pp. 753-73.