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# "The Best Soil of Their Hearts": Protestant Explorations of Catholic Spirituality in Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne

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“The Best Soil of Their Hearts”:  
Protestant Explorations of Catholic Spirituality in Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, focusing upon their explorations of Roman Catholic spirituality, as reflected in their poetry, prose, and personal writings. Despite the anti-Romanism prevalent in nineteenth-century American political and religious culture, these authors engaged deeply with Catholic sacramentality, discovering an appeal in the Catholic faith tradition that provided possible answers to questions about spirituality in an increasingly pluralistic democratic society. The first chapter explores the aesthetic appeal of Roman Catholic sacramentals that attracted the attention of Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne. The second chapter connects Catholic sacramentality to the American landscape, examining how these authors infused settings with a Catholic understanding of nature. The third chapter examines how these writers created ageric saints suited to the unique conditions of the American landscape in their works. The fourth chapter considers the connections between the consecrated life of ageric saints and its compatibility with nineteenth-century American understandings of civic virtue and republicanism. Despite many ongoing cultural conflicts, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne served through their creative works as mediators of the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism in nineteenth-century America, and their writings allow a better understanding of how Catholicism could be part of the identity that Jacksonian-era Americans were trying to create.

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## Dedication

For my family, with gratitude for their unflinching support: Mom and Dad, Patrick, Eric,

Steve, and Lilly

and

in memory of Father David Bellinghausen, O. S. B., who had faith in this project.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	29
Chapter 2.....	89
Chapter 3.....	140
Chapter 4.....	193
Conclusion .....	263
Works Cited .....	281

“The Best Soil of Their Hearts”: Protestant Explorations of Catholic Spirituality in Cooper,  
Longfellow, and Hawthorne

Introduction

In his *French and Italian Notebooks*, Nathaniel Hawthorne reveals that he spent quite a bit of time—more, it seems, than the typical tourist—in Catholic churches. In addition to seeing the paintings of Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel and other famous works in old churches and cathedrals, Hawthorne, like so many other visitors, was frequently drawn away from the frescoes and statues to the actions of the faithful, those whose visits were of a more spiritual, more familiar, and more comfortable nature. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1858, Hawthorne was moved by the sight of one particular family:

I saw a father entering with two little bits of boys, just big enough to toddle along, holding his hand on either side. The father dipt [sic] his fingers into the marble font of holy water (which, on its pedestals, was two or three times as high as those small Christians) and wet a hand of each, and taught them how to cross themselves. When they come to be men, it will be impossible to convince those children that there is no efficacy in holy water, without plucking up all religious faith and sentiment by the roots. Generally, I suspect, when people throw off the faith they were born in, the best soil of their hearts is apt to cling to its roots. (*Centenary* 14:460; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 Oct. 1858)

One might expect an American tourist to regard this ritual of dipping one’s fingers in water and making a sign of faith with the droplets on one’s fingers as superstitious, something of which churches in the “new” world were largely “purified.” However, in the holy water, Hawthorne found some spiritual resonance so strong that, regardless of what these boys were to experience in their lives, he was confident that the sacramental holy water would remain with them as a powerful reminder of faith. Further, in this moment, Hawthorne was possibly getting closer to understanding his own fascination with the rites and rituals of Catholic worship, despite his own Protestant beliefs, perhaps illuminating in this moment his earlier observation that “[i]t is for



Protestants to inquire whether some of these inestimable advantages are not compatible with a purified faith, and do not indeed belong to Christianity” (*Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858). Hawthorne, in other words, was open to an exploration of Catholicism as the faith that he and his Protestant ancestors and countrymen had thrown off, due to the possibility that “the best soil of their hearts” could indeed have clung to its roots. This study will demonstrate that Hawthorne, like his contemporaries James Fenimore Cooper and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, experienced such encounters with sacramental essence of Catholicism despite the anti-Romanism of their own American society, and thus it will offer a new way of analyzing their engagement of Catholic characters, settings, and themes in their works.

While it might seem unusual to focus on the works of three non-Catholics as a window into explorations of Catholic spirituality, I argue that this focus both complements extant scholarship and offers new ways of understanding the seeming incompatibility between Catholicism and American republican ideals, demonstrating that even for writers who did not adhere to Catholicism, the Catholic faith tradition offered an appeal and possible answers to questions about spirituality in an increasingly democratic and pluralistic society. Most serious students of American history and literature in the “Age of Jackson” (c.1820-1860) are well aware of the anti-Catholic sentiments of the era, and are probably aware of the very few American intellectuals who converted to Catholicism in that era. Stoked largely by the arrival of Irish immigrants, anti-Catholic nativism became interwoven into the fabric of nineteenth-century America, fueled by scandalous novels like Maria Monk’s *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, as Exhibited in a Narrative of Her sufferings During a Residence of Five Years as a Novice and Two Years as a Black Nun in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal* (1836), with its titillating and lurid whispers of convents as brothels in disguise, manifesting the deviance created by enclosed

communities of unmarried men and women in the midst of an American culture that favored marriage as essential to the perpetuation of American moral and political virtue. As Marie Anne Pagliarini notes, Maria Monk's "disclosures" sold over 300,000 copies between 1836 and 1861, making it second in copies sold only to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), its popularity undiminished by the revelation that much of the book was untrue (99-100). Similarly popular books, with only slightly less formidable titles, include Rebecca Reed's *Six Months in a Convent; or, The Narrative of Rebecca Theresa Reed, Who Was Under the Influence of the Roman Catholics About Two Years, and an Inmate of the Ursuline Convent on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, Mass., Nearly Six Months, in the Years 1831-2* (1835), Edward Beecher's *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed, and Protestantism Defended, in the Light of Reason, History, and Scripture* (1855), Rosamond Culbertson's *Rosamond, or a Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of an American Female, under the Popish Priests in the Island of Cuba, with a Full Disclosure of Her Manners and Customs, Written by Herself* (1848), and Grace Kennedy's *Father Clement: A Roman Catholic Story* (1847). These beliefs espoused in these sensational novels that Catholic institutions posed threats to civic virtue and family sanctity were furthered by the American Protestant Society and Order of the Star-Spangled Banner (later the Know-Nothing Party), organizations that both played on and inflamed the commonly accepted fears that Catholics would compromise the republican ideals of the United States of America, pulling the nation under the sway of a corrupt papacy headquartered in a Gothicized Rome. Most American intellectuals of the day were not members of the Catholic Church, and many, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, were openly critical of Catholicism and Catholic converts. Those who did convert to Catholicism, like Brook Farm residents Isaac Hecker and Orestes Brownson, have been studied by scholars intrigued by their decision to go against the tide of popular opinion;

Brownson in particular has been labeled a “weathervane,” blown this way and that by the winds of his own spiritual restlessness (Carey x-xx). While Brownson did seem to wander extensively through the many paths of spirituality before settling on Catholicism, his experience, like that of Hecker and other converts, offers only one aspect of Catholicism, one that has been viewed almost as an oddity in a solidly Protestant, Puritan-rooted America. Despite the proliferation of Protestant denominations, Calvinist permutations of Puritanism still were regarded by many nineteenth-century Americans as the religious standard for the new nation, and thus Roman Catholicism was viewed suspiciously by nativists as incompatible with Protestantism and republicanism.

For many Americans, Roman Catholicism raised critical questions about the relationship between religious and civic life. Though the number of Catholics was growing, and though the American Catholic Church was actively attempting to integrate itself into its republican surroundings, Catholics throughout the Jacksonian era were frequently viewed by many as religious, political, and cultural outsiders. These misgivings about Catholicism, however, do not point to a country’s movement towards secularism; on the contrary, nineteenth-century America was marked by an interest in religion that dated back to the colonial and early republican periods, when many American writers and thinkers had been theologians. Scholars addressing this general interest in religion include Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll, who have both provided extensive overviews of the changing religious landscape of the mid-nineteenth century. Hatch’s *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989) examines how common people used and shaped Christianity to challenge the religious and cultural elites of early nineteenth century America, particularly how the Jacksonian ideal led to the increasing confidence and importance of common, often uneducated people to pull American Protestantism away from traditions that

were “intellectually respectable and institutionally cohesive” (5), observing that these nineteenth-century trends founded a culture of religious populism that remains a dominant force in American culture. While Hatch is not particularly interested in Catholicism, noting that “this book has an explicit Protestant focus in order to trace the rise of a full-fledged populist clergy” (12), his study is useful to understand the religious and cultural upheaval that marked the time in which Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne lived and wrote. Noll’s *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (2002) continues work in this area, arguing that by the early nineteenth century, America was being driven by “a surprising intellectual synthesis” he describes as “a compound of evangelical Protestant religion, republican political ideology, and commonsense moral reasoning” (9). Further, Noll argues that by the 1830s and 1840s, this synthesis was “not only the most powerful value system *in* the nation, but also the most powerful value system *defining* the nation” (14). American literature, thus, frequently intersected with religious themes well into the nineteenth century, and for Americans trying to define the young nation, questions of religious identity and civic identity were necessarily intertwined.

In this era marked by both great religious changes and by concerns about Roman Catholicism as a threat to the established value system identified by Noll, several scholars have turned their attention to the cultural and religious history of Catholicism in America. General studies include works by Chester Gillis and Jay P. Dolan, who both take fairly long, sweeping views of the history of Roman Catholicism in the United States. Gillis’s *Roman Catholicism in America* (1999) states its primary focus is on understanding “Catholic identity and community in America—from without and within” (2), noting that “Roman Catholicism is a world religion, but its expression in America is a national and often local one” (3), one marked by a greater degree of pluralism and diversity in American Catholicism, whether considering ethnic background,

immigration status, or adherence to doctrine. Gillis also examines “the role of authority” (5), observing that for Americans both within and without the Church, the relationship of American Catholics to the larger church hierarchy is a source of ongoing tension (5-6). In his discussions of the mid-nineteenth century, Gillis focuses particularly upon documenting the many ethnic and immigrant groups that form the American Catholic Church, speaking less to interactions with the mainstream Protestant American culture (48-67). Jay P. Dolan’s *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (2002) offers another broad history of Catholicism in America, but one that does give greater consideration to tensions developing between Catholics and other Americans than Gillis does. For example, Dolan argues that up until about 1820, “certain ideals of the Enlightenment took hold among Catholics” (9), such as when early Catholic leaders stressed the importance of religious toleration and ties with other Christian denominations, or when American Catholic leaders structured their church hierarchies to reflect American republican ideals (25-42). However, Dolan notes that that in the middle of the nineteenth century, American Catholics became more defensive, responding to nativism with a “siege mentality” (54), leading to increased sectarianism, to an increase in the use of the distinctly Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the “Romanization” of the church (54-60), a concept picked up by other scholars whose works are significant to this study. Dolan’s work in *In Search of an American Catholicism* builds upon his earlier *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900* (1978), in which he argues that American Catholics in the nineteenth century were just as enthusiastic about revivalism as Protestants were, and that this shared interest points to an Americanization of Catholics as they held dear their own piety (35-38).

Another text with a temporal focus upon the nineteenth century is Jon Gjerde's *Catholicism and the Shaping of Nineteenth-Century America* (2012), completed and edited by S. Deborah Kang after his death. Gjerde attempts to pull away from the focus upon conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, arguing that the religious tensions between the groups led to positive debates about slavery, gender, economics, and other key issues (Kang in Gjerde, viii), such that Catholics and Protestants should be more accurately perceived, despite episodes of violence, as working together in "conversation" across the divide to face the challenge of building a nation, exploring "the quandaries created for Americans of many stripes who wished to celebrate a developing national tradition that offered rights encoded in American law but who also recognized the religious and cultural diversity of American society" (Gjerde 7). Gjerde understands American Catholics as seeking to become part of a nation that did not particularly want them to become part of the nation. Thus, Catholics faced these challenges of attempting to remain culturally separate as they Americanized, employing what Gjerde calls "a pilloried strategy that was aimed at providing an integration in state and society at the same time that it developed an institutional structure that shielded its adherents from excessive interaction with the unwashed," fostering the growth of parochial schools and insulated church practices as they participated economically and socially in American life (15). Like Gillis and Dolan, Gjerde offers useful insights into the broader relationships between American Catholics and Protestants, including nativism and Catholic responses to it in American history.

Other scholars interested in Catholicism in America have focused more narrowly, examining impacts on American literature, yet their significant works demonstrate that there is still more to be done. For example, James Emmett Ryan's *Faithful Passages: American Catholicism in Literary Culture* (2013) is a valuable contribution to scholarship, illuminating

how Catholic writers participated in the development of a distinctively American literary culture. Ryan does an excellent job of studying the works of important nineteenth-century American Catholic writers Orestes Brownson, Isaac Hecker, Anna Hanson Dorsey, and James Cardinal Gibbons, and connects these writers to key issues of gender and morality. He is interested in how non-Catholic writers drew on Catholic themes to engage these key issues, but points to Willa Cather and Kate Chopin as the best examples of Protestant writers who explored Catholicism in their works. While his examination of these two important writers offers much to students of literature, it does not shed much light on the mid-nineteenth-century Protestant contemporaries of Brownson, Hecker, and Dorsey. The same could be said for another important work on American literary evocations of Catholicism, Paul Giles' *American Catholic Arts and Fictions: Culture, Ideology, and Aesthetics* (1992). While Giles does include an analysis of Brownson's work as well as a good overview of some of the dominant Protestant phobias of Catholicism that were expressed in mid-nineteenth-century American literature, most of his study focuses on the emergence and solidification of Catholic realism in the early twentieth century. Giles offers ample evidence of how Catholic realist writers such as Theodore Dreiser eschewed issues of formal Catholic doctrine in favor of "detached, floating signifiers" of Catholicism in secular contexts (174), but he does not investigate whether American writers, Catholic or Protestant, might have been engaging Catholicism in similar ways during an earlier period of American literary history. Another work that focuses primarily upon the twentieth century is Ross Labrie's *The Catholic Imagination in American Literature* (1997). Labrie, focusing only on professed, practicing Catholics, concludes that the heart of Catholic writing is in "the doctrine of the Incarnation, wherein human experience and the natural world are perceived as both flawed and redeemed" (270). This inherently optimistic doctrine, Labrie argues, allows writers to emphasize

the dignity of the individual, an ideal that he believes meshes well with American political idealism. While Labrie's interest in incarnational, active, sacramental Catholicism closely mirrors the interests of my study, his work, with the exception of a chapter on Orestes Brownson, focuses upon twentieth-century writers, rather than upon curious and/or sympathetic nineteenth-century Protestant American writers. This dissertation will fill in some of these temporal and thematic gaps and thus serve as a complement to the works of Giles, Ryan, and Labrie.

In an effort to study how Catholicism intersected with civic and religious ideals in Jacksonian America, it is important to look at how non-Catholic thinkers and writers in Jacksonian America demonstrated some ambivalence regarding Catholicism, and to study what these tensions reveal about their personal interests in spirituality and about their influence on others. Scholars have questioned this influence and, in particular, have looked at this ambivalence, frequently identifying Catholicism as "Other." Most notable among these studies is Jenny Franchot's *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (1994). Franchot's study is sweeping, surveying a variety of texts and authors to demonstrate "that anti-Catholicism operated as an imaginative category of discourse through which antebellum American writers of popular elite fictional and historical texts indirectly voiced the tensions and limitations of mainstream Protestant culture" (xvii). In her study, Franchot looks at Roman Catholicism as a cultural phenomenon, inseparable from other, non-religious aspects of American life. Thus, while Franchot integrates the works of many authors with key historical events, *Roads to Rome* is best summed up as the study of what she often refers to as "Romanism," a fetishizing of Catholicism as something dangerous and alluring. Derived from a slur used by nineteenth-century Americans to evoke their simultaneous infatuation with and revulsion of corrupt popes, lecherous priests, and other potentially un-American aspects of



Catholicism, Romanism assumes, essentially, that the United States will never be suited to Catholicism because of the hierarchical nature of the Catholic Church; since Romanism flies in the face of republicanism, it must be rejected, despite its illicit appeal. Franchot's study, in other words, focuses on the American ambivalence regarding Catholicism, yet in its focus on Romanism, it avoids overtly spiritual questions in favor of more secularly defined constructs like class and gender. Franchot's work is path-breaking in its examination of the Roman Catholic Church as America's "Other," and does an excellent job of assimilating anti-Catholic popular novels into an established canon, including works of Hawthorne, Longfellow, Melville, Stowe, and Poe. Still, the key limitation of Franchot's important study is that it focuses on the church as "Other" in an almost xenophobic way, through the lens of the dominant discourse of the day. By focusing on the material, social, and political aspects of antebellum American culture, Franchot eschews a path into the spiritual aspects of Roman Catholicism, leaving untouched the possibilities that American writers could have found spiritual fulfillment in the "Other" faith, despite their concerns and fears.

Franchot's influential study has inspired several other scholars to travel down other roads to Rome in their work. For example, Susan M. Griffin's *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2004) offers a transatlantic perspective on Franchot's thesis, examining Victorian British literature for similar themes and tensions. Griffin argues that "[r]eading widely and closely in Victorian anti-Catholic narrative makes clear that well-known stories and figures provide a narrative language for discussion and analysis of a range of cultural ideals and problems...including Protestant self-critique" (2). Another examination of the lasting effects of the dominant Protestant discourse of nineteenth century America occurs in Tracy Fessenden's *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (2007). In this

sweeping literary history, Fessenden argues that what appears to be a “secularization” of America as a byproduct of modernity is in actuality the triumph of a Protestant discourse and literature that silences or marginalizes all groups that do not fit into Protestant ideals (1-12). In another effort to build upon Franchot’s work, Elizabeth Fenton’s *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism and Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (2011), examines a similarly wide variety of texts, including civic literature such as the Federalist Papers, works of history, and works of literature to demonstrate how the United States has defined itself against Catholicism from its foundation, arguing that “U.S. conceptions of religious pluralism and its corresponding ‘right of conscience’—two highly prized features of liberal democracy—drew their force from anti-Catholicism,” manifesting in “anti-Catholic cultural productions” (4). My study certainly agrees with Fenton that “[a] transnational Americanist perspective that takes religion seriously can enrich critical understandings of U.S. political forms by accounting for phenomena that narratives of race alone cannot explain” (9), but serves to look into a new dimension of the tensions that nineteenth-century Protestants interrogating Catholicism experienced when considering how Catholicism could be compatible with American liberal democracy. My study offers a more complete look at this ambivalence by exploring more explicitly the spiritual appeals of Roman Catholicism, because I believe that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, each in his own way, dug into the soil of Roman Catholicism to root himself in various sacramental aspects of the “unpurified” faith that struck him as aesthetically and spiritually authentic.

Of course, it is impossible to fully separate spirituality from other aspects of human culture, and by no means do I believe that the study of Romanism is unimportant. To a degree, the focus on Romanism that dominates discourse in this area is inescapable due to the influence

of the Gothic on antebellum American conceptions of Europe, and thus of “Old World” Roman Catholicism itself. Popular British novels such as *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764) and *The Monk: A Romance* (1798) established images of crumbling Catholic churches and monasteries as sites for delightfully terrifying encounters with earthly and supernatural villains, and Jacksonian American readers eagerly devoured Gothic novels that played on visual images of rotting bodies in the catacombs beneath the streets of Rome or monasteries whose cells were chambers of horror. As the Gothic form was adapted to the fledgling American republic, its elements appeared in literary works ranging from Indian captivity narratives to “convent captivity” stories like Rebecca Reed’s and Maria Monk’s wildly popular tales. As Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were part of this trans-Atlantic literary culture, they were undoubtedly familiar with these Gothic traditions and could certainly have chosen to incorporate these elements into their own works for the sake of popular interest. While they occasionally succumbed to this temptation, Cooper, Hawthorne, and Longfellow were interested in far more than merely using Catholicism as a prop. Each of these authors used Catholic themes in order to more deeply engage his own spirituality and explore issues suited particularly well to the American society of his day.

One of the reasons that Cooper, Hawthorne, and Longfellow were able to adapt the Gothic to their political and spiritual interests is that they adhered not to a purely European Gothic style, but instead followed in the path forged by Charles Brockden Brown, whose novels shifted the Gothic paradigm to the American frontier. Most particularly in *Wieland; or the Transformation: An American Tale* (1798), Brockden Brown replaced the crumbling castles, shadow-filled monasteries, and ancient catacombs central to the European Gothic with shadowy forests, twisting paths, cliffs, and canyons in an American landscape that offered a backdrop for

spiritual uncertainty and psychological confusion. The frontier, to Brockden Brown, was a place where a person's belief system was shaken, and where only the strong could survive the upheaval. Further, new liminal spaces offered possibilities to the Gothic that were not present in the European tradition. For example, the new spaces offered possibilities of both discovery and disorientation as characters made their way through what are effectively "undiscovered" locations, filled with potential dangers and opportunities. The setting of the wilderness connoted the prospect of striking out into a new world, and the frontier was very much a presence in the American psyche (and thus in American literature) well into the nineteenth century, offering opportunities for self-discovery along with national expansion. Thus, the frontier gave nineteenth-century American authors the occasion to envision both positive and negative experiences for the characters they cast out into the wilderness. A second and critical aspect to the relocation of the Gothic into the wilderness was that the American wilderness was filled with life, unlike the catacombs and decaying structures of the old world. Encounters with strange panthers, bears, and other menacing creatures offered interesting life-and-death confrontations, but even more significant were encounters with the Native Americans who inhabited the wilderness. The new American Gothic landscape therefore provided Brockden Brown and later writers with an opportunity to explore the psychological, spiritual, and social repercussions of immigration to the New World and of nation-building. One thrust of this dissertation is that the relocation of the Gothic to the American wilderness afforded nineteenth-century writers the ability to explore spirituality in ways that the European Gothic tradition did not emphasize.

Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne built upon the American Gothic tradition that Brockden Brown had established, offering their own perspectives as they explored the themes of psychological, spiritual, and social instability in their works. Though a generation removed from

Brockden Brown's time, their era of the 1820s-1860s was equally (if not more) tumultuous, and the uncertainty over the future of the nation and of its foundational religious principles reverberates through their work. All three of these authors created characters whose encounters with the American wilderness have a strong spiritual component, one that resonates strongly with Catholic spirituality. All three of these authors also raised issues that were both in harmony with and averse to nativist Romanism, yet they moved beyond Romanism into an engagement with spirituality, looking beyond fears of "popery" to the essence of Catholic belief. The use of Gothic conventions, particularly in the wilderness, allowed all three of these authors to engage in spiritual exploration that led them to a deeper encounter with Catholic sensibilities. Significantly, this ability to transcend the allure of Romanism continued to serve these three authors when they created European characters in "Old World" settings.

Of all the nineteenth-century American authors who engaged Catholicism, I choose to focus on Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne because each writer, in his own way, seemed to be on a journey of sorts to define his own spiritual ideals, and each writer explored aspects of Catholic spirituality both in fiction and in letters or journal entries, offering windows into his personal experiences with Roman Catholicism as he understood them. For each of these writers, Roman Catholicism offered a nurturing type of soil, much like that which Hawthorne referenced in his reflection on the family at the font, because each realized that his Protestantism was rooted in Roman Catholicism, which thus became a place to explore and grow his own faith. Though well aware of the prevailing cultural prejudices against the Catholic Church, each looked introspectively at the faith in order to both better understand himself and his nation. While a xenophobic understanding of Roman Catholicism as "Other" was a safe position in Jacksonian American culture, evidenced by events ranging from the Mexican War to the publicly sanctioned

arson of the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and while books depicting the horrors of brothel-like convents sold well, it is significant that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne swam against this stream in different ways, offering characters who demonstrate the redemptive nature of Catholicism in some way. In other words, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne reveal in their writings a level of support or sympathy for Roman Catholicism at odds with the antipathy expressed in the dominant culture, and their understanding of Roman Catholicism was tempered by the American Protestant experience. I argue that this tempered experience makes the works of Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne more influential, potentially, than the works of Hecker, Brownson, and other converts, because Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were part of the dominant intellectual circle and America's literary mainstream. Hence, the presence of these three authors in the American literary canon is critical to this study. This dissertation will show that these three American Protestant writers ultimately demonstrated in their explorations of Catholic spirituality that aspects of Roman Catholicism, such as sacramental beauty and eremitic monasticism, were wholly compatible with the political, moral, and social ideals of Jacksonian republicanism.

First, James Fenimore Cooper, though undoubtedly influenced by his friendship with the nativist Samuel F. B. Morse, nonetheless engaged Catholic spirituality through strong, heroic characters in his novels. Most obviously, Cooper's three European novels reflect his interest in Catholic monasticism, with monks as key characters in each of these novels. Of these, characters like Father Anselmo, the Carmelite in *The Bravo: A Tale* (1831), stand out as virile, masculine figures, seemingly in contrast to the negative and effete portraits of the celibate clergy in anti-Catholic works. Father Anselmo emerges as the true hero of *The Bravo*, one of the few willing to take down his cowl and show his face amidst the masked treachery of Venice. In addition to

exploring the spirituality of the Catholic monastics in Cooper's European novels, this dissertation examines a Catholic-tinged spirituality that infuses a number of his other works. For example, the *Leatherstocking Tales* reflect Cooper's strong interest in spirituality, particularly as imbued by the wilderness. I hypothesize, for example, that in *The Last of the Mohicans; A Narrative of 1757* (1826), Hawkeye is an eremitic monastic missionary: eschewing the comforts of settlements, he lives as one with the natural world, professes highly ecumenical views about the religion of the Native Americans, expects that they are equally likely to achieve salvation, and is unfettered by attachments to the material world or to a wife. Further, Hawkeye's frequent depiction as "a man without a cross" who disdains books, yet who remains acutely in tune with the natural world and able to converse with the Native peoples, makes him seem to be much like a Jesuit missionary, albeit one "without a cross" of a communal monastic order. Natty Bumppo's avowed bachelorhood affords him the privilege of serving as a consecrated guide into the wilderness, paving the way for travelers to follow him, making sacred his life's work as a pathfinder.

Several Cooper scholars have addressed religious themes in his works, and of these a few have noted connections to Catholicism. For example, in his article "Cooper and European Catholicism," Gary J. Williams offers a close reading of *The Heidenmauer; or, The Benedictines—A Story of the Rhine* (1832), the novel which he sees as the key to assessing Cooper's changing attitudes towards Roman Catholicism. Williams argues that before *The Heidenmauer*, Cooper was, at best, unsympathetic to Catholicism, but that his views changed when he visited Europe. Williams makes some interesting observations, particularly in his comparison of Cooper to Cooper's friend Samuel Morse, noting that though Morse found decadence and corruption in his European tour, Cooper saw what "he cherished most about

Catholicism—the association of God and beauty” (155). Careful reading of Cooper’s letters and travel writings certainly does reveal that Cooper became increasingly drawn to Catholicism during his European sojourn. Still, in this dissertation, I argue, contrary to Williams’s reading, that even in some of his earlier works, Cooper was addressing Catholic themes, though more indirectly, and he had certain spiritual concerns and latent Catholic sympathies in his heart even before he started to realize how his own spirituality could speak more directly to Catholicism. Though our readings diverge on critical points, I do agree with Williams that “[t]he ‘lesson’ of *The Heidenmauer* is that Roman Catholicism is not an ogre and that neither Catholics nor Protestants have exclusive holds on truth, virtue, or piety” (157). Williams’ ultimate argument, then, meshes with my claim that Cooper was interested in Catholicism as an avenue of personal and national spiritual exploration.

Further, my argument that Cooper was indirectly engaging Catholic themes allows for a more complete understanding of readings of Cooper offered by George Dekker and John T. Frederick. In *James Fenimore Cooper: The Novelist* (1967), Dekker struggles with his reading of *The Heidenmauer*, stating that “Cooper wrote a novel which, today, reads very much like the work of a highly intelligent and critical Roman Catholic controversialist!” (138). Dekker’s surprise reveals, perhaps, his own skepticism of Catholicism. A fresh look at Cooper’s work allows Dekker’s perplexity regarding the European novels to reconcile with his claim that “[t]here is no greater ‘secular saint’ than Natty Bumppo” (84). I argue that Dekker approaches my own reading of Bumppo, though I believe Bumppo’s presence as “the ideal citizen of an ideal republic” represents a life far less secular than Dekker acknowledges. Similarly, in *The Darkened Sky: Nineteenth-Century Novelists and Religion* (1969), John T. Frederick sees Natty Bumppo as an essentially Christian figure, representing Cooper’s “conception of the unity of



faiths” (12), yet he does not acknowledge any Catholic impact on Cooper’s work other than in his European novels (16). I believe that Frederick could do much more with his discussion of powerful scenes such as Father Anselmo’s granting of absolution to the old fisherman, and that his acknowledgement of these moments in the texts belies his claim that *The Bravo* does not deal with religion very much (19). It seems that Frederick, like Dekker, is hampered by his own skepticism of spirituality. This dissertation, therefore, will accommodate the views of Williams, Dekker, Frederick, and other Cooper scholars, while offering some fresh interpretations of key themes identified in his works. My approach is rather like that of Lawrence J. Oliver in “Cooper’s Calvinist Motif,” in which he argues that despite a well noted aversion to Puritanism and its lingering legacy in Jacksonian America, Cooper was nonetheless affected by America’s Calvinist heritage. Oliver observes that while Cooper’s three years at Yale “failed to convert young Cooper to Calvinism, they may well have instilled in him a Calvinist sense of man’s total dependence on God” (436). If Cooper could find resonance with some aspects of Calvinism/Puritanism and not with others, then it is reasonable that he could have had a similar experience with Catholicism/Romanism, developing an ambivalent spiritual relationship with an appealing “Other.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is most famous for his exploration of Catholicism on the American frontier in his epic poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847), but Catholicism and spirituality also pervade many of his other works. Longfellow, a Unitarian, was interested in a variety of religious issues and even in non-Christian beliefs, as indicated by his biography of Mohammed, his translation of Dante, and poems like “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport” (1858). This dissertation engages several of Longfellow’s works, particularly *Evangeline* and the prose piece *Kavanagh* (1849), whose main character is a Protestant minister converted from

Catholicism who seems to retain a strong Catholic sensibility. This dissertation examines the elements of Catholicism that intrigued Longfellow the most, including devotion to saints, worship, and monasticism, pushing beyond a study of the well-examined *Evangeline* and *Kavanagh* into many of Longfellow's other works to probe more fully and completely the spiritual explorations that first appear in *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* (1835) and continue throughout later prose and poetic works. Like Cooper, Longfellow offers an eremitic monastic figure in the American wilderness in his iconic *Evangeline*, and she, like Bumpo, enters into privileged space because of her consecrated journey into the wilds of both the frontier and the city of Philadelphia. Longfellow's ideal minister Kavanagh is likewise portrayed, in many ways, as living the life of an eremitic monastic figure before his engagement, and thus provides an example of the sacredness of the spiritual possibilities of the single life even as a transitory state, opening the possibility of new perspectives on gender and sexuality that other scholars have not fully explored.

Longfellow's fascination with religion in general, and Catholicism in particular, has been examined by other scholars, with some writers pausing to note the reflections on Catholicism in *Outre-Mer*, written when Longfellow was preparing for his appointment as a professor of modern languages at Bowdoin College. Of these works, perhaps the best examination occurs in Christoph Irmscher's *Longfellow Redux* (2008). In this biography of Longfellow, Irmscher offers a few pages of powerful insights into Longfellow's "complicated love affair with Catholicism" (178), drawn largely from his analysis of *Outre-Mer*. Irmscher notes that for Longfellow, the continuity of Catholic worship is particularly fascinating, so much so that "[a]n interesting analogy occurs to Longfellow: like the Catholic religion, poetry, too, is a kind of lingua franca in Europe, cutting across class lines as well as national boundaries" (180). I argue that Irmscher's

observations about Longfellow's fascination with the sensory aspects of Catholic worship, particularly his "obsession" with rites, prayers, and rituals, are borne out in an examination of Longfellow's later works, and this study will add depth and dimension to Irmischer's observations. I also will argue against Irmischer, however, primarily in his contention that "The Birds of Killingworth" is the only poem from Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863) not "inspired by a written source" (192), by demonstrating that the threads of Catholicism and wilderness tie this work to Cooper's *The Pioneers; or, The Sources of Susquehanna. A Descriptive Tale* (1823). Irmischer's recent biography of Longfellow, of course, is not the only study to devote some attention to Longfellow's interest in Catholicism. In *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Portrait of an American Humanist* (1966), Edward Wagenknecht also looks to *Outre-Mer* as a watershed work for Longfellow's understanding of the Catholic Church, arguing that Longfellow "soon discovered that it is not possible to repudiate her without repudiating Western civilization itself" (198). In his discussions of Longfellow's later works, he focuses in particular on the positive portrayals of Catholic piety in *Evangeline* and of the missionaries in *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) as evidence of a sympathetic understanding of Catholicism. This dissertation will probe more deeply the ideas that both Irmischer and Wagenknecht touch upon in an effort to develop an enriched understanding of how *Outre-Mer* presents Catholic themes that continue through far more of Longfellow's works than other scholars have suggested.

Like Longfellow and Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne expressed strong interests in Catholic devotions and celibate monasticism, and is (of these three authors) the author perhaps most immediately associated with Catholicism, in part because his daughter Rose became a rather famous and influential convert to Catholicism as Mother Mary Alphonsa, founder of the Hawthorne Dominicans, a congregation dedicated to care of cancer patients. The concept of

sacramental confession is commonly associated with *The Marble Faun* (1860), his “romance” of nineteenth-century Italy, but the idea of confessing (or failing to confess) secret transgressions pervades *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and many of his other works. Hawthorne’s interest in Catholicism is perhaps best illuminated in *The Marble Faun* because of the novel’s Roman setting, Hilda’s overt acts of Marian devotion, and Hilda’s eventual exploration of the sacrament of confession, but I argue that evidence of Hawthorne’s interest in Catholicism also emerges in other works, including *The Scarlet Letter* and many of his short stories. Thus, this dissertation offers analysis of *The Marble Faun*, but also looks at other novels and short stories in order to trace a more complete understanding of Hawthorne’s engagement with Catholic spirituality, such as when he offers readers Hester Prynne as an eremitic monastic figure, serving her community much like an anchoress consecrated into sacred space and sealed by her scarlet letter.

Most critics who have examined Hawthorne’s interest in Catholicism have focused their attentions almost exclusively on *The Marble Faun*. However, some critics find *The Marble Faun* to be one of Hawthorne’s lesser works, and that dismissiveness may cause them to overlook his deep engagement with Catholic spirituality that this dissertation addresses. For example, Franchot dismisses this novel as a bad convent captivity narrative, yet I argue that in *The Marble Faun* Hawthorne seems deeply compelled by authentic Catholic devotion, even when manifested through Hilda’s monastic devotion to Mary. Hawthorne’s ambivalence peaks when Hilda’s unburdening of her psyche in the sacrament of confession is undone, ultimately, by an unscrupulous priest who denies the non-Catholic the benefits of the sacrament, in opposition to actual Church teachings. The agent of Rome, thus, interferes with authentic prayer/devotion, showing the simultaneous appeal of Catholicism and repulsiveness of Romanism. Curiously, Franchot’s chapter “The Hawthornian Confessional” focuses entirely on *The Scarlet Letter*,

though she addresses *The Marble Faun* in other chapters of *Roads to Rome* (Franchot 260-269). This dissertation thus enhances her discussion through analysis of Hawthorne's depiction of Hilda's visit to the confessional, and connects this pivotal scene to his frequent observations of and reflection on confessionals during his tenure in Rome. Through Hawthorne's understandings and misunderstandings of the sacrament of confession, he offers us a window into the reasons why he wondered which aspects of Roman Catholic spirituality are "compatible with a purified faith" (*Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858). This dissertation thus also builds upon the work of scholars like Gilbert P. Voight, whose "Hawthorne and the Roman Catholic Church" (1946) remains the most readily available source to focus on Hawthorne's engagement with Catholic spirituality, particularly on key passages from Hawthorne's *French and Italian Notebooks* and *The Marble Faun*. Voight offers an overview of these passages, claiming that *The Marble Faun* demonstrates that Catholicism held a growing, yet limited, appeal for Hawthorne. Voight makes some interesting observations, suggesting that Hawthorne, before his sojourn in Italy, held attitudes towards Catholicism much like those of Kenyon, but that after his time in Rome, his views shifted to be more like those of Hilda (397). This work will build considerably on Voight's article, offering greater exploration of Voight's argument and intersecting with Franchot's discussion of Hawthorne and Catholicism to provide a more nuanced understanding of his spiritual development, such that it may well have impacted the spiritual formation of his young daughter Rose, not unlike the impact Hawthorne believed was possible by a father leading his sons to a font of holy water.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to Hawthorne's conflicted relationship with Puritanism, Calvinism, and his familial past; consequently, these areas of exploration overshadow other possible readings of his works. For example, Agnes McNeill Donohue, in

*Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild* (1985) focuses on the sense of "Calvinist-ordained irony" (1) that she believes pervades Hawthorne's best works, a sense that she believes eroded during his years in Europe and fractured completely by the time Hawthorne wrote *The Marble Faun*. She does note that while living in Rome, Hawthorne increasingly found that "Roman Catholicism was convenient and comforting" (Donohue 15), yet she argues that Hawthorne consistently favored Calvinist doctrine over Catholic doctrine, and that his attraction to aesthetic beauty was what drove him inside the churches of Rome. I find Donohue's argument that Hawthorne's Calvinism crumbled while in Rome to be in conflict with her argument that Catholicism held no lasting appeal to him beyond the aesthetic beauty of its structures, and this dissertation will thus challenge Donohue's claims. Other scholars disagree with Donohue's acceptance of Hawthorne's adherence to Calvinism, questioning the beliefs she finds to be so central to his work. For example, Frederick claims in *The Darkened Sky* that Hawthorne is more closely aligned with Unitarianism than Calvinism because of his avoidance of writing about Christ in his works, reflective of what Frederick sees as his inability "to embrace wholeheartedly, as a concomitant doctrine, the redemptive sacrifice of Christ" (30). Similarly, Charles Berryman argues in *From Wilderness to Wasteland: The Trial of the Puritan God in the American Imagination* (1979) that Hawthorne rejected much of Puritanism's theological, cultural, and historical legacy. For example, Berryman argues that "[n]o author in the middle of the nineteenth century thought more deeply about his Puritan inheritance" (120) than Hawthorne, arguing that theologically Hawthorne was much more skeptical of his Calvinist religious roots than most scholars believe (123-125). I do agree with Berryman's claims that Hawthorne played a major role in reshaping popular conceptions of Puritan history for his American readers (128), but I take issue with his argument that Hawthorne's personal spiritual beliefs are almost inscrutable

(123). Berryman seems too willing to dismiss Hawthorne's religious and spiritual yearnings in his reading of Hawthorne as prefiguring Freud in his explorations of guilt and familial baggage, but I disagree with his assertion that "Hawthorne explored the subtle passions and deceits of the human spirit without anticipating any divine redemption" (134). Even if Hawthorne never found the spiritual answers he sought, he was still searching for them, and Berryman's overlooking of Hawthorne's interest in Roman Catholicism perhaps overlooks some of the possible answers that Berryman believes Hawthorne never found. My reading of Hawthorne is thus more closely aligned with Frederick's in that I believe that Hawthorne's works do reveal his struggle with the idea of redemption, and because Frederick notes Hawthorne's "repeated recognition of the ability of Catholicism to meet widely varied human needs—a quality which, at least by implication, he found lacking in the Protestant institutions he had known in England and America" (60). This dissertation will give more attention to the needs that Catholicism seemed to meet for Hawthorne, thus demonstrating that Hawthorne was finding spiritual possibilities in Catholicism that Berryman fails to acknowledge and that offer a new possibility for understanding Hawthorne's spiritual longings in addition to those that Frederick identifies.

To develop my main argument that Roman Catholicism held spiritual meaning for Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, and that examining their spiritual exploration of Roman Catholicism yields a richer understanding of each of these writers and their works, I present here several paths of inquiry that yield some fresh understandings of these authors. I have made the conscious decision to tie the works of the three authors together thematically, rather than treat the three authors in separate chapters, because I believe that looking at intersections among their works allows for a fuller understanding of national ambivalence towards Roman Catholicism in a period widely known for its xenophobic fear of Romanism as "Other."

In my first chapter, “Poetry in the Popish Names,” I argue that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were drawn initially to the sacramentals associated with Catholic worship: icons, crucifixes, holy water, and other sacred signs, actions, or objects which Roman Catholics believe prepare individuals “to receive the fruit of the sacraments” (*Catechism* 1667), and which are, to many inquirers into Catholic spirituality, the visible outward signs of the “Otherness” of Catholicism. Because these material manifestations of God’s grace are received through and heightened through the human senses, sacramentals had an appeal to Romantic writers like Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, and stood in sharp contrast to the austerity of the Puritan/Reformed tradition. While some nativists charged against this sensory corrupting “Romanism,” with its connections to Old World Gothicism, the sensory aspects of Roman Catholicism were appealing to Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne. I argue that their attraction to these sensory stimuli was fueled by far more than the aesthetic appeal to which Franchot attributes it, because the works of these three authors indicate that though they varied in their acceptance or endorsement of different aspects of Catholic rituals, sacramentals, and material objects, their works make it apparent that these three writers took the “things” seriously, and that they were engaging Catholic sacramentality on a far deeper level than just adding some exoticism to their creative works. Thus, this chapter focuses not just on literary treatments of sacramentals in visibly (and often historically) Catholic settings, but also addresses these authors’ concomitant treatment and critique of the material paucity of the Reformed tradition in more visibly Puritanical settings, revealing ultimately that through their attempts to understand the sacramental aspects of Roman Catholicism, these writers were attempting to comprehend the immanence of God.



In my second chapter, “The Wood-paths Shall Be the Aisles of Our Cathedral,” I argue that the examination of the sensory aspects of Roman Catholicism leads to an appreciation of God’s immanence in the wilderness, and that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne all found a sense of spiritual sacramentality in nature. In contrast to the Reformed conception of nature as a challenge to be overcome, mastered, and defeated, Romantic thinkers in nineteenth-century America embraced classical ideas about nature as something to be respected and honored, ideas that gave birth to the idea of the “noble savage” and revived the idea of America as an Eden providing both material and spiritual wealth. The sensory aspects of Catholicism were more in line with the growing aesthetic veneration of nature, particularly since all three authors encountered, during their European travels, the ways that Roman Catholicism was embedded in the landscape. While some scholars might equate this understanding of nature with Transcendentalism, none of the subjects of this study identified themselves with the Transcendental movement, and while Transcendentalism for some writers served as a waystation to Roman Catholicism, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne developed a more Catholic understanding of a sacramental nature, allowing them the space to balk at the legacy of Puritanism without fully embracing Transcendentalism. For these three writers, the American wilderness offered a unique opportunity for encounters with a Deity incarnate in the majesty, wonder, and terror of the untamed frontier, building more fully upon the ideas of a New Eden or New Canaan that arrived with the first Puritan settlers in Massachusetts Bay, but which were transformed into the errand into the wilderness offering opportunities for encounters with God, not necessarily with demons. Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne thus responded to the unique terrain of America, essential to the forging of a national literary tradition they all desired, by incorporating into their works the spiritual benefits of encounters with nature.

In my third chapter, “Holy Men and Women, Full of Faith and Good Works,” I argue that for Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, Catholic understandings of sainthood were appealing because they drew on a longstanding tradition that combined charismatic individualism with charitable service. These three writers found great appeal in the Catholic concept of the communion of saints, in which particularly holy individuals rise through their faith and works to be intercessors between God and humanity. Fusing their interests in Catholic saints with their interests in the American frontier and rugged Jacksonian individualism, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne latched on to Catholic traditions that associated saints with action; Saint Christopher, for example, offered to them the quintessential example of an untutored individual who earned sainthood by serving Christ and other travelers through a tireless work ethic that nurtured his own emerging faith. Similarly, these writers were also inspired by a long Catholic tradition of eremitic monasticism, particularly in the form of anchorites who removed themselves to the fringes of settled communities and served as spiritual guides to those communities through their devotion and hard work. As they explored the sacramentality of American landscape, these authors developed characters that evoke eremitic monastics and ageric (action-oriented) saints (especially Christopher) through their service as spiritual guides to Americans, especially in the wilderness, but also in more settled communities. In so doing, they offered an important means of reconciling Roman Catholicism and the ideal of democratic individualism in Jacksonian America.

In my fourth chapter, “All Is Not Therefore Rottenness That Wears a Cowl,” I examine how Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne moved beyond the notion of “sacred individualism” to assess other aspects of Catholicism’s compatibility with the broader civic ideals of Jacksonian America. Because the increasing democratization of American politics and religion in this period

was not without controversy, I look beyond the ideal of “democracy” into the broader, bedrock ideal of “civic virtue,” which in the American republic had long merged political and religious influences. Because Protestantism, and especially various permutations of Puritanism/Calvinism, played such a dominant role in early ideals of American civic virtue, Roman Catholics faced many obstacles and prejudices—including an increasingly violent nativist movement—in their efforts to stake out places for themselves in Jacksonian American society. Unlike many of their Protestant contemporaries, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were able to speak out in various ways against anti-Catholic nativism, largely through their efforts in their writings to reconcile certain Roman Catholic beliefs and practices with their own ideals of American republican virtue. In Catholicism, all three authors found qualities that not only deserved to be tolerated in America, but could also serve to strengthen and nurture the republic as a whole.

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrates that despite many ongoing cultural conflicts, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne served through their creative works as mediators of the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism in nineteenth-century America, and their writings allow us to better understand how Catholicism could be part of the identity that Jacksonian era Americans were trying to create. In spite of their cultural misgivings and reluctance to fully embrace certain institutional aspects of Catholicism, they were working toward a type of syncretism by acknowledging or implying that the sacramental and sensory aspects of Catholicism could foster a desirable connection with the world and all that dwelt upon it. Catholicism allowed these three authors to dig into the best soil of their hearts, and therein develop a rootedness in virtuous democracy that allowed them to grow spiritually closer to an immanent God incarnate in the American landscape.

“Poetry in the Popish Names”: The Aesthetic and Devotional Appeal of Catholic Sacramentals

Chapter 1

In his January 1850 review of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie* (1847) and *Kavanagh* (1849), Orestes Brownson, a famous nineteenth-century American convert to Catholicism, wrote:

No one is fit to write fiction, unless endowed with imagination; and it is the province of imagination not to convince the reason, but to attract the heart. If our religious novelists could get Protestants to feel the beauty of Catholic customs and Catholic life, they would accomplish much in thus removing a load of prejudice that impairs the proper exercise of reason.... An acquaintance with the interior loveliness of Catholic life may remove the bigotry of Protestants, but reason, prayer and the grace of God alone can convert them to Catholicity.

Brownson, when he referred to “the interior loveliness of Catholic life,” made direct reference to sacramentality, the Catholic Church’s sensory use of material objects that most Protestant denominations had stripped away from their worship. Brownson argued that sacramentality is as essential to good writing as it is to divine worship, because a writer open to sacramentality would thereby “discover beauty and majesty, purity and truth, far beyond a poet’s conception; then would he discover that her ornaments, her music, her paintings, her statues, her aisles, and her bells, are but the offerings of piety and genius which she alone can inspire.” Brownson’s argument, in effect, was that writers interested in aesthetics and in stimulating the senses should be drawn to Catholicism as much as they were drawn to nineteenth-century Romanticism, and for the same reasons. Implicit in his comments, however, was a critique of Protestantism: the stripping down of the sacraments and other more material aspects of Christianity had stripped Christianity of its poetry—its capacity to stir the heart and spirit in the manner of the best works

of literature. For Brownson, literature and religion both require signs of the sacred—sacramentals—to be spiritually uplifting.

Brownson decried Longfellow's Protestantism, but in his zeal, he perhaps did not sufficiently appreciate that Longfellow was "not insensible" to the aesthetic and material wonders of Catholic worship, something remarkable for an American of his day. In an era of American history well known for the anti-Catholic actions of the Know Nothing Party, a time in which novels like *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836) purported to document the horrors of communal monastic life, and a time when in which Americans learned that Irish immigrants fought for the Mexican Army during the Mexican American War in allegiance to faith over adopted nation, the ability of American intellectuals and writers to find any appeal in Roman Catholicism could seem to be surprising indeed. However, the appeal is clearly evident in the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. These three writers, though not overtly pursuing conversion, clearly were attracted to Roman Catholic worship through its use of sacramentals. While sacramentals have a clear aesthetic and sensory appeal, careful analysis reveals that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne grew to understand sacramentals in a fundamentally more Catholic way, as these material objects and rituals held sacred by Catholic worshippers have spiritual resonance in the creative and reflective works of these three American writers. Sacramentals, in other words, opened the door into a surprisingly deep exploration of Roman Catholicism for Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne.

The concept of sacramentality seemed fundamentally at odds with most Protestant traditions of nineteenth-century America, as most Reformed Christian sects had worked not only to eliminate most of the seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, marriage, the Eucharist, confession, last rites, and holy orders) that the Catholic Church defended as channels for God's

grace into the faithful; they had also worked to “purify” their churches of the outward signs of Roman Catholicism. In this paring away, many denominations had removed most, if not all, of the Catholic icons, statues, paintings, crucifixes and other bodily images of Christ, blessed water, incense, and the like. For Roman Catholics, these sacramentals, objects “which bear a resemblance to the sacraments,” were meant to help the faithful recall and reinforce the experience of the sacraments (*Catechism* 1667). For example, the dipping of fingers in holy water, as reflected upon by Hawthorne in a Roman church in 1858, is a sacramental practice: the holy water is the sacramental object that reminds the person using it of his or her baptism, a birth through the sacrament into the community of the faithful. Every time a person uses the sacramental object of blessed water, therefore, that person renews his or her baptism, and thus experiences both a sign of and a medium for grace. Significantly, however, a sacramental holds spiritual power only if its adherent opens him or herself to receiving that power; in blessing a holy medal, for example, a Catholic priest prays for its wearer to maintain the faith that distinguishes the medal from an ordinary piece of jewelry. For nineteenth-century writers like Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, this understanding of sacramentality was in opposition to a faith tradition stripped of objects, images, and their connected aesthetic and spiritual resonance. What these writers and others like them found, however, was that the material culture of religious worship filled a space in the hearts of worshipers, a space that these writers unexpectedly found filled by their experiences with and openness to sacramentals.

Protestant denominations, in their efforts to create reformed or purified churches, replaced the material objects of Catholicism with a more literate, word-based understanding of sacraments, convinced that God’s transcendent presence made many of the sacraments meaningless at best and idolatrous at worst. The emphasis on the written and spoken word as

central to spirituality supported the removal of images, signs, and symbols associated with a pre-literate church. Thus, it was relatively easy for church leaders to eliminate sacramentality in exchange for the reading of and pastoral response to Biblical texts, creating the text-rich legacy of American Puritanism and of other reformed churches that forms a vital part of American literature. This transformation is well documented by several scholars, such as Candy Gunther Brown, whose *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (2004) argues that nineteenth-century evangelicals sought a kind of “textual community” to fill a void created by the restless mobility of nineteenth-century society, and that “scattered individuals and congregations longed for a sense of connection with a timeless, placeless, unified church” (12). According to Brown, nineteenth-century American Protestant churches hoped that texts could fill the void created with the removal of sacramentals and other material aspects of worship that they associated with the corruption and decadence of Romanism. Similarly, David Paul Nord posits in *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (2004) that the Protestant commitment to evangelical literacy, rooted in the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, led to “New England’s special penchant for print” (14). Both Brown and Nord document the centrality of the printed Bible as key to a shared faith tradition, with Nord noting that though “[t]he Bible was imagined to be a plain text, its meaning transparent and open to the direct perception of ordinary readers,” the result of this new emphasis on the written and spoken word led to “a proliferation of ministers and flood of print that has never subsided” (15). It seems that American Protestant church leaders, despite their fears of old world corruption, recognized the essential nature of sacramentals when considering the efforts they invested into replacing them with printed Bibles and various forms of religious tracts, meetings, and traveling preachers.

As this shift to literate reformed churches was underway, Catholics maintained a more material understanding of sacramentality, one that was invigorated by the Catholic Reformation of the sixteenth century, during which the Catholic Church sought to crack down on its internal abuses and accentuate its understanding of the beauty of both literate and signatory aspects of worship. Protestant churches tended to find God's grace through the Word, and only through the Word, but Catholics found God's grace manifest through both the material and the scriptural worlds. As Brown observes, the Catholic Church "encouraged a religious culture in which the Word was experienced orally and visually" (42). I would further her argument by noting that senses other than sight and hearing were stimulated as well, whether through the smell of incense, the feeling of water on the skin, or the consumption of consecrated bread and wine. Brown observes that "Catholics envisioned Christian community as centered squarely in the church, superintended by a priest who set apart particular spaces, times, and practices as sacred" (42). This setting apart of sacred experiences is critical to understanding the importance of sacramentality, particularly as it began to appeal to American writers like Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne.

Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were, like most of their American contemporaries, accustomed to the text-centered worship common to the nineteenth-century American Protestantism, and had fairly limited experiences with American Catholics and Catholicism. For these writers, their sojourns in Europe brought them direct exposure to Catholic sacramentals and rituals as they visited famous places in the Old World, and with this direct exposure came changing attitudes, as revealed in each author's writings. American encounters with European Catholic sacramentals and other aspects of Catholic worship were not uncommon, as many well-to-do nineteenth-century Americans considered the "Grand Tour" of Europe to be a formative



part of their social and educational experiences. However, these three writers moved beyond experiencing sacramentality as tourists, and found a deeper sustenance and sense of heightened devotion through the sensory nature of Catholic sacramentals and rituals.

As noted earlier, the most significant scholarly treatment of the nineteenth-century American understanding of European Catholic tradition and ritual is Jenny Franchot's *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (1994), but Franchot's work, though vitally important, fails to fully realize the spiritual significance of American writers' encounters with sacramentals. As noted in the introduction of this study, Franchot focuses in her study on "Romanism," essentially using the word to express her understanding of an American Protestant construct of "Otherness," noting that "[t]he Protestant American encounter with the estranged world of Catholicism provoked a characteristically conflicted response of repulsion and longing, of fear of corruption and a hunger for communion" (xxiii). In developing her study, however, Franchot interprets this "hunger for communion" as less spiritual than aesthetic, with Protestants understanding Romanism as a "seducer of the heart and senses more than the soul" (182). For Franchot, writers like Longfellow and Hawthorne, among the many others she considers, "were drawn to Catholicism as a site not for truth so much as expressivity—an aesthetic and psychological region that enabled their literary production" (197) by providing an exotic background, elaborate scenery, and vividly Gothic devices to adapt to their writings. Franchot's work would be greatly enhanced by acknowledging that the spiritual realm had importance to these three writers and to many nineteenth-century Americans, Protestant and Catholic alike. Franchot is quick to argue that Protestant observers of Catholic ceremonies and rites were essentially acting as voyeurs, seeking "controlled spectacles" (191) as tourists-turned-anthropologists, making detached, "ethnographic" observations of priests and worshippers that

set them distinctly apart from the gullible European Catholics in attendance who were foolish enough to believe it all (189). Franchot's study reveals, in other words, her own skepticism of religious belief, and seems to assume that these intellectual American writers and artists shared a late twentieth-century agnostic perspective on worship. Though there is some evidence that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were drawn somewhat by theatrics and voyeurism, they also moved into a spiritual realm themselves, because spirituality was important to them. Their writings reveal that they wrestled with great spiritual questions as a result of their experiences with Catholicism, drawn into deeper interrogation of matters of faith through the sensory appeal of sacramentals. The writings of Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne reveal that the sensory aspects of Catholicism were not just treated as props or window dressings; Catholic sacramentals allowed these writers to explore serious questions of spirituality.

Perhaps the best entrance into an analysis of how nineteenth-century American writers approached Catholic sacramentality is through a discussion of the Mass, a ritual filled with the use of sacramental items that set it apart from a purely sermon- and scripture-based service. While all three authors discussed in this study attended Mass and wrote about their experiences, the most fully developed discussion of the Mass in a literary work occurs in Cooper's *The Heidenmauer; or, the Benedictines – A Story of the Rhine* (1832). Cooper's description is culturally significant for two key reasons. First, his description of the Catholic Mass acknowledges that the rituals may seem unfamiliar, even strange, to his readership, yet he invites his readers to consider the Mass with open minds, "not disguising or affecting a single emotion because our fathers happened to take refuge in this western world, to set up altars of a different shade of faith" (154-155; ch. 8). Cooper's invitation, thus, is to experience the sensory, sacramental aspects of the Mass through reading. Cooper's invitation, issued just four years

before the publication of *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, thus offers a significant, if overlooked, counterpoint to the development of Romanist xenophobia in American culture. Cooper's openness to this exploration of Catholic ritual was likely grounded in his own religious upbringing in an Episcopalian congregation, where the rites of Catholicism would have seemed less alien than in a Puritan-based Reformed tradition. Though some Cooper biographers argue that for much of his life, his religious devotion was "a kind of cultural piety" rather than a deeply ingrained aspect of his being (Railton 246), others see in Cooper "a prolonged and highly personal quest for a definitely Christian faith" that could well explain his openness to and interest in Catholic worship (Frederick 1). In *The Heidenmauer*, a novel set around a powerful Benedictine abbey in the sixteenth-century German Palatine, Cooper's extended use of the Mass, "a ceremony addressed equally to the feelings and the senses" (145; ch. 8), reveals the appeal of sacramental, sensory elements of Roman Catholicism to Cooper and, he anticipates, to his readers.

In *The Heidenmauer*, Cooper opens his sketch of Catholic Mass with descriptions of the abbey bells, at which "all the pious had bent, in common, wherever the sounds happened to reach their ears, in praise and thanksgiving" (145; ch. 8). As even the cows on the hills surrounding the Abbey, "relieved from their weekly toil," marked the Sabbath by "ruminating in contentment" (145; ch. 8), "the deep-toned bells of the abbey called the flock to its usual fold" (145-146; ch. 8). Cooper was drawing on his recent experience as an American tourist at the Benedictine monastery in Einsiedeln, where he noted that the bells elicited two responses: the faithful, "[o]bedient to the summons" (146; ch. 8), gathered for worship, while "[a] crowd appeared also in the direction of the gorge, for devotion, superstition, or curiosity, never failed to attract a multitude on these occasions, to witness mass in that celebrated conventual chapel" (146; ch. 8).

Acknowledging that the crowds included “equally the sceptical [sic] and the believing” (146; ch. 8), Cooper thus reveals the powerful resonance of the bells as a call, whether to worshipers or to (likely American) tourists, to Catholics and to non-Catholics alike. In *The Heidenmauer*, Cooper uses the bells to summon a procession of worshippers and casual observers, creating a means to introduce a wide variety of characters to his audience. After presenting these characters to his readers, Cooper returns to his description of the Mass setting, focusing upon the chapel into which everyone has filed and taken seats, awaiting the start of the Mass. Cooper notes that the Abbey church was “so imposing to the senses, and so pleasing to the admirers of solemn effect” (150; ch. 8), describing its impressive size, its altars, its frescoes, its elaborate wood carvings, and its grave markers. Significant here is that Cooper, without saying directly that the space is consecrated, is nonetheless creating in his novel a distinctly sacred space with these sensory markers; the Chapel’s “hallowed precincts” (151; ch. 8) are unlike any other setting because the space itself is made holy, and the architecture and bells signal this holiness to the faithful and the curious alike.

After creating a hushed, imposing cathedral scene, Cooper moves his narration in *The Heidenmauer* closer to the opening of the Mass itself. He first describes how the monastic community “swept through the aisles, in stately silence” and formal robes (151; ch. 8), the reverent atmosphere broken only briefly by the entrance of Count Emich of Hartenburg, one of the key characters of the novel (151-152; ch. 8). After getting the Mass underway, Cooper as narrator must pause to further explain his intentions, perhaps anticipating his readers bristling at what they likely perceive as nothing more than “vain mummeries” (153; ch. 8). To prime his audience for a more open-minded look at the Mass, Cooper announces that “we shall proceed to describe the manner of the mass, as a ceremony, that ninety-nine in a hundred of our readers

never have had, nor probably ever will have, an opportunity of witnessing” (153; ch. 8). In other words, Cooper invites his readers along, whether as observers, tourists, or skeptics, as his narrative “endeavor[s] to represent things as they have been seen, not disguising or affecting a single emotion because our fathers happened to take refuge in this western world, to set up altars of a different shade of faith” (153-154; ch. 8). Slowly and carefully, Cooper is building anticipation for the description of the Mass itself, almost placing his impatient readers with him in a church pew, perhaps fidgeting a bit, waiting for the ceremony to begin. At the same time, Cooper is building an understanding of the sacramentals as critical to understanding the Mass, focusing as he does on the “deep and sublime devotion in its rites” (153; ch. 8).

Returning to the opening of Mass, Cooper shifts from the sensory effect of the bells to the musical opening of the service. Observing that “the chant of the monks, and the tones of the organ, broke in a deep and startling appeal to the soul” (154; ch. 8), Cooper details how instruments “lent their aid to increase the solemn melody of powerful masculine voices...to comprise but one deep, grand, and grave sound of praise” (154; ch. 8). Cooper presents the monastic community participating in the Mass as wholly spiritual in purpose, exhibiting “[l]ives dedicated to the practices of their community, [which] had drilled the brotherhood into perfection” (154; ch. 8) of voices and, by implication, of their entire spiritual lives, with no hesitation expressed about monasticism. Cooper continues by observing that “[a]s the service proceeded, the zeal of the brotherhood seemed to increase” (154; ch. 8) until “there were moments when the tones of the instruments, full and united as they were, appeared drowned in the blending of a hundred human aspirations” (155; ch. 8). Clearly, here, the musical voices, from which emerge a soloist whose voice is “nearest allied to the supernatural” (155; ch. 8), mesmerizing the congregation and causing Count Emich to drop his sword, thus unite the

listeners with the supernatural, the heavenly, the perfect, allowing them to transcend their humanity, if only for the duration of a song.

As Cooper continues his observations, his discussion of the spoken and written word—the parts of the Mass likely to be most comparable to the Protestant worship experience he considers familiar to his readers—lead him to temper his praise somewhat. Cooper, in particular, seems troubled by the celebration of the Mass in Latin, arguing that using “prayers in a tongue that defeated their object” (155; ch. 8) made the words and actions of the celebrant turn into “gesticulations which lost their significance by being blended and indistinct” (155; ch. 8), indicating that the language barrier seemed to undo the spiritual edification of the chanting, which was, however, likely in Latin as well. For Cooper, words alone, when stripped of the sensory power of music, were empty: “[w]orship lost its character of inspiration, by assuming that of business, neither attracting the imagination, influencing the feelings, nor yet sufficiently convincing the reason” (156; ch. 8). These failings of the Latin rite, however, are balanced somewhat by the inspiring sermon given by “Father Johan, a brother known for the devotedness of his faith and the severity of his opinions” (156; ch. 8). Interestingly, Father Johan’s sermon sounds remarkably like something out of a Puritan meetinghouse; Father Johan “painted, in strong and ominous language, the dangers of the sinner, narrowed the fold of the saved within metaphysical and questionable limits, and made frequent appeals to the fears and to the less noble passions of his audience” (156; ch. 8). The “sharp, angry, and denunciatory address” seems to alienate the congregation, with most people instead “gazing at the monuments and other rich decorations of the place” (156; ch.8), seemingly caught up in the visual sensory stimulation of the church rather than in the limitations of the fire and brimstone message of the textual aspects of Catholic worship. One wonders, therefore, if Cooper is critiquing both Catholic and Protestant

sermonizers alike with their harsh messages, with Father Johan sounding more like a Jonathan Edwards or other minister familiar to a New England readership.

As the Mass description in *The Heidenmauer* draws to a close, then, it seems that Catholic worship is purest and most holy when it engages the senses, and loses some of its ability to engage the spirit when it relies solely on texts. In other words, for Cooper, the spiritual benefits of Catholicism rest in the sacramental elements of worship that stir the soul—the very elements that Protestants rejected. The spoken words—what Protestants retain—fail to sufficiently bring worshipers into a spiritually open and awakened realm. At the conclusion of the service, however, Father Johan is balanced by the emergence of Father Arnolph, “towards whom many longing eyes had been cast” (157; ch. 8), offering to the congregants “doctrine, like that of the divine being he served, [that] was charitable and full of love” (157; ch. 8). Father Arnolph’s words, directed in the novel at Count Emich, seem equally targeted at those readers suspicious of Catholicism:

Such is the church in its purity, my hearers, let the errors, the passions, or the designs of man pervert it in what manner they may. The faith I preach is of God, and it partakes of the godlike qualities of his divine essence. He who would impute the sins of its mistaken performance to aught but his erring creatures, casts odium on that which is instituted for his own good; and he who would do violence to its altars, lifts a hand against a work of omnipotence! (157-158; ch. 8)

In this passage, Cooper returns to the essence of sacramentality: the sounds and the sights that stir the spirit are “the church in its purity” (157; ch. 8) not the dreadfully off-putting sermons or the muttered prayers of “his erring creatures” (158; ch. 8). Sacramentals bring transcendent beauty and inspire true devotion as they stir the emotions deep within each person present, whether skeptic or believer, participant or tourist.

Cooper’s portrayal of the Mass in *The Heidenmauer* is remarkably sympathetic to the possibilities of spiritual edification through sacramentals, observing that they hold more than Old

World quaintness or charm, and perhaps open a door into a heightened sense of devotion. In this portrayal, Cooper was almost certainly drawing upon his personal experience at Einsiedeln Abbey in Switzerland on September 12, 1828, a visit upon which he reflected in a letter published in *Sketches of Switzerland* (1836), now better known as *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland*. Cooper remarks of his visit to the Abbey that he could “scarcely recall a day of stronger or more varied sensations than this” (167; Letter 16). After briefly describing the origins of both the Abbey itself and the miracles associated with the shrine to Our Lady of the Hermits, Mary of Einsiedeln (167-168; Letter 16), he notes that the prevailing view of the time is “that this particular species of devotion, or, indeed, most of those ancient observations of the church of Rome, which depend more on tradition than on doctrine and revelation, are fast falling into disrepute with all classes of society” (168; Letter 16). Cooper, in other words, was visiting the shrine as a tourist, curious about local traditions and customs, but not consciously seeking a spiritual encounter.

Nevertheless, Cooper discovered an unexpected range of feelings upon encountering the pilgrims arriving at the shrine, first hearing their “poetical and plaintive” prayers (168; Letter 16), seeing them drink from all of the spouts emerging from the fountain in the front of the church “in order to make sure of pressing their lips to the one which is supposed to have been consecrated by the lips of the Saviour” (168; Letter 16), and watching them as they “entered the building, serious, earnest, and devout, and knelt before the shrine” (168-169; Letter 16). Cooper was impressed first by the sheer numbers of visitors to the shrine, seeing “hundreds of pilgrims [who] were kneeling on the pavement. . . . Many maintained this position for hours, and all appeared to be absorbed in subdued devotion” (169; Letter 16). Cooper arrived in Einsiedeln at a fortuitous time for witnessing pilgrims, who were arriving in large numbers to commemorate the



consecration of the shrine on September 14, 948, celebrating the date when, as Cooper notes, “[t]he Saviour is stated to have visited the shrine dedicated to his mother” (167; Letter 16), a visit of which Cooper seems skeptical, particularly of Christ’s stopping to drink at the fountain. As Cooper writes about his visit in his letter, the skepticism he seems to express at the fountain fades away, replaced by unanticipated feelings of “reverence, pity, admiration, and awe” at the throngs of humble pilgrims gathered to express their devotion (169; Letter 16). Cooper willingly accepts that the space is consecrated, stating “I knew that the temple was God’s, and that his Spirit was present” as “the mystery of the incarnation never appeared so sublime, and, if I may so express it, so palpable, as at that moment” (169; Letter 16). Cooper, who expected to visit as a tourist and who anticipated that “my reason [would show] how fearfully near idolatry these poor people had approached” (169; Letter 16), discovered instead that their practices were not, in his eyes, the idolatrous practices of a superstitious and uneducated peasantry. Cooper seems surprised indeed by what he feels stirring in his own heart:

I believe few men are less under the influence of superstition, or a dread of any sort connected with spiritual agencies, than myself, and yet I found it necessary to draw largely upon my Protestant insensibilities, in order to gaze at the bronzed countenance of Mary with indifference. . . . It was impossible to witness the pain and labour with which these poor people had traversed plains and mountains to reach the shrine, the subdued and imploring air with which they approached the image, and the fixed attitudes of reverence and deprecation, mingled with a strange sentiment of affectionate reliance, that all assumed, without feeling how insignificant shades in creed become, when devotion really occupies the soul. In short, I was in no humour to be critical, and felt strongly disposed to receive everything as it was offered, and as it wished to appear. (169-170; Letter 16)

This passage highlights the unexpectedly transformative aspect of Cooper’s visit to the shrine of Maria Einsiedeln. In short, Cooper was inadvertently drawn into the sacramental experience of a pilgrimage, and in that moment, felt “how insignificant shades in creed become” in the face of authentic worship, which he described as “devotion [that] really occupies the soul.” As a result,

he consciously chose to join, as much as possible, in the pilgrimage, in order to “receive everything as it was offered and as it wished to appear.” As for Cooper, it seems that perhaps he wished to be like the dignified pilgrims who “were perfect models of manly submission to an omnipotent and incomprehensible Power” who surrounded him, “bending on the stones with naked knees” (180; Letter 16). The purity of devotion inspired by this sacramental and sensory experience of a pilgrimage to a sacred shrine clearly shaped Cooper’s understanding of Catholic worship.

Though Cooper’s visit to Einsiedeln transformed his thinking about devotion amongst common worshippers, his letter reveals that he still held conflicted feelings about the Abbey’s monastic community, feelings that also spilled over into *The Heidenmauer*. Cooper had noticed the monks above the church floor in a gallery area “apparently looking down, in watchfulness, at the devotees; but, though picturesque to the eye, their flitting about in this manner had recalled me from more pleasing thoughts, to recollections of monkish craft, and I found their presence unseasonable” (180; Letter 16). In all likelihood, the “monkish craft” to which he refers evoked sordid tales of monasteries as brothels or other Gothic tales of intrigue, ideas familiar to his American peers and readers. After this “twilight” procession “to chant the offices” (170; Letter 16), Cooper then observed the pilgrims bringing “boxes of beads, images, and other similar articles, to a monk who remained in the shrine” (171; Letter 16) so that the monk touched the items to the Black Madonna, then “returned them to their several owners to be preserved as relics” (171; Letter 16). Cooper’s objection to this scene was not to the faithful themselves, but to the monk’s demeanor, as Cooper disappointedly notes that “[n]othing could be more business-like than the whole process” (171; Letter 16). It seems that Cooper saw in the pilgrims a level of devotion and reverence, both for their own objects made holy by contact with the shrine, and for

the experience itself, while the monk seemed to take for granted what must have struck Cooper as a particularly holy or sacred function. At this moment, Cooper confesses in his letter that the monk reminded him of a pastry vendor in Paris (171; Letter 16). As “[s]uch ludicrous associations make sad inroads on the touching and the beautiful” (171; Letter 16), Cooper realized that his spiritual reverie was broken. Thus, Cooper left the Abbey church at Einsiedeln “devoured by skepticism” (171; Letter 16), but no less touched by the experience.

Cooper’s deepening understanding of Catholicism is apparent when examining novels he wrote before and after his visit to Einsiedeln. His portrayal of Catholic characters in *The Prairie; A Tale* (1827), written before his transformative visit to the shrine of the Black Madonna, demonstrates a more limited, less accommodating understanding of sacramentals and their impact on devotees. For example, Cooper’s reflection on the courtship of the Protestant Yankee Middleton and the Louisiana creole Inez notes that after their engagement, “[r]eligion formed a stubborn and nearly irremovable obstacle” to their union, as Middleton suffered the “systematic, vigorous, and long sustained” efforts of Father Ignatius, Inez’ priest, to convert him to Catholicism (158; ch. 15). Middleton endured these efforts “with the patience and humility of a martyr” (158; ch. 15), but “with no weapons more formidable than common sense . . . he never failed to repulse the father with something of the power with which a nervous cudgel player would deal with a skillful master of the rapier” (158; ch. 15). As Father Ignatius grew more frustrated with Middleton and the larger “inroad of Protestants” into Louisiana, he ordered that his church’s relics be “concealed from profane eyes,” and “his people were admonished not to speak of miracles before a race that not only denied their existence but who had even the desperate hardihood to challenge their proofs” (159; ch. 15). In Father Ignatius, Cooper presents what seems to be a caricature of superstitious Romanism, but he is somewhat more sympathetic

towards Inez, as when she is held captive by the Sioux chief Mahtoree after being kidnapped onto the western prairie:

every additional misfortune fell with a diminished force on her, seemingly, devoted head. . . . But . . . there were at times such an air of pious resignation, such gleams of meek but holy hope, lighting her countenance, as might well have rendered it a question whether the hapless captive was most a subject of pity, or admiration. All the precepts of Father Ignatius were riveted in her faithful memory, and not a few of his pious visions were floating before her imagination. Sustained by so sacred resolutions, the mild, the patient, the confiding girl was bowing her head to this new stroke of Providence with the same sort of meekness as she would have submitted to any other prescribed penitence for her sins, though nature, at moment, warred powerfully, with so compelled a humility. (286-287; ch. 26)

Inez is, in this description, an almost ethereal, hyper-effeminate caricature of Catholic devotion and innocence. She clearly reads her circumstances in light of stories of the saints and martyrs, but here Cooper seems focused on the words, not on the sacramentals, as her centering stronghold for her faith during her captivity. In other words, there is nothing particularly Catholic in this passage, though one could read it very easily as painting Inez as resigned to the possibility of dying as a noble Christian martyr. Cooper, when writing *The Prairie*, lacked the familiarity with sacramentals necessary to portray a character as more specifically Catholic, rather than just as a pious, meek, faithful Christian woman, but his sympathetic treatment could possibly indicate an interest in Catholicism, or at least a willingness to look more closely at its practices. While Gary J. Williams perhaps goes too far in arguing that “Catholicism in *The Prairie* is a joke, an assemblage of laughably irrational beliefs which serve to enervate their devotees” (154), Father Ignatius and Inez do seem rather like stock characters, lacking sufficient dimension in the depiction of their faith to distinguish it as fully Catholic.

While Cooper’s Catholic characters before his trip to Switzerland seem rather one-dimensional, his Catholic characters developed after his first-hand experience with Catholic worship reveal both a focus on sacramentals and a level of development indicative of Cooper’s

deeper interest in the different manifestations of Catholic devotion, both in positive and negative lights. For example, he creates in *The Heidenmauer* a pious woman, Ulrike, whose visit to the Holy Hermit, the anchorite who lives in a hut near the Abbey, reveals a more complex aspect of Catholic devotion. The Holy Hermit, an individual whom villagers and pilgrims visit seeking “comfort and peace for thine own soul” (255; ch. 16), lives in isolation as an anchorite away from the monastic community, sanctified by his solitary existence, as noted when Ulrike tells her nurse Ilse “that one blessing of his is as good as two from the Abbey; for of him no harm is known, whereas there is much reputed of Limburg that had better not be true” (247; ch. 15). Ulrike visits the Holy Hermit, a man “sworn to mortifications and sorrow” (256; ch. 16), recognizing at once that he is, in fact, her former fiancé, Baron Odo von Rittenstein, whose youthful indiscretions led to his banishment from the community (249-250; ch. 15; 258; ch. 16). His most egregious offence was blasphemy, for Odo had joined with “young and heated reformers of abuses” (261; ch. 16) in the church and, in a moment “heated with wine, and maddened with anger,” he “did violence, in presence of my armed followers, to those sacred elements which Catholics so reverence” (261; ch. 16). Fleeing the Abbey of Limburg brought Odo no relief from his grief and remorse over trampling the consecrated host (261; ch. 16), so he atones for the damages he caused to the church through a life of ascetic deprivation, ministering to others as an anchorite, and through seeking forgiveness from God through midnight mass offered on the anniversary of his act of desecration (262-263; ch. 16). In the church, Odo sat at the railing before the altar “with his eyes fixed on the golden vessel that contained the consecrated host he had once outraged—the offence which he had now come, as much as in him lay, to expiate” (270; ch. 16). Cooper’s understanding of Catholic devotion here has shifted greatly in focus, centering on sacramentals, both the sacramentally penitent anchorite and, most

prominently, a consecrated host that lies at the center of the anchorite's spiritual transformation. The sacramental objects provide more direct access to the divine, as is clear both in the seeking of blessings and in the life-destroying consequences of irreverence towards a consecrated sacramental like the host displayed in a golden monstrance on the altar at the Abbey of Limburg.

Scholars have noted that *The Heidenmauer* marks an important turning point in Cooper's sympathy with Roman Catholicism. Williams, in "Cooper and European Catholicism," recognizes that in this novel, Cooper's treatment of Catholicism focuses "not on its degradation, but rather on its glory, beauty, and worthiness" (153). He further argues that Cooper wrote *The Heidenmauer* when "for the first time in his life, [he had] come to appreciate the potential of the Roman Catholic Church to foster and intensify piety" (153). Extending Williams's reading allows for the conclusion that for Cooper, Catholicism held a spiritual appeal, offering qualities that were lost in the Protestant removal of the tangible sacramental aspects of devotion. In a conference paper, "James Fenimore Cooper and Catholicism," Henry P. Roberson builds upon Williams's work, but significantly recognizes that "Cooper unexpectedly found a powerful spirituality that spoke to him" when he encountered Catholic worship. Roberson notes that Cooper believed "that God reveals himself in beauty," and that Cooper's understanding of beauty as divine, and that all people are reflections of God's creation, "is profoundly Catholic." Both Williams and Roberson, therefore, recognize that in finding beauty in Catholicism, Cooper moved beyond a mere Romantic recognition of aesthetics into a deeper spiritual pursuit, and a further focus on Catholic sacramental and devotion in Cooper's works allows for an even deeper understanding of the spiritual value of Cooper's writings about Catholicism.

Cooper demonstrates a similar appreciation of sacramental devotion in *The Bravo: A Tale* (1831), set in early eighteenth-century Venice, focusing in particular on the sacramental act of

confession. Antonio Vecchio is a fisherman whose intense devotion to Saint Anthony fortifies him to plead for the release of his grandson, a fourteen-year-old boy conscripted into the Venetian navy in the galley of a ship doing battle with the Turks (79-81; ch. 5). Faith fuels Antonio to carry his request from a senator to the doge, and then he rather miraculously wins the city's annual gondola race in order to ask for his grandson as his prize. Antonio's continued requests anger the rulers of Venice, who decide that he is a threat to the state who needs to be eliminated. The senators, thus, send Father Anselmo, a Carmelite priest, on a state gondola to hear Antonio's confession. Father Anselmo, unaware that the state intends to kill Antonio, hears Antonio's story of his efforts to regain his grandson, "affecting a severity he could not feel" (229; ch. 16) as the pure-hearted fisherman accounts for his sins. Antonio confesses to Father Anselmo that he "cursed" the senators, "for to me they seemed men without feeling for the poor, and heartless as the marbles of their own palaces" (230; ch. 16). Father Anselmo urges Antonio to "pardon the error of the patricians, in a contrite spirit for thine own sins" (230; ch. 16), and when Antonio does so, Father Anselmo absolves Antonio of all of his sins:

The Carmelite arose and stood over the kneeling Antonio, with the whole of his benevolent countenance illuminated by the moon. Stretching his arms towards the stars, he pronounced the absolution, in a voice that was touched with pious fervor. The upward expectant eye, with the withered lineaments of the fisherman, and the holy calm of the monk, formed a picture of resignation and hope, that angels would have loved to witness. (230; ch. 16)

After bestowing a benediction upon Antonio, Father Anselmo watches helplessly while the Venetian gondoliers overturn Antonio's boat as they speed away, drowning the aged fisherman in the canal. Father Anselmo returns from his errand shocked at the intentional drowning of Antonio, stating "I have witnessed the death of one who was better fitted to live, as happily he was better fitted to die, than those who pronounced his doom" (235; ch. 17). But even the treacherous villains within the Venetian government reveal something about the power of

Catholic sacramentals. Though they are the most powerful men in Venice, they dare not kill their enemy without allowing him the opportunity to confess his sins and thereby right his soul with God, lest denying him that opportunity put their own souls in peril. Men who are unconcerned with Old Testament prohibitions against murder still revere the Catholic sacrament of confession. Not least amongst its powers is the ability to right any wrongs committed on earth; as Father Anselmo says, “[m]en may pity him who hath wrongfully undergone the anger of the world, but the church will only pronounce pardon on him who confesseth his errors, with a sincere admission of their magnitude” (227; ch. 16). Clearly, Cooper has focused his interest in Catholic devotion on the awe-inspiring redemptive powers seen in the sacraments, demonstrating an interest almost certainly linked to his travels in Europe and his resulting encounters with sacramental devotion.

Much like Cooper, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was attracted to a deeper study of Catholic sacramentals, drawn in by the experience of seeing Mass celebrated in Europe and driven to explore the spiritual meaning of the Catholic rites he witnessed. Also like Cooper, Longfellow had not grown up in a strict Reformed tradition; Wagenknecht describes Longfellow’s childhood as characterized by an “earnest and benevolent” influence, in which “the Puritan high mindedness survived, shorn of all its early harshness and fanaticism” (*Longfellow* 4). As an adult, Longfellow gravitated to Unitarianism, a religion whose universalizing tendencies allowed him the freedom to explore Roman Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism in his works. Even so, Longfellow’s interest in Catholicism is particularly noteworthy for its longevity and development, and while Irmischer sees this interest as “not [in] the practice but the idea of it” (178), Longfellow’s writings in actuality reveal a deep engagement with the sensory, sacramental practices of Catholicism. Longfellow documented his European travels in *Outre-Mer; A*



*Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* (1835), a travelogue that offers memories and reflections of the European tour that Longfellow made between 1826 and 1829 in preparation for his teaching assignment at Bowdoin College. In *Outre-Mer*, Longfellow offers contemplative sketches of sacramental Catholic practices that made an impression upon him.

As does Cooper in *The Heidenmauer*, Longfellow in *Outre-Mer* enters into his discussions of Catholic Mass through the pealing of bells across a landscape. In “Jacqueline,” a chapter devoted to the final days of a young girl in Auteuil, France, Longfellow opens with Jacqueline asking for her bedroom window to be opened to “a slight breeze [that] wafted to the sick chamber of Jacqueline the song of the birds, the rustle of the leaves, and the solemn chime of the church-bells” (71-72). Jacqueline requests her missal, and participates in the Mass service from her death-bed, the distance insufficient to keep her from being “wholly absorbed in her devotions” (72), which she expresses in part by kissing a crucifix and making the sign of the cross on her own person. The sound of the bells is soon replaced by the sounds of the Mass itself, with the distant voices of the priest and the congregation, then “the thrilling chant of the Catholic service broke upon the ear” (72). The “full, harmonious, majestic” chant and the “trembling, thrilling” organ music (72) impact Jacqueline, for Longfellow notices that in this scene of “touching pathos,” her spirituality is nourished: “[t]he soul of the sick girl seemed to kindle into more ardent devotion, and to be rapt away to heaven in the full harmonious chorus” (73). Longfellow continues his description of this faintly audible Mass, noting that “the invalid seemed entranced in prayer” when once again a bell rang, this time “announc[ing] the elevation of the host” (73). Tearful at the “triumphant peal of bells” marking the distribution of the Eucharist that resonate through her sick-chamber, and focused in “deep adoration and penitence upon an image of the Saviour on the cross” (73), Jacqueline demonstrates the transcendent power

of the sacramental liturgy. At the conclusion of the Mass, Jacqueline tells her mother, who knelt at the window during the service, that “the hymn of adoration and entreaty I have just heard, I shall never hear again on earth” (74). Jacqueline instructs her mother to hear the Mass from the same location on the next Sunday, stating “I shall not be here, upon this bed of pain and sickness; but when you hear the solemn hymn of worship, and the beseeching tones that wing the spirit up to God, think, mother, that I am there” (74). The sounds of the celebration of the sacrament, it seems, thin the barrier between earth and heaven; just as Jacqueline’s soul seems “rapt away to heaven” during the Mass, so can her mother’s soul shed the bonds of earth, briefly, when hearing the bells, chants, and prayers of the Mass that “wing the spirit up to God” (74).

As Longfellow’s account of Jacqueline’s illness continues, he moves deeper into his exploration of Catholic rites when he recounts how Jacqueline “expressed a wish to receive the last sacraments of the church” (75). Longfellow notes that once again, a bell, this time carried by an altar boy, signals the imminent arrival of the sacraments, this time carried by an altar boy, and “the passing of these symbols of the Catholic faith” (75). The “symbols” Longfellow references are carried by the priest, who responds to the summons by bringing a consecrated host and holy oil needed for in the sacrament of extreme unction, commonly known as the last rites. The priest, followed by members of the community bearing candles, enters into Jacqueline’s sick-chamber, with the community members kneeling behind him at this solemn moment. The priest offers Jacqueline the opportunity to confess her sins before her death, so “that thy sins may be forgiven, and thy name recorded in the book of life” (76). Waving the kneeling villagers out of the room, the priest hears her “confession of a meek and lowly heart” (76), with Longfellow noting that “Jacqueline had few sins to confess” (76), similar to the confession in Cooper’s *The Bravo* of Antonio, at whose mild sins the priest feigned distress. After Jacqueline’s confession, the

community returns to keep vigil in her room as the priest leads her in a final profession of faith, in which she affirms her belief “that by the holy sacraments of the church thy sins are forgiven thee, and that thus thou art made worthy of eternal life” (77). Jacqueline, again like Antonio in Cooper’s *The Bravo*, forgives those who have caused her offense in life, and receives the viaticum from the priest, who, “while the assistant sounded the little silver bell” (78) places “a consecrated wafer” between Jacqueline’s lips and recites, in Latin, the prayer that the body of Christ, present in the transfigured host, guard her soul unto eternal life. Once again, the bell rings, this time for Jacqueline, just as she had heard when listening to Mass earlier. After she receives the viaticum, the priest anoints Jacqueline with holy oil, and Jacqueline, “from the exhaustion caused by the preceding scene, sank into a death-like sleep” (78), prepared by the sacraments to die, with Longfellow ending his narrative of her death by noting that she “passed to a better world than this” (79).

Significant to Longfellow’s story of Jacqueline, of course, is the centrality of the sacraments, moving from a celebration of the Mass into her experience with the last rites, including confession, communion, and anointing. For the invalid Jacqueline, these sacraments seem to connect her soul to heaven, carrying it on the sounds of the ringing bells, chanted prayers, and music. However, these sacraments also allow her to participate fully in her community, something Longfellow describes without commenting upon, though it is worth noting that the universal expression of the sacraments allows Jacqueline to recall the Masses held at her country home before she was brought to Auteuil in search of a cure, and the administration of the last rites allows the faithful in Auteuil to join her in her final act of devotion, an aspect of Catholicism that likely appealed to the universalist tendencies of the Unitarian Longfellow. Most significant in this story is the absence of any sort of critique or questioning by the author: though

Longfellow does not know all of the vocabulary of Roman Catholicism, as when he refers to the altar boy as an assistant, he professes no concerns about the rituals practiced, depicting in sentimental and sympathetic terms the sacramentality of the Catholic Church, here on full display as central to the faith. Longfellow certainly uses traditional Romantic images—such as the sunlight of the Sunday morning in August streaming through the windows as the breeze blows, the songs of the birds joined with the church bells in harmony, with the beautiful Jacqueline propped on a pillow, ethereal and angelic as she nears death—that evoke other deathbed scenes of young girls popular in nineteenth-century sentimental fiction, yet Longfellow uses these details earnestly to connect aesthetic beauty and sacramental ritual to devotion and, even in the face of the death of an innocent and devout child, to communal harmony.

Longfellow, in his sketch of Jacqueline, seems genuinely transfixed by the sensory nature of the sacraments as something that offers a window into a deeper connection to the divine.

It is true, of course, that Longfellow was a Romantic, but those who would dismiss the story of Jacqueline as one of purely aesthetic and emotional appeal would overlook Longfellow's probing of religious devotion through the sacraments, a probing deeper and more serious than other scholars have considered. For example, biographer Edward Wagenknecht, in *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Portrait of an American Humanist* (1966), argues that Longfellow found certain aspects of Catholicism inspirational, and that sympathy helped him create positive portrayals of Catholic piety in *Evangeline* and the Jesuit missionary in *Hiawatha* (199).

Wagenknecht argues, however, that Longfellow “appreciated only the beauty of the seven sacraments, not their intrinsic value” (*Longfellow* 200), a position very much in line with Jenny Franchot's thesis that the appeal of Catholicism to nineteenth-century American Protestants was largely aesthetic. In *Longfellow Redux*, Christopher Irmischer offers a more insightful analysis of

Longfellow's "complicated love affair with Catholicism" (178), developed largely from his reading of *Outre-Mer*. Imscher notices Longfellow's interest in the sensory aspects of Catholicism, referencing his "obsession" with rites, prayers, and rituals, and their role in building communities of harmony and selflessness (178). Imscher's work reads Longfellow as seeking deeper meaning in Catholic forms of devotion than Wagenknecht might acknowledge, but even Imscher's analysis could be more fully developed if extended into Longfellow's poetic and prose works published after *Outre-Mer*. A careful reading of some of Longfellow's later works of poetry and prose reveals that his interest in the sacraments involved far more than just sentimental decoration for the story of Jacqueline or even an attempt at finding a universal metaphor for conveying the Old World appeal of Europe to an American audience; on the contrary, Longfellow, like Cooper, seemed to search for meaning in the sensory nature of the sacraments.

Longfellow perhaps most famously invokes Catholicism in *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847), an epic poem infused with sacramental devotions that fortify the spirit of the Acadian people during their forced exile, just as the last rites fortified young Jacqueline for her passage into death. After the men of Grand-Pré have been informed of the seizure of their property and imminent exile by the British soldiers sent to evict them, Father Felician silences their maledictions against "these foreign soldiers, who seize on our homes and our harvest!" (1.4.457) by urging them to pray instead, resulting in "sobs of contrition [that] succeeded the passionate outbreak" (1.4.480). As the candles "gleamed from the altar," Longfellow notes that they prayed

Not with their lips alone, but with their hearts; and the Ave Maria  
Sang they, and fell on their knees, and their souls, with devotion translated  
Rose on the ardor of prayer, like Elijah ascending to heaven (1.4.484-486).

After this service, the men emerge from the church singing “a chant of the Catholic Missions” that asked for “strength and submission and patience” as they prepared for their voyage into exile, as “the birds in the sunshine above them/ Mingled their notes therewith” (1.5.551-552). Nature thus provides sacred sounds and spaces for the Acadians when they, removed from their village “without bell or book,” continue their devotions (1.5.657). This merging of the natural world into sacred spaces will be developed more fully in the next chapter; here, the significance is that, just as Jacqueline’s priest carried the sacraments out of the church and into the world, so Father Felician and the Acadian community carry their devotions with them out into the world beyond the walls of the burned church. Sacred spaces, in other words, are a necessary part of sacramental devotion, but sacramental devotion can infuse sacredness into an otherwise ordinary space, leading ultimately to a view of the entire natural world as a sacred space.

Longfellow’s interest in sacramentals devoted to the dying, explored in his narrative of Jacqueline’s death, reemerges in his later poetry. For example, in “The Norman Baron” (1845), Longfellow seems to revisit Jacqueline’s death scene, though the dying penitent is the titular character, not an innocent little girl. Nonetheless, the parallels are strong enough to indicate that Longfellow was still pondering the idea of deathbed sacraments ten years after initially writing about them. In “The Norman Baron,” readers encounter the “weak and dying” baron, with a monk seated next to him, reciting prayers. Though a thunderstorm rages outside, “[s]ounds of bells came faintly stealing” into the room, signaling the start of Christmas Mass at the nearby church, followed by Christmas carols sung by the worshippers (lines 13-14). Though the bells and the thought of dying brought joy to the innocent Jacqueline, Longfellow paints a decidedly different image here, with the bells and the chants from the nearby church rising to “the chamber terror-haunted” (26), as the baron fears his approaching death. “Tears upon his eyelids glistened”

(29) as the baron listened to the final lessons of the monk at his bedside. As a flash of lightning reveals “sainted / Figures on the casement painted,” the baron finally chooses to repent of his sins and seek salvation, crying out “Miserere, Domine!” (37-40). Longfellow describes this moment “of deep contrition” as changing the course of the baron’s eternal soul:

Every vassal of his banner,  
 Every serf born to his manor,  
 All those wronged and wretched creatures,  
     By his hand were freed again.  
 And, as on the sacred missal  
 He recorded their dismissal,  
 Death relaxed his iron features,  
     And the monk replied, “Amen!” (49-56)

The baron, in death, receives immortality two-fold: first, his sin of holding so many in bondage is forgiven, and second, the story of his “good deed” upon his deathbed “[b]righter grows and gleams immortal / Unconsumed by moth or rust” (63-64). In the final moments of life, then, the Norman baron’s soul becomes like the innocent Jacqueline’s soul, forgiven of earthly transgressions and prepared for heaven, all via the sacrament of confession.

Longfellow returns to the idea of contrition and confession repeatedly in his poems, reinforcing his interest in a search for deeper spiritual meaning through the sacrament, demonstrating that his interest in Catholic devotion, though inspired by sensory aspects of sacramentals, moves beyond just an aesthetic appreciation of sights and sounds. His 1863 poem “Snow-Flakes” connects the falling snow to the sacrament:

Even as the troubled heart doth make  
 In the white countenance confession,  
 The troubled sky reveals  
 The grief it feels. (lines 9-12).

The natural world here is so intimately connected to the human spirit that the sky shares in the troubles of an individual’s heart. Another poem, “The Student’s Second Tale; The Baron of St.

Castine” from Longfellow’s *Tales from a Wayside Inn* (1863) features a visit to the confessional as a turning point in its narrative. The poem tells the story of the young Baron Castine, who left his home in the Spanish Pyrenees for Acadie, whose letter announcing his marriage to a “dusky Tarratine” (line 136) literally kills his father upon reading it (137-150). Upon the return of the young man with his Native American bride, the community grows to welcome her, “[a]nd in the course of time they learn to bless / The Baron and the Baroness” (248-249). However, the Baron, in the confessional, tells the Curate “[a] secret so dreadful, that by turns / He is ice and fire, he freezes and burns” (250-251): he and his wife never married in a church; instead, “[h]e hath wed her as the Indians wed, / He hath bought her for a gun and a knife!” (255-256). In the confessional, the Curate urges the Baron to make amends: “O Prodigal Son! return once more / To the open arms and the open door / Of the Church, or ever it be too late” (258-261). The Curate, noting that “[t]hings have been mended that were worse” (267), assures the Baron that “[t]hou shalt be wed as Christians wed, / And all things come to a happy end” (270-271). Longfellow ends his poem with a joyful wedding scene, the community and natural world alike celebrating the sacramental bonds of matrimony that unite the Baron and Baroness as the world is made right, thanks to his confession.

For Longfellow, it seems that confession offered an opportunity to Catholics to make amends for a wrong in a way that other sects did not offer, and Longfellow found great appeal in the opportunity to rectify a life lived fully, as shown in “The Baron of St. Castine”: “[b]ut the nearer the dawn the darker the night, / And by going wrong all things come right” (265-266). The idea stayed with Longfellow until he neared the end of his life, as evidenced in “The Sifting of Peter” (1882), his reflection upon how all people are subject to occasions of sin, in that “Satan desires us, great and small, / As wheat to sift us, and we all / Are tempted” (lines 7-9). Though



all humans sin, the solution is to “make Confession” through the “reddening scars” (32-33) of our “[w]ounds of the soul” (31), through which “noble souls, through dust and heat, / Rise from disaster and defeat / The stronger” (37-39). Longfellow, thus, moves from a description of the sacrament of confession in *Outre-Mer* into deeper reflections on the meaning of the sacrament, probing it for deeper meaning and for, possibly, better outcomes for people of faith who seek to reconcile with God before they die.

Longfellow’s interest in the sacrament of confession could have been inspired by its reconciliatory power; in his novel *Kavanagh* (1849), Longfellow seems to write of a possible reconciliation between Protestantism and Catholicism through Reverend Arthur Kavanagh’s efforts to infuse Catholic sacramentals into the worship services of his Protestant church in a small New England village. Kavanagh was raised and educated as a Catholic, but because “books taught him more than their writers meant to teach” (96; ch. 18), he eventually “became a Protestant,” but “[b]y slow degrees, and not by violent spiritual conflicts” (97; ch. 18). Kavanagh’s conversion did not cause him to abandon all of his childhood faith; on the contrary, “[o]ut of his old faith he brought with him all that he had found in it that was holy and pure and of good report” (97; ch. 18). Thus, in his services, he encourages his organist to incorporate “the beautiful symphonies of Pergolesi, Palestrina, and Sebastian Bach” (103; ch. 19) in his belief “that sacred melodies were becoming to sacred themes” (103; ch. 19). As Kavanagh in his ministry works toward “the union of all sects into one church universal” (104; ch. 19), the tolling bells of his church return this Protestant minister to his Catholic roots by reminding him of their sacramental significance. Longfellow further illustrates the varied sacramental uses of bells in a scene where a contemplative Kavanagh sits in his study within the church tower:

he heard the great bell boom above him, and remembered the ages when in all Christendom there was but one church; when bells were anointed, baptized, and prayed

for, that, wheresoever these holy bells should sound, all deceits of Satan, all danger of whirlwinds, thunders, lightnings, and tempests, might be driven away,—that devotion might increase in ever Christian when he heard them,—and that the Lord would sanctify them with his Holy Spirit, and infuse into them the heavenly dew of the Holy Ghost. (104; ch. 19)

This passage suggests a Protestant minister's desire for ringing bells to maintain this level of sacramental power in his community, both to increase devotion amongst the faithful and to ward off evil. The supernatural, sacramental role of the bells is clarified in his observation that they, too, receive sacramental baptism with water and anointing with oil, actions which sanctify them and make their sounds sacramentally holy, capable of sanctifying the people and places over which they sound.

Just as Longfellow maintained an interest in the sacrament of confession that went well beyond aesthetic considerations, so too he maintained a lifelong interest in church bells that extended well beyond *Outre-Mer* and *Kavanagh*. While one might argue that bells are purely sonorous items of aesthetic beauty, a look at Longfellow's writings indicates, again, that there is deeper sacramental significance to the bells that he uses in his works. Longfellow knew that in Catholic worship, bells served different functions, as when church steeple bells alerted communities that a service or prayer was about to begin, whether the Sunday Mass or a daily prayer. Thus, throughout Europe, the steeple bell served as the first true community clock, establishing an order to the day centered on worship. These bells thereby inspired communal prayer both within and without the church walls, as when Jacqueline prays along with the Mass service, or when, as Longfellow describes in *Outre-Mer*, he listens with "solemn pleasure" for the bells at day's end that signal the Ave Maria, as these bells also seem to "call the soul from its worldly occupations to rest and devotion" (292). Other ringing bells served very specific sacramental meanings; when the host was consecrated during the Mass service, the Sanctus bells

alerted the congregation within the church and those outside the church alike that transubstantiation, the supernatural transformation of bread and wine into the consecrated body and blood of Christ, was occurring at that very moment. Longfellow observed the Sanctus bell ringing when he noted that in Jacqueline's room, "[o]nce more the low sound of the bell smote the air, and announced the elevation of the host" (73), inspiring the dying girl to pray fervently at the miraculous culmination of the celebration of the sacrament despite her inability to attend Mass. In this story, Longfellow seems particularly entranced by the idea of the bell carrying the sacred into the secular world, as when the altar boy rings the bell in front of the priest hurrying to Jacqueline's bedside, alerting the community that a consecrated host has left its place of exaltation on the altar and is traveling through the streets. The bell thus alerts those who hear it to light their candles and follow along, joining in the prayers for the dying young Jacqueline.

Longfellow continued his reflections on the significance of sounding bells in many of his poetic works, but over time, the spiritual significance of bells in his poems seems to decline, indicating perhaps a decrease in faith in the waning years of the nineteenth century. Of course, not every bell in every Longfellow poem has a deeper sacramental meaning; in "The Venetian Gondolier" (1832), though the poem elsewhere envisions a novice nun who "sighs/ Her vespers to her rosary" when "[t]he bell swings to its midnight chime" (lines 19-20, 25), there seems to be no clear religious underpinning to a city's bell, which simply marks the hours as a clock with no particular devotional qualities. Similarly, "The Belfry of Bruges" and "Carillon" (1845) focus on the town bell in the Belgian city of Bruges, which has an important secular, though not spiritual, significance. Frequently, though, Longfellow uses church bells in a more particularly Catholic sense, either as a summons to a church service or as the sign of the movement of a sacrament outside church walls. In these cases, church bells indeed resonate with a multi-layered meaning

that goes beyond musicality. For example, in “The Beleaguered City” (1839), the city of Prague is tormented by “a midnight host of spectres pale [sic]” (line 3), which disperse only “when the old cathedral bell / Proclaimed the morning prayer” (17-18). Just as the church bells inspire Jacqueline’s soul to pray, even when far away from the church and unable to attend in body, so do these church bells serve a communal function, for “when the solemn and deep church-bell / Entreats the soul to pray,” the entire community responds, eliminating the supernatural threat, the bell’s sound carrying with it the sanctity of its holy home (41-42). Similarly, the “[s]ounds of bells came faintly stealing” into the death-chamber of “The Norman Baron” (line 14), inspiring him to prepare his soul for death. In Longfellow’s work, bells serve, in some ways, as messengers between earth and heaven, their peals most obviously calling people to prayer and seemingly carrying their prayers to heaven; in “Christmas Bells” (1866), the bells drown out the cannons firing in the Civil War with a powerful message:

God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!  
 The Wrong shall fail,  
 The Right prevail,  
 With peace on earth, good-will to men! (lines 52-55)

For Longfellow, then, bells create a liminal space for those who hear them, the sacramental objects offering a both means of calling the attention of the faithful to the presence of divinity and a means of receiving messages from that divine presence.

While Cooper and Longfellow seemed drawn almost readily into an interest in Catholic sacramentality and devotion, Nathaniel Hawthorne approached Catholicism with a higher degree of wariness. Far more than Cooper or Longfellow, Hawthorne was consciously rooted in a strong Puritan tradition and family lineage that defined him in stark opposition to the aesthetic and material trappings of Roman Catholicism. Scholars have well documented how Hawthorne wrestled with his Puritan ancestry in his writings, perhaps most famously in *The House of the*

*Seven Gables* (1851), so much so that even a casual student of Hawthorne is likely to be aware of how his lineage haunts his creative works. While Hawthorne was certainly uncomfortable about some of his anti-Catholic Puritan foundations, he was nonetheless influenced by the historical weight that they carried, which is evident in his early short stories, such as “Endicott and the Red Cross” (1837). In this tale, John Endicott reads a letter to the people of Salem from the Puritan governor, warning that King Charles I will force upon them “idolatrous forms of English Episcopacy” (*Centenary* 9:439-440; *Twice-Told Tales*), such as a steeple upon their meeting house and an altar surrounded by candles, where they will “hear the sacring-bell [sic], and the voices of Romish priests saying the mass” (*Centenary* 9:440; *Twice-Told Tales*). Endicott hacks his sword through the Red Cross in the English flag, purifying the community of the idolatrous symbol with a shout that “[n]either Pope nor Tyrant hath part in” New England (*Centenary* 9:441; *Twice-Told Tales*). Hawthorne’s narrator records this event as “the first omen of that deliverance which our fathers consummated” (*Centenary* 9:441; *Twice-Told Tales*), praising Endicott for his utter rejection of anything remotely resembling a Catholic sacramental, even the cross upon the flag of the kingdom. Hawthorne lived within the Puritan-haunted towns and spaces of New England until fairly late in his life; he did not leave with his family for a residency in England until he was approaching fifty, and did not arrive on the European continent until several years later. For most of his creative life, Hawthorne had no direct exposure to Catholic ceremony or Catholic culture, in contrast to Cooper, who traveled overseas in his mid-thirties, and Longfellow, who was not even out of his teens when he embarked on his first European tour. All three of these writers were changed by their encounters with European Catholicism, but Hawthorne went into these encounters more set in his Protestant ways and suspicions.

Despite Hawthorne's overall parochialism, it is important to note that much of what he wrote even before his European sojourn reveals a curiosity towards a more sacramental kind of faith than could be found in either the Puritanism of his ancestors or in the Congregationalism and Unitarianism that surrounded him in Salem and Concord. Hawthorne revealed many of his spiritual longings and religious sensibilities in "Sunday at Home" (1837), a sketch whose narrator describes his weekly habit of throwing back the curtains on Sunday morning to gaze at the church next door to his home, thinking about but not participating in any form of organized or communal worship. He rationalizes his lack of attendance by arguing that his "inner man goes constantly to church, while many, whose bodily presence fills the accustomed seats, have left their souls at home" (*Centenary* 9:21; *Twice-Told Tales*). He also explains that he can better enjoy the music from afar, lest the strains of the choir and organ "fall with a weight upon me" (*Centenary* 9:24; *Twice-Told Tales*), pushing aside the fleeting "uneasy sense of neglected privileges and duties" (*Centenary* 9:23; *Twice-Told Tales*) that makes him think, "Oh, I ought to have gone to church!" (*Centenary* 9:23; *Twice-Told Tales*) Hawthorne, through his narrator, establishes himself in this sketch as a voyeur, describing in great detail how he watches the church from morning until night, experiencing what he can vicariously, and using his imagination to fill in the narrative gaps that emerge when, for example, the worshippers are actually worshipping in the church where an outsider can no longer see them. Unable to see inside, the narrator relies on natural sensory elements to construct his description of the church and its services, noting that "a holier brightness marks the day" (*Centenary* 9:20; *Twice-Told Tales*), the "Sabbath sunshine" brighter and more beautiful than on the other days of the week (*Centenary* 9:21; *Twice-Told Tales*). The church bells, "glad, yet solemn," ring, then the narrator observes that "[a]ll the steeples in town are talking together, aloft in the sunny air, and rejoicing

among themselves” (*Centenary* 9:21; *Twice-Told Tales*), suggesting an interesting possibility of unity of purpose, if not of creed. He is able to enjoy the church’s music, but not the sermon, unless the preacher “be indeed a son of thunder” (*Centenary* 9:24; *Twice-Told Tales*), which forces him to imagine what goes on behind the “impenetrable obscurity” (*Centenary* 9:25; *Twice-Told Tales*) of the church doors, until at last he can watch the congregation disperse after the service has ended. Hawthorne’s sketch demonstrates his interest in aesthetic aspects of religion, yet also betrays a distinct reluctance to actively participate in a church community; he seemed instead to prefer taking the bits and pieces that suited him from his observation point afar.

While “Sunday at Home” clearly demonstrates some of Hawthorne’s aesthetic yearnings, it also suggests his reluctance to attend any of the local New England churches that he judged incapable of providing for his spiritual needs. For Hawthorne’s voyeuristic narrator, the sermons preached in churches prove to be unsatisfactory, for in his mind, a sermon “gives birth to a train of thought, and leads me onward” into the deep intellectual and emotional conflicts that he feels working inside him (*Centenary* 9:24; *Twice-Told Tales*). Hawthorne’s listening and reading experience brings his intellect and his emotions into conflict that bubbles up inside of him. Referencing his “Mind and Heart,” the narrator states that

The former pretends to be a scholar, and perplexes me with doctrinal points; the latter takes me on the score of feeling; and both, like several other preachers, spend their strength to very little purpose. I, their sole auditor, cannot always understand them. (*Centenary* 9:24; *Twice-Told Tales*)

In addition to the shortcomings that the narrator anticipates in a Sunday sermon message, he is even more troubled by the shortcomings of the church space itself. He seems most troubled by the fact that the church is only a hub of activity on Sunday: “[f]or six days more, there will be no face of man in the pews, and aisles, and galleries, nor a voice in the pulpit, nor music in the

choir” (*Centenary* 9:26; *Twice-Told Tales*). He therefore wonders whether it was “worth while [sic] to rear this massive edifice, to be a desert in the heart of the town” (*Centenary* 9:26; *Twice-Told Tales*), when to him clearly members of the congregation, like the elderly woman first to arrive for services, wish “that the Sabbath came twice as often” (*Centenary* 9:22; *Twice-Told Tales*). He is deeply troubled by the emptiness of the church during the week, wondering at its “moral loneliness on week-days,” (*Centenary* 9:20; *Twice-Told Tales*) as the rest of the town notices only when its bells mark the hours, “remind[ing] thousands of busy individuals of their separate and most secret affairs” (*Centenary* 9:20; *Twice-Told Tales*). It seems that for Hawthorne, the pervasiveness of this lonely silence marked a significant failing of the Protestant churches in his various New England communities.

Just as “Sunday at Home” reveals some of Hawthorne’s spiritual longings through his voyeurism, “Sights from a Steeple” (1837) connects his voyeurism to his obsession with secrecy and confession. Written from the perspective of someone who has scaled a church steeple for the best possible vantage point from which to look at his community, the narrator wishes “that the multitude of chimneys could speak, like those of Madrid, and betray, in smoky whispers, the secrets of all who, since their first foundation, have assembled at the hearths within” (*Centenary* 9:192; *Twice-Told Tales*). Musing that “[t]he most desirable mode of existence might be that of a spiritualized Paul Pry, hovering invisible round man and woman, witnessing their deeds, searching into their hearts” (*Centenary* 9:192; *Twice-Told Tales*), Hawthorne’s narrator uses his perch here to meditate less overtly on religion, and more so on the secrets that he believes all men and women keep. He wishes that he could read people more clearly, desiring to discern where “guilt is entering into hearts that are still tenanted by a debased and trodden virtue,—guilt is on the very edge of commission, and the impending deed might be averted; guilt is done, and



the criminal wonders if it be irrevocable” (*Centenary* 9:196; *Twice-Told Tales*). He wonders, then, about the ideas of sin held secret and whether any sin, secret or not, might be unforgivable—ideas that pervade many of his later stories, as students of Hawthorne are quick to perceive. “Sights from a Steeple,” however, is concerned only partly with the idea of reconciliation with heaven, as when he wonders if any sin might be unpardonable, a theme that he develops in other works, including “Roger Malvin’s Burial” (1832), “The Minister’s Black Veil” (1836), “Ethan Brand” (1850), and most famously, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850).

Other scholars have certainly remarked on the recurrence of confession in Hawthorne’s works. Several works written before Hawthorne’s European residency reflect what Harry G. Fairbanks in his article “Hawthorne and Confession” aptly describes as “[a] preoccupation with guilt, and a search for healing reunion” (38), but Fairbanks’ argument that these themes “often drew his attention to the Sacrament of Penance understood by Catholics” (38) is premature. In these works, Hawthorne’s interest in confession, though deep and abiding, is not a sincere engagement of sacramental Catholic confession. In “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” Reuben Bourne was indeed tormented by his failure to return to Roger Malvin’s body and properly bury it, and further tormented by allowing his fiancée Dorcas Malvin and his community to believe that he had, in fact, kept his promise to the dying man, yet “his sin was expiated” (*Centenary* 10:360; *Mosses*) without his ever uttering a word of confession to anyone else in the story. Similarly, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne is even more overt in considering the disastrous consequences of secret sins, as when Arthur Dimmesdale develops what seems to be a psychosomatically-induced scarlet “A” on his own chest, his own flesh perhaps literally burning itself in an attempt to achieve the community reconciliation that Hester Prynne achieved by wearing her embroidered letter on her bosom (*Centenary* 1:258-259; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 24). Jenny Franchot’s *Roads to*

Rome similarly examines the theme of confession in *The Scarlet Letter*, judging the novel as “[p]erhaps the finest antebellum romance of Catholicism” (260). She supports her reading by citing references to Hester’s affiliation with “Madonna imagery” (262), her “gradual transformation into a “Sister of Mercy”” (263), and Dimmesdale’s “various identifications with monkish excess” (260), arguing that the scarlet “A” itself is representative of “the stigmata, and the “marks” of the visible church” (262). Still, Franchot’s reading more convincingly connects *The Scarlet Letter* to the anti-Catholic pulp fiction of Jacksonian America than it does to an interrogation of authentic Catholic practice, more effectively probing what she describes as “Catholicism’s alleged violations of the Protestant American’s political, sexual, and spiritual ‘rights’” (267). Franchot’s focus on “Dimmesdale’s fantasied pseudo-confessions from the pulpit” (268) suggests a more psychological than doctrinal examination of the impact of secret sin and the human desire for confession and expiation of sin. The renowned nineteenth-century critic and Catholic convert Orestes Brownson was keenly aware of the misinterpretations of sacramental confession in *The Scarlet Letter*. In his blistering October 1850 review of the novel, Brownson accused Hawthorne of being “wholly ignorant of Christian asceticism” before announcing that “Mr. Hawthorne mistakes the character of confession” in the novel: “[h]e does well to recognize and insist on its necessity; but he is wrong in supposing its office is simply to disburden the mind by communication of its secrets to another.” In other words, Brownson argued that Hawthorne and many other American Protestants misunderstood the primary purpose of confession to be one of community reconciliation, rather like serving a time in prison or, possibly, wearing a scarlet “A”. However, Brownson points out that the purpose of confession is only “restoring us to the favor of God, and reestablishing us in his friendship,” independent of any other community punishment or forgiveness that might be merited for a transgression.

Though Brownson is somewhat notorious for his bombastic writing style, his review is useful in indicating that at the time that the novel was published, understandings of *The Scarlet Letter*'s engagement with Catholicism were more pointed than those written more than a century later, which seem to conflate Hawthorne's overarching interest in confession with the sacramental exploration of confession that he did not truly begin until his European travels inspired him to do so.

When Hawthorne did encounter Catholic and Catholic-inspired sacramentals during his sojourn in Europe from 1853 through 1860, he did not immediately apply them to the spiritual yearnings he had articulated in his earlier writings. In fact, after he attended Easter services at Chester Cathedral, the High Anglican service inspired a complaint characteristic of his spiritual reticence and skepticism:

The spirit of my Puritan ancestors was mighty in me, and I did not wonder at their being out of patience with all this mummary, which seemed to me the worse than papistry because it was a corruption of it....The Puritans showed their strength of mind and heart, by preferring a sermon of an hour and a half long, into which the preacher put his whole soul and spirit, and lopping away all these externals, into which religious life had first gushed and flowered, and then petrified (*Centenary* 22:193; *English Notebooks* 12 Apr. 1857).

Here, Hawthorne chafes against the “externals”—the sensory and aesthetic elements of Catholic-influenced High Anglican services—considering them to be nothing more than a ridiculous show, even though he does acknowledge that at one point, authentic spirituality had “gushed and flowered” in the sacramental rites and rituals that made up part of the worship service. In expressing his preference for Puritanical sermonizing, Hawthorne forgets here how his “Mind and Heart” had struggled with sermons, and how he once preferred to watch the church from his window at home and sit far enough away from the sermonizing preacher so that he was unable to hear him.

Several years later, Hawthorne had his first encounters with true Catholic sacramentals in Amiens, France, at the first Catholic cathedral he visited on the European continent. In his visit, he noticed, but was unimpressed by, the side chapels dedicated to individual saints “adorned with great marble sculptures of the crucifixion, and with pictures, —execrably bad, in all cases” (*Centenary* 14:9; *French Italian Notebooks*, 6 Jan. 1858). He similarly remarked upon “the quaint and curious sculpture, fencing in the Holy of Holies,” and noticed a woman “with a great supply of tapers” sitting before an altar, commenting that “I suppose these were to be lighted as offerings to the saints, by the true believers” (*Centenary* 14:9; *French Italian Notebooks*, 6 Jan. 1858). Overall, though, his attitude towards the church was chilled by the cold winter weather, as when he noticed some holy water frozen in its font and wondered, “[c]ould not all that sanctity at least keep it thawed?” (*Centenary* 14:10; *French Italian Notebooks*, 6 Jan. 1858).

Hawthorne seemed to have a less miserable experience at La Madeleine in Paris, as he and his family joined the mourners entering the cathedral for a funeral, unashamedly acting as tourists during a worship service. Here, the funeral service impressed Hawthorne greatly, and objects like those he had observed in Amiens seemed less cold to him: the candles in La Madeleine “shone like a galaxy of stars” while the paintings and sculptures led him to remark that “[t]here is no such thing as making my page glow with the most distant idea of the magnificence of this church” (*Centenary* 14:19; *French Italian Notebooks*, 9 Jan. 1858). In observing the Mass, Hawthorne was struck by the way the priests “knelt and bowed, and bore aloft the cross, and swung the censers in a way that I liked to see” (*Centenary* 14:20; *French Italian Notebooks*, 9 Jan. 1858). All in all, the sacramental rites of the funeral struck Hawthorne as more meaningful, though his reticence to embrace them was still clear:

The ceremonies of the Catholic Church were a magnificent work of art, or perhaps a true growth of man’s religious nature, and so long as men felt their original meaning, they

must have been full of awe and glory. Being of another parish, I looked on coldly, but not irreverently, and was glad to see a funeral service so well performed (*Centenary* 14:20; *French Italian Notebooks*, 9 Jan. 1858).

Hawthorne here is conscious of himself as an outsider and a tourist, yet he is able to appreciate that the sacramental rites, such as perfuming the coffin with incense swung in a censer, had meaning to the faithful that went beyond the aesthetic pleasure that he experienced in watching them. At this point, he could acknowledge that sacramental rites were not “mummeries,” but was careful to hold himself back, keeping himself cold even when the church was not as frigid as he had found it to be in Amiens.

When Hawthorne and his family arrived in Italy, however, his attitudes began to thaw out, ever so slowly, and he grew more intrigued by the possibilities in Catholic sacramentals, particularly in the activities that took place in the churches and cathedrals he visited. In Italy, Hawthorne found activity within the churches every day, much as he had wished for in “Sunday at Home.” In the churches, again lit by candles before images of the saints, and with walls adorned by beautiful paintings and sculptures, Hawthorne found tremendous beauty fostered by what he perceived as true devotion: upon visiting the Cathedral of San Lorenzo, he commented that “nobody who has not seen a church like this...can imagine what a gorgeous religion it was that reared it” (*Centenary* 14:48-49; *French Italian Notebooks*, 24 Jan. 1858). In San Lorenzo, Hawthorne noticed the devotion of clergy and lay persons alike, including their tour guide:

In the cathedral, and in all the churches, we saw priests, and many persons kneeling at their devotions; and our Salvator Rosa, whenever we passed a chapel or shrine, failed not to touch the pavement with one knee, crossing himself the while; and once, when a priest was going through some form of devotion, he stopped a few moments to share in it. (*Centenary* 14:49; *French Italian Notebooks*, 24 Jan 1858)

For Hawthorne, this freedom to worship in a church every day, with individuals conducting themselves in their spiritual exercises under the stares of tourists, is what he yearned for when

writing “Sunday at Home,” simply because the Italian churches were open, living spaces, every day of the week. Over time, Hawthorne shifted in his understandings of these perpetual opportunities to worship. For example, while in Rome, he was perplexed by “a little ragged boy, the very least of human things, going round and kneeling at shrine after shrine” (*Centenary* 14:59; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb. 1858). Though impressed by the availability of worship, it took months of observations of daily devotional practice in Italy for Hawthorne, ultimately, to reveal that these open churches were exactly what he had yearned for in Concord, years before. Visiting Siena on a Sunday, he noticed some boys playing outside, and remarked that “Sunday with these people is like any other feast-day, and consecrated to cheerful enjoyment. So much religious observance, as regards outward forms, is diffused throughout the whole week, that they have no need to intensify the Sabbath, except by making it gladder than any other day” (*Centenary* 14:461; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 Oct. 1858). For Hawthorne, the daily opportunity for worship made Sunday more enjoyable, perhaps even more of a true Sabbath, in that one could play and be glad, because one was not attempting to force a week’s worth of devotion into one service before the doors were shuttered again for a week.

Just as Hawthorne’s notebooks demonstrate an increased appreciation for the frequent liturgical celebrations and worship opportunities for Catholics, they also seem to reflect an increasing comfort level with individual Catholic devotion, with much less of a condescending tone. This shift is perhaps clearest when comparing his remarks on the font of holy water in Amiens with the holy water in Siena, where he noticed the father teaching his sons how to cross themselves; rather than mocking the water, Hawthorne was struck by the enduring power of the sacramental act. Surrounded by flickering candles, audible prayer, and other sensory stimulations, Hawthorne found in the Cathedral in Siena much more of what he had longed for in

his 1837 sketch: “[a] good many people were present, sitting, kneeling, or walking about,—a freedom that contrasts very agreeably with the grim formalities of English churches and our own meeting-houses” (*Centenary* 14:459; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 October 1858). Hawthorne was increasingly intrigued, almost in spite of himself, by the realization that for Italians, Catholicism was a living faith, not merely relics from a Gothic past in ruins, more than “a mere fossil shell, out of which the life has died long ago” (*Centenary* 14:460; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 Oct. 1858). On the contrary, Hawthorne realized that “for many a year yet to come the tapers will burn before the high altar, the Host will be elevated, the incense diffuse its fragrance, the confessionals be open to receive its penitents” (*Centenary* 14:460; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 Oct. 1858). Hawthorne was moved by the enduring qualities of Catholicism, noting that “individual acts of worship” lead to “a great deal of devout and reverential feeling [that] is kept alive in people’s hearts” (*Centenary* 14:98; *French Italian Notebooks*, 21 Feb. 1858), reinforcing John T. Frederick’s reading in *The Darkened Sky* that of Hawthorne’s observations in Italy, “[p]erhaps the most important is his repeated recognition of the ability of Catholicism to meet widely varied human needs—a quality which, at least by implication, he found lacking in the Protestant institutions he had known in England and America” (66).

For Hawthorne, the institution most lacking in Protestantism and which most met human needs was, of course, the sacrament of confession, which quickly became the object of his obsessive voyeurism and speculation in Rome. Hawthorne found that he was repeatedly drawn to the seat of the Vatican at St. Peter’s Basilica, where he increasingly spent time observing the confessionals inside. Hawthorne increasingly reflected upon the nature of confession as a holy sacrament, noting that “the more I see of the Catholic church, the more I wonder at the exuberance with which it responds to the demands of human infirmity” (*Centenary* 14:91;

*French Italian Notebooks*, 20 Feb. 1858) in its enabling of the faithful to receive absolution from sin. As someone whose writings reflect a sense of haunting by ancestral, familial, and personal sin, Hawthorne found in the sacrament of confession a possibility for redemption that he could not find in his native faith tradition:

If I had a murder on my conscience or any other great sin, I think I should have been inclined to kneel down there, and pour it into the safe secrecy of the confessional. What an institution that is! Man needs it so, that it seems as if God must have ordained it. (*Centenary* 14:59; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb. 1858)

Hawthorne, despite his self-professed skepticism at the corruption of Rome, found an opportunity for redemption unlike any other that he had encountered in a religious institution, seeing possibilities for an alternative to eternal self-torture. As he commented in his notebooks, “I saw a young man standing before a shrine, writhing and wringing his hands in an agony of grief and contrition. If he had been a protestant, I think he would have shut all that up within his heart, and let it burn there till it seared him” (*Centenary* 14:59-60; *French Italian Notebooks*, Feb. 1858). Thus he observed the confessionals in each and every church he entered, eager to gain a deeper understanding, yet unwilling or unable to engage the sacrament as anything other than an observer from afar. Just as in “Sunday at Home,” Hawthorne relied upon his imagination to fill in the narrative gaps regarding what happened while a penitent was actually in a confessional, based on what he was able to see from the outside. Still, he fixated on the duration of individual confessions, watching individual penitents and attempting to time them (*Centenary* 14:458-460; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 Oct. 1858). Hawthorne, in his observations, attempted to glean all that he could from the sacrament from outside the door to the confessional, forcing himself to read the faces of priests and penitents alike to determine their engagement, their sympathy, and their sense of forgiveness.



Because Hawthorne only learned about the sacrament of confession through observations from afar, he developed his own understanding of the sacrament, one which left him ultimately to decide that though the sacrament offered much to Catholics, it could offer nothing to him. *The Marble Faun* (1860), Hawthorne's novel set in Rome, allows readers most clearly to see how Hawthorne ultimately understood and misunderstood the sacrament of confession and its limitations. In this novel, the young American copyist Hilda (who, in many ways, serves as Hawthorne's self-insertion into the novel) visits St. Peter's in a moment of despair, and is attracted to the confessionals. The language that Hawthorne uses in this chapter so closely reflects his notebooks that his fiction is clearly based upon his experiences, allowing readers to see him fill in the narrative gaps with his imagination. For example, in his notebooks, Hawthorne wrote that the sacrament of confession "must be a blessed convenience" (*Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858), while in *The Marble Faun* he notes that "Hilda was anew impressed with the infinite convenience (if we may use so poor a phrase) of the Catholic religion to its devout believers" (*Centenary* 4:354-355; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39). He reflects in his notebooks upon how Catholic churches provide "a cool, quiet, silent, beautiful place of worship" at any time of the day, phrasing he repeats in *The Marble Faun* (*Centenary* 4:355; *Marble Faun* ch. 39; *Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858). Likewise, in both the notebooks and in *The Marble Faun*, he comments upon how Catholics have the opportunity of "purifying themselves with a touch of holy water," how they might commune with a saint, or place "the dark burthen at the foot of the Cross," so that they may emerge "in the freshness and elasticity of innocence" (*Centenary* 4:355; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39; *Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858). Also, Hilda witnesses a woman emerge from the confessional, kissing the hand of the priest, just as Hawthorne had witnessed in churches in Rome (*Centenary*

14:194; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858). Hawthorne's lifting of phrasing from his notebooks for inclusion in his novel demonstrates that in the novel, he was working out in his mind his own understanding of the sacrament of confession, based upon his observations.

In the novel, however, Hilda does what Hawthorne dared not: she finds a confessional marked PRO ANGLICA LINGUA, with a "mystic rod" to indicate the availability of a priest inside, and Hilda enters, throwing herself tearfully into the confessional to tell her story (*Centenary* 4:357; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39). After she reveals "the whole of her terrible secret" that she witnessed a murder committed by her friends Miriam and Donatello (*Centenary* 4:357; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39), Hilda experiences tremendous relief at her spiritual unburdening, until the priest emerges from the confessional and summons her from her booth therein. Standing face to face, the priest asks Hilda about her heritage, and then demands to know "on what ground, my daughter, have you sought to avail yourself of these blessed privileges (confined exclusively to members of the one true Church) of Confession and Absolution?" (*Centenary* 4:359; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39) Caught off guard, Hilda explains further how she is "a motherless girl, and a stranger here in Italy" (*Centenary* 4:359; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39), grateful that she has shared her story "under the sacred seal of the Confessional; and now it will burthen my poor heart no more!" (*Centenary* 4:360; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39) At this expression of relief, the priest stops Hilda, telling her that since she lacks "faith in the sanctity of the ordinance" (*Centenary* 4:360; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39) as a non-Catholic, he is not bound to the vow of secrecy, and is "as free to disclose all the particulars of what you term your confession, as if they had come to my knowledge in a secular way" (*Centenary* 4:360; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39). In this moment, Hawthorne revealed his lingering fears of what might happen to him, or to any American Protestant, were he to dare enter a confessional in Rome. In the novel, the priest does tell Hilda

that he has no reason to share her story after dismissing her right to secrecy, and then invites Hilda, “a stray lamb, into the true fold” through conversion (*Centenary* 4:362; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39). Hilda, however tempted she might be to “come home,” refuses his invitation, saying that she “shall never return to the Confessional; never dip my fingers in holy-water; never sign my bosom with the cross. I am a daughter of the Puritans” (*Centenary* 4:362; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39).

Hawthorne believed that he could not freely unburden himself in a Catholic confessional, so he held his distance from confession and all of the other sacramentals—such as holy water and signs of the cross—that he found desirable in Catholicism.

Though *The Scarlet Letter* has received a great deal of scholarly attention for its allusions to confession, *The Marble Faun* has received surprisingly little, perhaps because the distinction made in that novel between confession as a communal act and confession as a sacramental act is unclear to many scholars. Fairbanks comes closest to understanding confession’s overall significance as a sacrament, noting that by the time Hawthorne wrote *The Marble Faun*, his deliberations about confession were “mature” to the point that he could work them convincingly into his novel. Fairbanks appropriately notes that “the theme so long revolved in his heart, [and] the details so expertly blended from the notebooks” that Hawthorne was able to create a detailed description of the sacrament, yet his reading that Hawthorne’s novel allows his understanding of confession to “coalesce in a moving affirmation of religious truths which he felt profoundly—the insufficiency of man and the abiding mercy of God” (43) falls short, for in the end, Hilda is ultimately unable to receive absolution from this merciful God by the misfortune of her birth, a far more Calvinist than Catholic reading that reveals Hawthorne’s own misgivings about his ancestral sins. Franchot’s reading of *The Marble Faun* as a failed romance, too much given to anti-Catholic conventions, dismisses the novel as nothing more than a depiction of Rome as “a

touristic prose of pictorialized units” in which “the conventions of confessional and convent captivity narrative disable the renowned powers of his voyeuristic prose” (357). Such a reading fails to see the spiritual yearning present in this work and Hawthorne’s other works, which is consistent with her general dismissal of spirituality as a motivating factor for Hawthorne or any other American Protestant writer to explore other faith traditions. A more spiritually open reading of Hawthorne, however, demonstrates his belief that something supernatural occurred in the “sacred precincts” (*Centenary* 4:355; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39) of a Catholic church for those who were able to enter a confessional.

Hawthorne’s fascination with confessionals and with cathedrals, as expressed both in *The Marble Faun* and in his notebooks, reveals that he gave a great deal of consideration to the connections between sacred rituals, sacred objects, and sacred spaces. This connection was more or less unavoidable for him once he arrived in Rome, the epicenter of Roman Catholic devotion, doctrine, and material culture. Once in Rome, in fact, Hawthorne was overwhelmed by the religious paintings, sculptures, and sacramental objects around him. In his first notebook entry from Rome, Hawthorne wrote of the sensory overload he experienced:

I soon grew so weary of admirable things, that I could neither enjoy nor understand them. My receptive faculty is very limited, and when the utmost of its small capacity is full, I become perfectly miserable, and the more so the better worth seeing are the things I am forced to reject. I do not know a greater misery; to see sights, after such repletion, is to the mind what it would be to the body to have dainties forced down the throat long after the appetite was satiated (*Centenary* 14:49; *French Italian Notebooks*, 24 Jan 1858).

Hawthorne found that he simply could not process the breadth and, indeed, depth, of the antiquities in Rome, with a church or shrine on nearly every corner, filled with religious paintings and sculptures, and with even more of this Catholic materialism hidden underground in the catacombs and tombs underneath most religious structures. Hawthorne encountered this close confluence of the living and the dead when he and his party visited the basilica of St. John

Lateran, “and, going down a winding staircase, found ourselves among the tombs and sarcophagi” (*Centenary* 14:74; *French Italian Notebooks*, 14 Feb 1858), just the first of many such encounters during his stay in Rome. The presence of these underground funerary spaces made Rome the perfect setting for Gothic ruminations, augmented by the presence of ancient ruins, causing Hawthorne to observe that “[w]hatever beauty there may be in a Roman ruin is the remnant of what was beautiful originally; whereas an English ruin is more beautiful often in its decay than even it was in its primal strength” (*Centenary* 14:74; *French Italian Notebooks*, 14 Feb 1858). Indeed, the interplay between beauty and decay runs throughout *The Marble Faun*, with chapter titles such as “Subterranean Reminiscences” (*Centenary* 4:20-27; *Marble Faun*, ch. 3) and “The Spectre of the Catacomb [sic]” (*Centenary* 4:28-36; *Marble Faun*, ch. 4) designed to intrigue American readers who might pick up the novel as a virtual Roman holiday. Hawthorne’s treatment of the decay in Rome catches the attention of Franchot, whose study of “Romanism” and its allure to American Protestant tourists centers around how “[i]n the Roman catacombs, such tourists experienced a confused merging of the literal and the metaphoric, of corpses and the past” (25), sharply in contrast to “the symbolic terrain of American Protestantism [that] figured itself as clean, empty, and magically capable of change without decay” (25). Many Hawthorne scholars, in fact, argue that it was the overwhelming presence of such decadence and death that ultimately caused Hawthorne to turn away from Catholicism. Leo B. Levy, for example, argues that *The Marble Faun* demonstrates that Hawthorne believed that Italian civilization had decayed past the point of no return, causing him to create “mutually exclusive moral worlds” in the novel, pitting “pagan and Catholic Italy” against “Christian civilization” (152). Evan Carton similarly argues that “Hawthorne, like Hilda, finds Rome’s and Catholicism’s imperialistic claim on the emotions and imagination of the individual at once

appealing and unacceptable” (52-53). Readings like these dominate Hawthorne scholarship and thus lead to dismissals of *The Marble Faun* as a work that reveals less about Hawthorne’s spiritual turmoil than do his earlier works set in his native New England.

While it is true that Hawthorne did not decide to fully take part in Catholic sacramentality, it is no less important to note that Hawthorne did not categorically reject it. On the contrary, Hawthorne selected from it what he found useful and appealing, employing the same strategies that he had used when watching church services outside his window at home in Massachusetts. Frederick acknowledges that Hawthorne’s repeated visits to European churches and cathedrals strengthened his religious feelings and reflections, noting that Hawthorne in his writings repeatedly “sees in church or cathedral windows—dull and colorless from without, richly brilliant within—a significant analogy to religious faith itself as seen by the unbeliever and the believer” (66). Other scholars have observed that Hawthorne was drawn to aesthetic beauty in spite of his Calvinist background; Donohue, for example, notes that while Hawthorne struggled with many aspects of Calvinist-inspired doctrine, he found rejecting Calvin’s strictures against the use of blasphemous images in worship to be relatively easy, and she goes so far as to suggest that this weakness for aesthetic beauty caused his entire Calvinist foundation to crumble (34). While this study demonstrates other motivations for Hawthorne’s interrogation of Catholicism, Donohue is correct that Hawthorne was drawn to the beauty of sacred spaces, in part because he found beauty there that stood in contrast to the relatively stark meeting houses of his native tradition. Donohue concentrates on Hawthorne’s rejection of Puritan rules against graven images, rules inspired by Calvin’s belief that the images compromised the delivery of the Word-based message, but her analysis could do more to investigate the possibility of Hawthorne finding true spiritual meaning and benefit in objects of beauty that he found in Gothic churches

and cathedrals. Hawthorne's European notebooks, for example, reveal that he never lost a sense of true reverence for the cathedrals he visited, the most sacred of Catholic spaces, and that his reverence was due primarily to the fact that the spaces themselves were consecrated and thus sacramental in essence.

Hawthorne recognized that the construction of these churches by Catholic hands was a form of worship in and of itself, one that created spaces to express and house their devotion to God as well as the sacramental, material objects they used to channel and dispense God's grace. For example, in Perugia, Hawthorne entered a Gothic cathedral to see its frescos, noting that "[t]he ecclesiastics of old time did an excellent thing in covering the interiors of their churches with brilliant frescos, thus filling the holy places with saints and angels, and almost with the presence of the Divinity" (*Centenary* 144:251; *French Italian Notebooks*, 28 May 1858). A Catholic church houses the consecrated host, its presence noted by a lit candle near the main altar. The entire space is made holy by the direct presence of the body of Christ, further sanctified by the relic held in each altar, and any other relics that may be housed in the space, and this confluence of life and death creates a liminal space, both natural and supernatural, both man-made and divinely made. For Hawthorne, this notion of a Catholic church as a consecrated space was fascinating, as it differed so greatly from his own New England traditions, whether those of seventeenth-century Puritan iconoclasts or their nineteenth-century descendants, but it nevertheless filled the emptiness that Hawthorne had observed in the church outside his window and many other Protestant houses of worship.

Hawthorne makes clear his objections to the typical Puritan meeting house in many of his works. For example, in "The Gentle Boy" (1839), Hawthorne describes the meetinghouse as something less than conducive to worship: "The interior aspect of the meetinghouse was rude.

The low ceiling, the unplastered walls, the naked wood-work, and the undraperied pulpit, offered nothing to excite the devotion, which, without such external aids, often remains latent in the heart [sic]" (*Centenary* 9:78; *Twice-Told Tales*). Well before his travels to Europe, Hawthorne sought the utility of "external aids" to inspire prayer—in essence, he was longing for the sacramentals that had been "purified" out of the church because he recognized their facilitation of devotion. Similarly, in "Endicott and the Red Cross" (1837), Hawthorne seems to offer a bully pulpit to Puritan governor Jonathan Winthrop, his letter roared to life by the famous stalwart Endicott, voicing his fears that King Charles I will establish "idolatrous forms" of worship (*Centenary* 9:339; *Twice-Told Tales*), including the installation of the very forms of imagery that Calvin deplored: "If this king and this arch-prelate have their will, we shall briefly behold a cross on the spire of this tabernacle which we have builded [sic], and a high altar within its walls, with wax tapers burning around it at noonday" (*Centenary* 9:440; *Twice-Told Tales*). Meanwhile, Endicott stands in a courtyard filled with stocks, pillories, and other devices of public torture and humiliation, and in front of a Puritan meeting house with a severed wolf's head nailed to its tabernacle with its blood "still plashing on the door-step [sic]" (*Centenary* 9:434; *Twice-Told Tales*). Hawthorne, in both of these stories, demonstrates that the plain meeting house is not in and of itself infused with spirituality, but is subject to the impulses and machinations of most assuredly fallible leaders of the Puritan theocracy and their cruel forms of punishment for transgressors and religious objectors. The Puritan meeting house, for Hawthorne, could symbolize cold austerity and diabolical violence in the name of religious fervor.

Moreover, Hawthorne's criticism is not limited to his understandings of the seventeenth century. In addition to the emptiness he notices in "Sunday at Home," he further comments upon nineteenth-century Protestant churches in "The New Adam and Eve" (1843). In this story,



written a decade before his own trip to Europe, Hawthorne revealed speculations that European Catholic structures might be more conducive to worship than anything found in the American Protestant architecture:

Had our Adam and Eve become mortal in some European city, and strayed into the vastness and sublimity of an old cathedral, they might have recognized the purpose for which the deep-souled founders reared it. Like the dim awfulness of an ancient forest, its very atmosphere would have incited them to prayer. Within the snug walls of a metropolitan church there can be no such influence. (*Centenary* 10:252; *Mosses*)

Though Hawthorne had yet to see a European cathedral, he imagined that upon entering one, his new Adam and Eve would intuitively recognize it as a consecrated, holy place that naturally induces prayer. In contrast, he demonstrated that in his mind, American churches, with their austere “snug walls,” could offer no such natural spiritual power. Hawthorne, thus, saw a deeper meaning to the beauty of cathedrals than purely aesthetic attractiveness; even before his travels, he anticipated that the aesthetic beauty of Catholic spaces create a natural propensity to prayer and holiness, thus proving that within their aesthetic beauty exists a holiness that truly sets these spaces apart as consecrated.

When Hawthorne did travel to Europe, his notebooks reveal that the cathedrals he visited lived up to his expectations as spaces conducive to spiritual reflection. Even in his darker moments, Hawthorne noted that his own feelings of gloom emerged from his inability to adequately respond to cathedrals in his notebooks, commenting that “[c]athedrals are almost the only things (if even those) that have quite filled out my ideal, here in the old world; and Cathedrals often make me miserable from my inadequacy to take them wholly in; and, above all, I despise myself when I sit down to describe them” (*Centenary* 23:50; *English Notebooks*, 17 Jun. 1856). Even before his travels took him to Italy, he discovered in the Catholic structures

repurposed into Anglican cathedrals a richness that he found difficult to explain. Upon visiting Lichfield Cathedral, for example, Hawthorne wrote that

there are such strange, delightful recesses in the great figure of the Cathedral; it is so difficult to melt it all into one idea, and comprehend it in that way; and yet it is all so consonant in its intricacy—it seems to me a Gothic Cathedral may be the greatest work man has yet achieved—a great stone poem. (*Centenary 22:223; English Notebooks*, 4 July 1855)

In England, Hawthorne truly fell in love with Gothic cathedrals, and it might be significant that his first encounter with these Catholic-constructed spaces came in cathedrals employed by Anglicans, in that someone so determined to keep up a guard against Catholicism might have allowed himself to be less on guard when entering these spaces. Still, any medieval or renaissance European object possessed of any liturgical or sacramental significance, regardless of its current usage, predated the fragmentation of the once-universal church and was by definition a Catholic space, essentially unchanged in its design and structure by the removal of Catholic institutional control. While Franchot probably would argue that Hawthorne responded to cathedrals as Gothic rather than as Catholic structures, easy to admire from a spiritual distance as relics of a bygone age, such a reading downplays the fact that it was not possible for Hawthorne to fully untangle the Gothic from the Catholic. This confluence is perhaps most fully realized in his second visit to York Cathedral, made after his sojourn in Italy:

But it is only that we have seen much splendid architecture, since then, and so have grown in some degree fitted to enjoy it. York Cathedral (I say it now, for it is my present feeling) is the most wonderful work that ever came from the hands of man. Indeed, it seems like a 'house not made with hands,' but rather to have come down from above, bringing an awful majesty and sweetness with it; and it is so light and aspiring, with all its vast columns and pointed arches, that one would hardly wonder if it should ascend back to heaven again, by its mere spirituality....I thank God that I saw this Cathedral again, and thank Him that he inspired the builder to make it, and that mankind has so long enjoyed it. (*Centenary 23:338; English Notebooks*, 14 Jul. 1857)

In this passage, Hawthorne reveals that he found cathedrals to be far more than just beautiful Gothic spaces—even in their immense beauty, they held far more significance as sacramental spaces. Hawthorne found himself inspired to do exactly what he said in “The New Adam and Eve” that an individual walking into a cathedral would do: he offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the “mere spirituality” of the space, which allowed him to wonder if, in that space, he had entered a liminal space between heaven and earth, and poised himself to move from one to the other.

Just like Hawthorne, Longfellow and Cooper associated Gothic, Catholic architecture and materialism with a spiritual power and beauty that they found to be lacking in the religious architecture produced in the modern world. Hawthorne wondered what it must have been like to experience Notre Dame Cathedral and its sensory rituals “when they stood glowing with gold and picture, fresh from the architect’s and adorer’s hands” (*Centenary* 14:31; *French Italian Notebooks*, 11 Jan. 1858), echoing Longfellow’s account in *Outre-Mer* of his own experience in Rouen Cathedral:

It was the hour of vespers. The religious twilight of the place, the lamps that burned on the distant altar, the kneeling crowd, the thinking bell, and the chant of the evening service that rolled along the vaulted roof in broken and repeated echoes, filled me with new and intense emotions.... I was transported back to the Dark Ages, and felt as I can never feel again. (26-27)

Longfellow’s experience in the Gothic cathedral at Rouen indicates that though the vaulted roof and other design elements contributed to his experience, he appreciated the space for its sacredness, not just for its aesthetic beauty. In the “religious twilight” he too found himself in a liminal space, where time suddenly seemed irrelevant, and where he experienced a moment of emotionally charged spirituality. Likewise, Cooper found himself moved to tears upon his first visit to St. Peter’s, writing in his *Gleanings in Europe: Italy* that “I turned away impressed with

the truth that if ever the hand of man had indeed raised a structure to the Deity in the least worthy to his majesty, it was this!" (192; Letter 20). Just as Hawthorne found that these feelings extended to spaces no longer actively used by Catholics, as when he described Lichfield Cathedral as a "stone poem," Cooper likewise found that "poetry in the Popish names" extended beyond the most magnificent cathedral spaces to the more outwardly humble, yet still consecrated, structures, as when he visited a Capuchin mission chapel in Switzerland "dedicated to Notre Dame des Nieves—Our Lady of the Snows!" and remarked upon the "pious intention" of "those who formed an establishment like this" (*Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* 109, Letter 22). These comments in the letters and journals of Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Cooper demonstrate that the feelings each author experienced upon entering these cathedrals went beyond an appreciation for the Gothic aesthetic. Rather, these American Protestant writers unexpectedly encountered profoundly spiritual spaces in their travels as tourists.

Stemming from these spiritual encounters, Cooper and Longfellow both use Catholic architecture in their creative works to explore the spiritual aspects of European history, probing in particular the possibilities of using consecrated spaces as allegories for the evolution of European civilization, seeking insights into possible trajectories for American civilization and culture. Scholars have written about Cooper's use of European settings and spaces as allegories for American political history. George J. Becker, for example, cites *The Bravo*, well known as an exploration of the differences between American republicanism and European oppression masked as republicanism (328). Similarly, Blake Nevius observes that Cooper uses *The Heidenmauer* to create an "allegorical landscape" to sketch out various struggles of European political and religious history, using the ruins of the monastery as an entrance into an exploration of the Reformation as ending the Catholic Church's unchallenged hold on European civilization

(26-27). For all of these authors, sacred church spaces offer windows into a time and space when people were, perhaps, more spiritually inclined to experience the supernatural through the sensory.

While the works of all three authors marvel at what it might have been like to experience a sacred space, filled with sacramentals, before the universal church was fractured, Longfellow most overtly queries the future of the sacramental power of the church. Longfellow evokes the tension between past and present in “Monte Cassino” (1874), in which he muses on “[t]he conflict of the Present and the Past” (line 77) when contemplating Benedict’s ancient abbey overlooking the landscape where “the iron horses of the steam” (82) move forward in contrast to “the deep / Recesses of the ages that are dead” (43-44) yet not dead, for in that place “this world and the next world were at strife” (80). Longfellow further meditates on these questions about the future of sacramental spirituality in a setting of colonial Spanish decay in his final poem, “The Bells of San Blas” (1882). In this poem, the narrator asks what the bells of San Blas, all that remain of a chapel “[t]hat has crumbled into the dust” (line 27), might say to different listeners. To the ships in the harbor, they are “[n]othing more to master or man” (6), but to the speaker, the “strange, wild melody” (11) of the bells has a deeper meaning:

For the bells are the voice of the church;  
They have tones that touch and search  
The hearts of young and old;  
One sound to all, yet each  
Lends a meaning to their speech,  
And the meaning is manifold. (13-18)

Thus, to the speaker, the bells evoke an “age that is fading fast” (29), when “the Priest was lord of the land” (60) and both the imperial power of Spain and the Catholic Church were revered and respected in Mexico. Now that the church is no more, the priest and faithful are absent, and the bells are no longer rung as part of worship. Sounding only in the wind now, the bells “are green

with mould and rust” (30), yet they call out to their listeners, asking “[i]s, then, the old faith dead” (31) to anyone who listens to them still. The bells wish for the times “[w]hen the world with faith was filled” (51), longing for people with stout hearts and “hands that believe and build” (54). However, the narrator replies sadly to the bells that those days are over; the past is not to return. Though “[t]he world rolls into light; / It is daybreak everywhere” (65-66), the narrator offers no substitute for the faith of times gone by. As Longfellow entered into the final weeks of his life near the end of the nineteenth century, it seems that for him, the possibilities for faith, unity, and “hearts of fire and steel” (53) were gone away, the result of communities no longer listening to or keeping up their churches and their bells, the decay of the chapel a symbol of a larger cultural decay. It seems poignant that, for one who found inspiration for stories of hope and reconciliation in sacramentals, those sacramentals lose their power at the end. The bells can only carry the benefits of the sacraments to the community, ultimately, if the people are willing to receive them in good faith.

If, as Longfellow wondered, the sacramental beauty and power associated with the Catholic Church was destined to fall into decay in the Americas, remaining locked away in mossy and crumbling monuments to which no one paid heed, then clearly attempting to transport Old World forms of sacred spaces into America was not feasible. At the same time, however, Longfellow, Cooper, and Hawthorne still found spiritually inspiring spaces in their travels to Europe, sacramental experiences which held the promise of nurturing and inspiring an American civilization that was largely empty of the material vestiges and traditions of a sacramental Catholic past, with the exception of isolated colonial ruins like the San Blas mission. In other words, all three of these writers recognized that America needed sacramental spaces, but felt that they must be suited to the “newness” of the world in which they would serve to bring people

closer to God through sensory sacramentals. Thus, each writer was forced to look out his windows and wonder how much more holy a church might be if located not in a European city or, as Hawthorne wonders in “Sunday at Home,” “a desert in the heart of the town” (*Centenary* 9:26; *Twice-Told Tales*) in America, but situated “in the outskirts of town with space for old green trees to wave around it, and throw their solemn shadows over a quiet green” (*Centenary* 9:26; *Twice-Told Tales*). Though their European tours brought unexpected spiritual encounters in consecrated spaces, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne did not seek, in their creative imaginations, to create basilicas of stone and stained glass in America. As with the titular characters in “The New Adam and Eve,” these writers felt stifled by American churches, where, as Hawthorne’s Adam states, “it troubles me to see this roof between us and the sky. Let us go forth, and perhaps we shall discern a Great Face looking down upon us” (*Centenary* 10:252; *Mosses*). To find a sensory sacramental experience, therefore, they turned their gazes outdoors, for what America lacked in sacred monuments and vessels constructed by divinely inspired human hands, it could readily surpass in the divine artistry of nature.

“The Wood-paths Shall Be the Aisles of Our Cathedral”:

Catholic Sacramentality in the Natural World

Chapter 2

In the short story “Earth’s Holocaust” (1842), Hawthorne’s narrator attends a bonfire where the full range of humanity’s inventions, productions, and accomplishments from the annals of history are gradually tossed onto the roaring flames. Some in the crowd get upset when the fire consumes religious books and icons, but the narrator assures them that none of these are necessary for worship:

The wood-paths shall be the aisles of our cathedral—the firmament itself shall be its ceiling. What needs an earthly roof between the Deity and his worshipper? Our faith can well afford to lose all the drapery that even the holiest men have thrown around it, and be only the more sublime in its simplicity (*Centenary* 10:400; *Mosses*).

While Hawthorne probably intended “Earth’s Holocaust” as a satire of Transcendentalism and its rejection of many worldly ideas and institutions, he also tapped into a much broader American reverence for the spiritual endowments of the natural world. Even a simple “cathedral” out in the woods is filled with sights, sounds, smells, and textures to stimulate the senses. Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, like many of their contemporaries, were drawn not only to the sensory aspects of the Catholic sacraments but also to the sensory aspects of the natural world, particularly—but not exclusively—the wilderness. By their day, numerous ideas of the bounty and majesty of nature had been building for several centuries, both from an Enlightenment-based rationalist perspective and from a more intuitive, Romantic perspective. These authors were part of an ongoing movement away from the Puritan view of nature as the domain of an all-powerful yet ultimately inscrutable God toward a Catholic perspective of the natural world and its salvific



potential. Consequently, their literary explorations of the sacramentality of landscapes in both old and new worlds brought Hawthorne, Cooper, and Longfellow closer to Catholic spirituality.

The difficulty with identifying a clear Catholic perspective on the natural world is that there actually have been multiple perspectives, which is not surprising for a church whose history goes back thousands of years and across many continents and cultures. Per Binde, in his article “Nature in Roman Catholic Tradition” (2001), offers a useful overview of the three major historical Catholic perspectives on man’s relationship with nature, or more particularly, on the “trinitarian” relationship between nature, human society, and the supernatural (16). The three overlapping views have included understandings of nature as corruptible and in need of mastery by man (16-18), of nature as vulnerable and in need of stewardship by man (18-21), and of nature as home to supernatural powers, both beneficial and harmful to man (21-24). Binde argues that all three of these views have existed historically, to greater and lesser degrees, within the Catholic faith, and he argues that the Catholic Church has allowed for the simultaneous existence of different philosophies as part of its efforts to be a truly universal church that caters to diverse peoples and societies. Furthering the complications, of course, is that because the Puritan/Reformed traditions were originally rooted in the Catholic tradition, Puritan/Reformed understandings of the natural world actually had much in common with at least one of these Catholic understandings. Still, Binde’s article offers a helpful framework to examine the religiously inspired views of man’s relationship with nature that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, among others, were engaging in their writings.

The first view of nature that Binde associates with Roman Catholicism is one very close to what most students of history and literature connect to the American Puritans and the Reformed tradition. In this perspective, all “matter” must be mastered, controlled, and overcome

by man in order to remain true to God's design, as "matter" is more easily corruptible and is less pure than the "spirit" (17). In other words, since nature is part of the physical world, it is prone to corruption and corruptibility, evidenced in the mortality of all things earthly; this view seems very close to the Puritan understanding of nature as something to fear, with an "errand into the wilderness" as the dominant Puritan metaphor for an encounter with demons that abide either within the soul or in the wilds of nature. Binde suggests that this view of nature tends to be associated with social structures that value order, stability, and patriarchal control (17), and most who study American history and American literature ascribe to Puritanism this medieval Catholic belief that the spiritual is superior to the material, and man's mastery of nature is but a component of man's mastery of self and sin.

Nineteenth-century authors, like earlier theologians, acknowledged that man's control of nature is sanctioned in scripture, and that it serves as an important part of God's mandate to make proper, productive use of what God has left for humanity. This understanding of nature is Biblically grounded in the first creation story in Genesis, when God gives mankind complete dominion over all of creation, charging man with the task of filling and subduing the earth (Gen. 1:28-29), a text almost certainly familiar to most nineteenth-century Americans. Binde notes that this view is classically rooted in Aquinas's hierarchical understanding of creation, which was itself drawn from an older Aristotelian understanding: as man is subject to God, so Nature is subject to man (17). Thus, nature is best understood as a resource to be controlled, used, and ultimately commoditized, an implication that grew all the more meaningful as European Christians who were driven by both commercial and religious motivations encountered (and reported on) the natural wonders of the Americas. Such an understanding of nature is evident in the earliest literature of the Puritan North America, when explorers wrote detailed missives that

read like shopping lists, motivated by “their tendency to view the landscape in terms of their own cultural concepts, their selective emphasis on commodities, [and] the ecological changes they themselves wrought” (Cronon 22). Still, these early settlers, motivated as they were by their desire to subdue the natural world, marveled at “the incredible abundance of New England plant and animal life” (Cronon 22), noting the wealth of natural resources around them. For example, John Josselyn remarked that the “millions and millions” of migrating passenger pigeons were “so thick that I could see no Sun” (qtd. in Cronon 23). Similarly, Francis Higginson marveled at the expansive forests, noting “here is good living for those that love good Fires” (qtd. in Cronon 25). These feelings of limitless abundance meshed perfectly with the belief that New England, and all of North America, was so placed for these European settlers to control for their own material and physical comfort.

While the Puritan impulse to control and master the New England landscape did comprise an important part of their historical mission in New England, the Puritans’ attitudes about nature were actually more complex than many students of American history and literature have tended to believe. John Gatta presents a far more nuanced understanding of Puritan views of nature in *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present* (2004). Gatta argues that the popularly held view that Puritans believed in a natural world filled with diabolical temptations fails to acknowledge that they believed nature also held out hope for divine grace, often articulated in the idea of New England as a Promised Land or a New Canaan. If the Devil was immanent in the wilderness, it was only because God permitted it as part of his larger design for humankind. While the Puritans believed that the natural world was not necessarily a safe space, they did believe that, as God’s chosen people, they could reap the blessings provided by God in the land set aside for them by Divine

Providence. In fact, Gatta seems to note his own trinity of Puritan understandings of nature: “[f]or seventeenth-century Puritans, untamed nature was at once a challenge, a force to be mastered by human industry, and a revelatory field of divine creation” (*Making* 8). Further, Gatta argues that Puritan views of nature evolved over time, with later generations of Puritans more disposed to seeing nature as “sacred space” rather than as an abode of hostile, diabolical forces (*Making* 25-27). Thus, Gatta makes it clear that the Puritans, like later Americans, were moving towards Binde’s second understanding of nature as a realm of divinely instituted stewardship.

Gatta offers an extended analysis of the Stockbridge treatises of Jonathan Edwards to demonstrate this evolution of Puritan thought, arguing that Edwards believed that the whole of nature is an emanation of God’s glory that can be used to benefit mankind, though its ultimate purpose is known only to God (*Making* 57). For example, Gatta notes that Edwards counters the early economically inspired understandings of the New World when he “establishes in *The End for Which God Created the World* that the ultimate end of all works of Creation is not human commodity but divine glory” (*Making* 64). Thus, for Edwards, an understanding of nature allows for a way to approach and encounter God, perhaps not as Moses encountered a burning bush, but possibly in some other form. For example, Edwards states in his *Personal Narrative* that

I felt GOD at the first Appearance of a Thunderstorm. And used to take the Opportunity at such Times, to fix my self to view the Clouds, and see the Lightnings play, and hear the majestick & awful Voice of GOD’s Thunder; which often times was exceeding entertaining, leading me to sweet Contemplations of my great and glorious GOD [sic]. (685)

Edwards opens up interesting possibilities for fearsome sounds to be more than just ominous warnings; in his account, nature offers a space in which to see God reveal both his awesomeness and his majesty, and thus have an encounter with an immanent God in the landscape of his

making. Edwards, in this narrative, clearly is embracing a proto-Romantic view of nature, anticipating many early and mid-nineteenth-century writers as part of a movement “to undo that disenchantment of the world precipitated by the European Enlightenment” (Gatta, *Making* 11). Gatta’s work is significant, not just for building a bridge between Edwards and later Romantic writers, but also for illuminating the complexity of Puritan understandings of the natural world, thus allowing for a more complex understanding of how the works of later writers engage Puritanism and their relationships with the natural world.

Despite Gatta’s presentation of the nuances of Puritan conceptions of nature, Binde’s explanation of the prevailing view is no less significant, in large part because Hawthorne, Cooper, and Longfellow helped to construct a simplified impression of Puritan views of nature, thus helping to create through their works of fiction the perceptions of Puritanism that are held by Binde and so many students of American history and literature. Perhaps the most enduring impressions of Puritan views of the wilderness emerge not from history texts, but from Hawthorne’s works. Hawthorne creates the darkest images of wilderness evils in stories like “Young Goodman Brown” (1837), the iconic tale of a man whose faith is tested by a witches’ coven in a dark forest. In this tale, Hawthorne makes full and masterful use of the Puritan association of wilderness and evil, cementing the view that nothing good can come of Goodman Brown’s walk into the forest, particularly as the fading road “vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal men to evil” (*Centenary* 10:83; *Mosses*). In this story, man can only be corrupted by his encounter with this corruptible space.

Similarly, Hawthorne fills *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) with reminders of the evil found in nature, which he implies in his descriptions of both Roger Chillingworth’s sojourns in the

wilderness and his vengeful nature. Hawthorne also repeatedly describes Pearl as elf-like, evoking an impish, yet malevolent forest-dwelling “evil spirit [that] possessed the child” (*Centenary* 1:97; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 6), and suggesting that perhaps “poor little Pearl was a demon offspring” (*Centenary* 1:99; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 6), seemingly happy and comfortable only in the forests, where she asks her mother to tell her stories

about the Black Man...How he haunts this forest, and carries a book with him,—a big, heavy book, with iron clasps; and how this ugly Black Man offers his book and an iron pen to everybody that meets him here among the trees; and they are to write their names with their own blood. (*Centenary* 1:184-185; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 16)

By recounting this legend, and having Hester dismiss Pearl’s request as “a common superstition of the period” (*Centenary* 1:185; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 16), Hawthorne further establishes that Puritans regarded the forest as the location where one sells one’s soul to the devil himself, and thus when Pearl tells her mother that community members say Hester earned her “A” from meetings with the Devil out in the woods, neither Hester nor the reader is terribly surprised (*Centenary* 1:185; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 16), though readers might note that even Dimmesdale wonders, after his honest conversation with Hester in the forest, if he were “given over utterly to the fiend? Did I make a contract with him in the forest, and sign it with my blood?” (*Centenary* 1:220; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 20). In making Pearl’s story the province of the minister, Hawthorne is able to solidify the pervasiveness of this belief amongst Puritans. Hawthorne is utterly persuasive in his contention that “the little Puritans, being of the most intolerant brood that ever lived, had got a vague idea of something outlandish, unearthly, or at variance with ordinary fashions” (*Centenary* 1:94; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 6) in not only their dismissal of Hester and Pearl as wholly corrupt, but also in their appraisal of the entire environment around them as the site of their corruption.

Similarly, several of Cooper's novels anticipate Hawthorne's simplified understanding of the Puritan fears and suspicions of nature. For example, in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish: A Tale* (1829), Cooper opens with the Puritan patriarch Mark Heathcote's desires "to establish his altars in the wilderness, in the hope that he and his household might worship God as to them seemed most right" (17; ch. 1). As Heathcote departs a Massachusetts settlement for the unknown wilds of Connecticut, his community sends him off with "unfeigned and general sorrow," fully expecting his efforts to be met with danger, believing as they did that "the great parent of evil early looked with a malignant eye" on the Puritan colonists (18; ch. 1). Significantly, Heathcote wishes to *build* altars in the wilderness, not to *find* them there: Heathcote sees nature as something to be mastered and subdued. Like Hawthorne, Cooper establishes the forest as the locus of all that threatens the settlers, commenting that "the forest was rarely approached after night-fall by the boldest woodsman, without some secret consciousness that he encountered a positive danger" (55; ch. 4), and when individuals like Ruth Heathcote do venture into the woods, they are overcome with visions of imminent evil threatening them and their families (56-57; ch. 4), fears that merely send more members of the community into the wild to encounter its dangers. Even as Cooper dismissively describes these "very quaint and peculiar religious dogmas," he solidifies them, recording the beliefs as part of "our duty, as faithful historians of the events recorded in this homely legend" (135; ch. 9). Thus, when a deer leaves no footprints before disappearing in a clap of thunder, seemingly replaced by a mysterious man proclaiming that "the Powers of Darkness have been manifested in the Provinces in a hideous fashion" and that "[n]umberless of the believers have been persecuted by the invisibles," readers accept these signs and omens as the essence of Puritan views of nature, particularly when these omens serve in the plot to bring about great suffering and loss in the community of Wish-Ton-Wish (141; ch.

9). Cooper, like Hawthorne, solidifies in the American imagination the understanding of Puritan belief in a corruptible, evil nature that will destroy lives and souls if not properly mastered.

While Cooper and Hawthorne both reinforced a simplified Puritan theology of nature, both also made efforts to critique this view, in line with many of their contemporaries in the nineteenth century. Hawthorne's critique is certainly the more subtle of the two; in *The Scarlet Letter*, his efforts to dismiss the "little Puritans" and their "outlandish" beliefs are worth noting, if somewhat shrill and ineffective against his powerful overall picture. He does, interestingly, depict the community as interpreting the "great red letter in the sky" as a good omen signaling that "our good Governor Winthrop was made an angel this past night" (*Centenary* 1:158; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 12), yet such a claim does not make sense within the context of Puritan theology, which would hold that a predestined man could enter heaven, but could not be transformed into an angelic creature. It is surprising that little attention has been paid to this designation from an author renowned for his familiarity with Puritanism, perhaps because readers have focused so tightly upon the transformation of the "A" from a mark of shame to a mark of honor in this moment. In "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne offers no such critique of Puritan views of nature, and the story ends with no hope for the aged Goodman Brown, his life ruined by his run-in with the witches in the forest and his own insufficient faith; upon his death, "they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom" (*Centenary* 10:90; *Mosses*). Hawthorne's critique is largely ineffectual, and his presentation of the nature-fearing Puritans looms large as a result.

Cooper's novels reveal his critique of the Puritans for what he saw as their adversarial, exploitative relationship with nature. For example, in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*, Cooper uses militaristic imagery to suggest an unfounded Puritan war on the landscape:



Rails, in which lightness and economy of wood had been but little consulted, lying in zigzag lines, like the approaches which the besieger makes in his cautious advance to the hostile fortress, were piled on each other, until barriers seven or eight feet in height, were interposed to the inroads of vicious cattle....High against the size of an adjacent hill, that might aspire to be called a low rocky mountain, a similar invasion had been made on the dominion of the trees; but caprice or convenience had induced an abandonment of the clearing, and after it has ill requited the toil of felling the timber by a single crop. In this spot, straggling, girdled, and consequently dead trees, piles of logs, and black and charred stubs, were seen deforming the beauty of a field, that would, otherwise, have been striking from its deep setting in the woods. (27; ch. 2)

The piles of trees, evoking piles of bodies, create barriers against the “vicious cattle,” an unusual pairing of words that surely indicates Cooper wanted his readers to pause and think about his meaning. In order to cement this imagery of the trees as fallen victims of a war, Cooper notes later that the rudely constructed settlement is fenced by “an unbroken line of high palisadoes [sic], made of the bodies of young trees” (29; ch. 2). While Motley mentions that in this novel, Cooper, a proud New Yorker and noted “New Anglophobe,” was trying to trace to Puritan New England the origins of the wasteful, almost wantonly destructive settlers who went chopping their way through the frontiers of New York and even further west in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (10-11), he could go further in looking at the type of language used to describe this wanton destruction. Cooper’s novel quite clearly uses human imagery, such as the “bodies of young trees,” to evoke the waste of life and of spirit. Similarly, House comments on Mark Heathcote’s construction of the block-house behind this fence, noting that Cooper “designates Mark as one of those who cannot commune with God or appreciate the order of the natural world unless he is shut off from that world and praying in a block-house made of the trunks of fallen trees” (122). Again, though her analysis is correct, it can be taken further, because Mark Heathcote has quite literally constructed a fortress out of the fallen, evoking perhaps both the destruction of the landscape and the slaughter of the native peoples, and their spirits, in the process, with the settlers in reality just as vicious as the cattle, despite their

outwardly kindly temperaments. For Cooper, Puritan mastery and subjugation thereby lead to a spiritual alienation from both God and his creation. When Mark Heathcote gazes “over this picture of prosperity and peace” (30; ch. 2), the reader recognizes the enormous costs exacted from nature to create what is truly a false peace and a wasteful prosperity. Cooper continues this critique in his novels set later in history, creating a direct philosophical connection between the Puritan settlers of Connecticut and the residents of Templeton, New York, in their famous massacre of migrating passenger pigeons, whose populations were declining in New England at the time of Cooper’s writing of *The Pioneers; or, The Sources of the Susquehanna* (1823), so that his novel seems to presciently anticipate their extinction in the early twentieth century. Likewise, the Bush clan’s rapacious chopping of an isolated grove of cottonwood trees in the opening chapters of *The Prairie; A Tale* (1827) demonstrates the enormous ecological and spiritual costs of viewing nature as something to subjugate.

In these novels, however, Cooper offers a slightly more nuanced critique of this understanding of Puritan desires to master the “evil” wilderness than does Hawthorne in his own works. In *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*, Mark Heathcote is portrayed consistently as a fair-minded, benevolent man; whether in his kindness to his Indian captive or his frequent prayers for peace and protection, he demonstrates what Motley describes as Cooper’s “admiration for the cohesive hierarchy of patriarchal government” (30). Motley seems to argue that Cooper’s admiration for the patriarch surpasses his general wariness of the Puritans and their wariness of nature itself. The fears of the wilderness seem to be more pronounced in the characters of lesser status, as well, with Ruth Heathcote and Eben Dudley recounting their Puritan fears of the forest. In each case, the patriarchal figure works to overcome the fears with positive action, as when Content Heathcote continues tending his horse while reassuring his wife that her imagination is

overactive, or when Mark Heathcote cuts off Eben Dudley's tale of the ghost deer with his prayers for protection. In both cases, the leaders are portrayed as men of action, whose reason allows them a more objective view of the wilderness than the more superstitious view of the women and less educated men. Likewise, Judge Temple in *The Pioneers* and even the more brutish Ishmael Bush in *The Prairie* are given, to different degrees, some redeeming qualities as dispensers of civic order and/or justice. Motley would argue that this tendency to mitigate the enormous spiritual costs of the degradation of nature was due to Cooper's admiration for these men Motley calls "American Abrahams," noting that "the frontier patriarch and his settlement represent a social experiment in which Cooper assesses different balances of authority and freedom that might enable American society actually to realize and perpetuate its possibilities" (12). Notwithstanding Motley's argument, Cooper was deeply troubled by the spiritually bereft misuse of the environment perpetrated even by "good" settlers, so he created in Natty Bumppo a more reverent attitude toward nature as a better model than that set forth by even the most noble of his patriarchal characters.

Cooper's critique thus creates a bridge to the second view of nature outlined by Per Binde, one in which nature is as a divine yet fragile creation in which man plays the role of steward, not of master. In this understanding of nature, Binde notes that "[n]ature is part of God's creation and has a specific purpose in his plan for mankind and the world, therefore nature should be respected" (18). Binde traces this understanding back to the writings of Paul and Augustine, noting that it was particularly embraced by medieval Franciscan and Dominican theologians. This view is a counterpoint to the adversarial and commoditized views of nature articulated above, and stresses the holiness of "nature as an abode of divine presence, apt for consolation, renewal, revelation, and redemption, and also as a place where the Christian faces

temptations and trials” (18). Thus, the Puritan understanding of the “errand into the wilderness” is not completely overturned, but it is mitigated by opening the possibility of positive spiritual growth in nature without the necessity of a spiritual trial, because nature reflects God’s essential goodness. Hence, Jonathan Edwards could hear God in the roll of thunder as he walked in nature, inspiring him “to spend abundance of my Time, in walking along in the Woods, and solitary Places, for Meditation, Soliloquy and Prayer, and Converse with GOD [sic]” (685), but not all of his fellow ministers were equally comfortable with such sojourns, which even Edwards seems to dismiss in his narrative as the activities of a young boy, not fully formed in faith (685-686). Still, this understanding of man’s stewardship of and interaction with nature was fully embraced in the nineteenth century by Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne—along with members of the Transcendentalist movement and others who were moving away from the view of man as rightful conqueror and despoiler of the natural world—largely because this view of a more adversarial relationship between man and nature was, for them, associated with Puritanism and Reformed traditions. Binde claims that this view of a more harmonious relationship between man and nature gained a foothold after the Enlightenment and the democratic political revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as cultures moved away from strict patriarchal social organization, and he notes that this shift occurred despite technological and market changes that led to man’s more rapid exploitation of the natural world over which he professed stewardship (18). Historian Mark Noll likewise argues in his book *America’s God* (2002) that in mainstream American Protestant theology of the early nineteenth century, “[t]he physical world created by God was more likely to be regarded as understandable, progressing, and malleable than as mysterious, inimical, and fixed” (4). The natural world, then, was

becoming for Americans a sacred, living text to be read, preserved, and understood in order to achieve a sense of an incarnate spirituality.

As noted above, perhaps the character who best exemplifies a steward and reader of nature is Natty Bumppo, Cooper's iconic hero of *The Leatherstocking Tales*. This view of the sacredness of nature is examined at length by Gatta, who argues that in these novels, Cooper is "entranced by the sacred grandeur of the American frontier—and troubled by the need to locate a religious ethic suited to this untamed atmosphere" (*Making* 79). In his analysis of *The Deerslayer* (1841), Gatta emphasizes Bumppo's stewardship, arguing that Bumppo shows high ethical standards and attachment to Christian values in his determination to protect an unspoiled nature from human depredations—in other words, to preserve the sanctity of nature's temple (*Making* 81-83). Stewardship and respect for life do not make Bumppo weak or ineffective as a rugged frontiersman, by any means. After all, Gatta notes that *The Deerslayer* is the story in which Bumppo takes his first human life, but nevertheless "his ethical awareness is governed still more by the struggle to integrate New Testament ideals of nonviolence, forgiveness, and restraint with the brutal facts of life on the frontier" (*Making* 82). Similarly, Gatta argues that in *The Pioneers*, nature's temple is despoiled by Judge Marmaduke Temple and his settlement of Templeton, representing "the artificial imposition of a statutory order" on a temple Bumppo considers as belonging to God alone (*Making* 85). This strong ethical framework, grounded in reverent stewardship, is what causes a sorrowful Bumppo to scold the residents of Templeton who arrive to arrest him for shooting a deer outside of the legally prescribed hunting season:

You've driven God's creators from the wilderness, where his providence had put them for His own pleasure; and you've brought in the troubles and divilties of the law, where no man was ever known to disturb another. . . . You've driven me to burn these logs, under which I've eaten and drunk, the first of Heaven's gifts, and the other of the pure springs, for the half of a hundred years, and to mourn the ashes under my feet, as a man would weep and mourn for the children of his body [sic]. (*Pioneers* 356-357; ch. 32)

Bumppo regrets the wanton lack of stewardship of creation, perhaps best exemplified in not just the constraints the community has placed upon him, but in the entire concept of a hunting season, which radically alters the spiritual landscape: one no longer uses what one needs, but kills for the sake of sport. Cooper shows this man-made order to be far less effective than an internalized sense of respect for the natural resources created by God for man's prudent use.

Nowhere is Cooper's chagrin over the lack of respect for nature more clear than in the already mentioned massacre of the passenger pigeons in *The Pioneers*, where "[n]one pretended to collect the game, which lay scattered over the fields in such profusion as to cover the very ground with fluttering victims" (246; ch. 22). The bodies of the birds demonstrate what Bumppo decries as "wicked to be shooting into flocks in this wastey manner [sic]" (247; ch. 22). He makes clear that a pigeon is "made as all other creators, for man's eating; but not to kill twenty and eat one [sic]" (247; ch. 22). Bumppo momentarily persuades Judge Temple to stop "the wastey ways that you are all practysing, as if the least thing wasn't made for use, and not to destroy [sic]" (248; ch. 22), but Temple cannot resist the temptation of another approaching flock, and joins his community in their "united discharge of small-arms," with citizens even shooting a cannon into the flock (249; ch. 22). Just as Cooper wants readers to see the militaristic imagery in his critique of the Puritan devastation of the natural landscape in *The Wept of Wish-ton Wish*, he wants readers of *The Pioneers* to see the absurdity when one of the villagers shouts, "victory! we have driven the enemy from the field!" (250; ch. 22) Cooper uses this artillery barrage to demonstrate the folly in the neo-Puritan drive to subdue and master the natural world, because this drive for domination leads to excessive violence, wanton destruction, and ultimately a separation from God. Cooper's ideal, standing in sharp contrast, is personified in Natty

Bumppo, a man who regards nature less as an adversary and more as an ally in achieving a greater understanding of God's immanent presence.

One of the key reasons why Natty Bumppo sees nature as an ally in his quest for God is that he is an expert reader of the wilderness as a "book" complementary and ultimately superior to scripture; thus, nature is his church, the place where he directly encounters the divine.

According to Gatta, the concept of nature as a "book" was a rather ancient Catholic view, strengthened by the Renaissance's fascination with the material world, and was one that the Puritans acknowledged, but never fully trusted, because nature's "texts" seemed so much more fluctuating and indefinite than what the highly literate Puritans were able to find between the covers of their Bibles (*Making* 36). Cooper uses several of the novels in *The Leather-Stocking Tales* to demonstrate Bumppo's use of the natural world as a revelatory text. In *The Last of the Mohicans; A Narrative of 1757* (1826), when Bumppo argues with the Puritan David Gamut over the doctrine of predestination, Gamut demands that Bumppo "[n]ame chapter and verse; in which of the holy books do you find language to support you?" (117; ch. 12), and Bumppo, increasingly frustrated in his efforts to explain to Gamut that he does not rely upon printed books, finally tells him:

'Tis open before your eyes...; and he who owns it is not niggard of its use. I have heard it said, that there are men who read in books, to convince themselves there is a God! I know not but man may so deform his works in the settlements, as to leave that which is so clear in the wilderness, a matter of doubt among traders and priests. If any such there be, and he will follow me from sun to sun, through the windings of the forest, he shall see enough to teach him that he is a fool, and that the greatest of his folly lies in striving to rise to the level of one he can never equal, be it in goodness, or be it in power. (117; ch. 12)

In this passage, Cooper shows his readers another reason why Natty Bumppo is nicknamed

Hawk-eye: he sees the revelation of God in creation, while those who have spent years in man-

made buildings studying written texts are simply unable to see, their vision obscured by their beliefs that in mastering the wilderness, they are superior to it, and thus like gods themselves.

Cooper is careful to have Natty Bumppo distance himself, however, from other forms of scholastic learning as well. Gamut serves as Natty's foil when he espouses his Puritan view of nature, based in texts, just as the traveling naturalist Dr. Obed Battius serves as Bumppo's foil in *The Prairie*, espousing his rationalistic, proto-Darwinian view of nature. While Cooper drew heavily on the reports of natural scientists in his research for that novel, and while he formed Battius' character as a composite of several of his own naturalist friends, Cooper in this novel does seem to reject Battius' prideful assertions that nature's design can be deciphered solely through human intellect and perseverance (Vance 324-326). Battius' inability to read the wilderness sometimes serves as comic relief, as when Natty asks Battius to identify the animal served for dinner or the footfalls in the darkness, but Bumppo clearly asserts that just as Gamut and Temple are blind to the revelations around them, so too is the naturalist, whose "notions are a little blinded with reading too many books" (98; ch. 9). In fact, in some aspects, Battius could be seen as a more dangerous threat than a Puritan, because at least the Puritan has some faith, while the scientist takes God entirely out of the picture, because he "believe[s] that a school master can make a quicker wit than the Lord" (105; ch. 9). Bumppo, then, is faced with not just the Puritan inability to see the wilderness, but also with the "mere effigy of reason" (56; ch. 5), revered by Battius and others like him.

Some scholars have recognized that Bumppo experiences a spiritual communion with the wilderness. For example, Michael Clark argues that in *The Pioneers*, Cooper uses architectural terms, referencing columns, capitals, arches, and pinnacles, to describe the features of Mount Vision, the mountain overlooking the new frontier settlement of Templeton. The mountain, Clark



argues, is clearly being identified as its own kind of temple, towering over the building efforts of Judge Temple and his townspeople. Clark comments that in Mount Vision, “a religious ideal is embodied in nature” (228); in this analysis, what is most significant is that the residents of Templeton have their vision so obscured by their efforts to subdue the wilderness that they cannot see the Vision literally before them. Natty Bumppo, on the other hand, sees and experiences communion with God so vividly that when Judge Temple orders him to jail for violating hunting season, he protests against “the wickedness of shutting up and old man that has spent his days, as one may say, where he could always look into the windows of heaven” (370; ch. 33). Bumppo is incredulous at his sentence, and his cry that “I b’lieve there’s some who thinks there’s no God in a wilderness” (365; ch. 33) indicts Judge Temple for his lack of vision, his inability to see the divinity of nature. Bumppo, then, finds himself an increasingly isolated character in *The Pioneers* due to his outspoken stance in what Clark refers to as the central tension between “man’s architecture versus God’s architecture” (227).

In this respect, Natty Bumppo reflects a larger cultural trend in the early and mid-nineteenth century, when many writers and thinkers were chafing against overly rationalistic views of nature and the world. Romanticism, of course, was one of the outgrowths of this reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne all demonstrate in their works a Romantic view of nature. With Longfellow and Hawthorne, the influence of the American Transcendentalists, a vibrant part of the larger Romantic Movement, is also useful to understand their conceptions of nature. While the entire Transcendentalist movement is too complex to be outlined here, it is important to note that none of the authors in this study were Transcendentalists, though Longfellow and Hawthorne were well acquainted with many of the leading Transcendentalist figures, and Hawthorne certainly brushed with

Transcendentalism during his time at Brook Farm and while living in Concord along with the likes of Emerson and Thoreau. Hawthorne in particular seemed to share in Thoreau's view that the glories of nature can be found close to home, not necessarily in a remote "wilderness." Still, both Longfellow and Hawthorne brought a historically religious presence into their understandings of nature far more than did Transcendentalists like Thoreau and Emerson. While they all seemed to share a belief that one could gain insights through having one's mind stimulated by nature's grandeur and its revelatory textuality, Longfellow and Hawthorne saw those insights as more likely to lead one on a path to God. Thus, for Longfellow and Hawthorne, the "wood-paths" could become tantamount to the aisles of a cathedral, a place of both a sacred offering and a divine presence. The majesty of nature could also, as suggested by the narrator of "Earth's Holocaust" and by Natty Bumppo in *Last of the Mohicans*, serve as a sacred text to help man understand that divine presence. Transcendentalists like Thoreau and Emerson, on the other hand, saw less of a conventionally religious dimension to these spiritual encounters with the wilderness, finding instead opportunities for man to have his inner genius cultivated by nature's grandeur. This was especially true of Emerson, whom Isaac Hecker, a Transcendentalist who converted to Catholicism, criticized for believing that "nature is his own church, and he is his own god" (qtd. in Gatta, *Making* 89). Most studies of Isaac Hecker or of his fellow Catholic convert Orestes Brownson see them as entirely turning their backs on Transcendentalism in favor of Catholicism, but in reality these Catholic converts remained closer to Transcendentalist views of nature than they might have admitted.

While the Transcendentalists sought to divest nature of a historically defined sense of divine presence, they at the same time worked within a Romantic conception of nature that owed much to Roman Catholic influences. For example, Thoreau's well-known essay "Walking"

(1862) invokes the spiritual aspects of “sauntering”—essentially entering into a state of communion with nature—by invoking solitary monastic figures: “every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the lands of the infidels” (185). Further, he refers to the seclusion of deep wilderness as if it were a cathedral: “I enter a swamp as a sacred place,—a *sanctum sanctorum* [sic]” (205). For Thoreau, the wilderness offered the opportunity to enter the Holy of Holies, his reference evoking both the tabernacle which held the Ark of the Covenant in ancient Jerusalem and the tabernacles holding the consecrated host in Catholic churches. In each context, the *sanctum sanctorum* is the dwelling place of an immanent God, traditionally accessible only to one who is consecrated and thus able to commune with the divine. Even Emerson seems intrigued by the possibilities of monasticism in poems like “The Problem” (1839), where he wrestles with his own spirituality:

I like a church; I like a cowl;  
 I love a prophet of the soul;  
 And on my heart monastic aisles  
 Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles;  
 Yet not for all his faith can see  
 Would I that cowlèd churchman be [sic]. (lines 1-6)

An attraction to, and revulsion from, Catholicism is readily evident in both of these selections from the most famous of the Transcendentalists, indicating that their explorations of new avenues of understanding the divine did not necessarily result in an outright rejection of established paths.

Of course, some scholars have noticed that Thoreau and Emerson maintained an interest in Catholic aesthetics even as they rejected much of organized religious practices, yet their explorations were far less involved than those of Cooper, Longfellow, or Hawthorne. In fact, Richard Birdsall documents in “Emerson and the Church of Rome” that Emerson shared in an

appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of Catholic rituals, as Emerson described in an 1843 letter to Margaret Fuller:

This morning I went to the Cathedral to hear mass with much content....The chanting priest, the pictured walls, the lighted altar, the surpliced boys the swinging censer every whiff of which I inhaled, brought all Rome again to mind [sic]. And Rome can smell so far! It is a dear old church, the Roman I mean, & today I detest the Unitarians and Martin Luther and all the parliament of Barebones. (qtd. in Birdsall 274)

Emerson here is obviously enthralled with the sights, sounds, and smells of Catholic Mass, preferring the sacramental rituals to the “Barebones” of a Protestant service. However, a closer look could indicate that even Emerson saw something more than the “romantic appreciation” (274) that Birdsall describes. An 1847 journal entry reflects that Emerson saw Catholicism as more compatible with a reverence for the natural world:

The Catholic religion respects masses of men and ages....The Catholic Church is ethical, and every way superior. It is in harmony with Nature, which loves the race and ruins the individual. The Protestant has his pew, which of course is only the first step to a church for every individual citizen – a church apiece. (qtd. in Birdsall 274)

In this passage, Emerson points to Catholicism as offering harmony with the wholeness of the natural world, both the wilds of creation and the people who live in communities. If the Protestant has his individual pew as a stepping-stone towards an individual church, then the Protestant is not sharing in community with his fellow worshippers or with the surrounding environment. Radical individualism for all, in other words, leads potentially to radical alienation from both nature and man. Catholicism, on the other hand, fosters community interaction through its aesthetically pleasing sacramental rituals, celebrated in community. Emerson’s writings, therefore, demonstrate that he perceived possibilities in Catholicism that he simply could not find in the “icehouse of Unitarianism” (qtd. in Birdsall 274) or in other excessively rational Protestant sects. Emerson’s widely known disdain for Catholicism did not emerge until 1858, when his friend Anna Ward, aided by Isaac Hecker, converted to Catholicism, inspiring

feelings of alarm and betrayal in Emerson (Birdsall 277). The works of Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne demonstrate that not all Protestants shared in Emerson's hostility, but these three writers instead worked actively to explore Catholicism, seeking compatibility and common ground.

Roman Catholicism's compatibility with nineteenth-century Romantic views of nature is perhaps best exemplified in the Franciscan tradition, which echoes through the views of nature expressed by Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne. Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) is legendary for his radical devotion to stewardship and his communion with his natural brothers and sisters, be they the moon and sun or various members of the animal kingdom, and Francis is commonly depicted as actively engaged with the natural world in some way. While much of what has already been developed in this chapter supports an argument for Natty Bumppo as a Franciscan figure, the connection is solidified in the great pigeon massacre of *The Pioneers*. After Bumppo has scolded Judge Temple and the community for their "wastey" [sic] ways, Judge Temple is moved to call off the hunt, before the irresistible urge to fire again takes over as a new flock flies overhead. After the community launches its artillery barrage into the flying birds, Judge Temple looks over the fields in front of him, soberly realizing that staring at him from the field are thousands of "eyes, in every direction, as the innocent sufferers turn their heads in terror" (250; ch. 22), wounded but still alive. The blinking eyes of the wounded pigeons strike Judge Temple in the heart, because he realizes—seemingly for the first time—that the birds are, in fact, living beings that are capable of feeling pain. After sending the village children to end the lives of the wounded birds and collect them for cooking, Judge Temple realizes "that he has purchased pleasure at the price of misery to others" (250; ch. 22), but the others, significantly, are not his human brothers and sisters, but are mere creatures of the air. Here, on at

least some level, Bumppo's warnings have been heard, and it seems, momentarily, that Temple could gain a deeper understanding that the true temple is all around him, and that the lives of the creatures therein are worthy of respect and care. For one who reads this passage closely, even the trees that make the fences in *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* seem to take on added meaning, with their bodies, like the bodies of the pigeons, destroyed by man's quest for mastery. Bumppo is a herald for using creation respectfully and without waste, living his life wholly in line with his spirituality, and recognizing the value of the life in the creatures around him. Thus, when Natty Bumppo in *The Prairie* observes that his dog Hector "has used and not abused the gifts of his Maker," and that the difference between a man and a dog is that "one thinks he can add to the gifts of the Creator, while the other is humble enough to enjoy them" (97; ch. 9), he distances himself equally from the rationalists, the Puritans, and the Romantic humanists, favoring instead what is fundamentally a Franciscan and Catholic view of nature.

The Franciscan goal of communion with nature reverberates not just in Cooper's depiction of Natty Bumppo, but also in the works of Longfellow. In *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847), Longfellow most vividly shows the sacramentality of nature by depicting the forces of nature as actively assisting in the administration of Catholic sacraments after the Acadians get evicted from their village and are forced to abandon their parish church and the sacred objects within. Though "from the church no Angelus sounded" (1.5.589), Father Felician ministers to his people encamped on the beach, and finds that the natural world provides the sacred symbols needed to practice the sacraments. For example, at the hasty funeral for Evangeline's father Benedict, with "the glare of the burning village for funeral torches" (1.5.656) though the congregation is "without bell or book" (1.5.657), they are able to celebrate "the service of sorrow, / Lo! with a mournful sound, like the voice of a vast congregation, / Solemnly

answered the sea, and mingled its roar with the dirges” (1.5.658-660). This passage demonstrates that when the Franciscan goal of communion with nature is achieved, man is truly unified with the natural world in worship. The Acadians are revealed to be authentic in their devotions in these moments on the beach, appropriately reverent of the natural world as an extension of the Divine, and the Divine in the natural world thus responds appropriately to support them. If, as Higgins argues, *Evangeline* is truly “a poem about assimilation” of the Catholic Acadians into American culture (549), then the response of the natural world to their worship demonstrates that in this ideal American republic, man and nature should exist in full communion with one another.

In addition to showing how a people can be in full communion with the natural world in his depiction of the Acadians in *Evangeline*, Longfellow also develops the Franciscan ideal of communion between man and his fellow creatures in other works. For example, Longfellow’s “The Poet’s Tale: The Birds of Killingworth,” part of his 1863 publication *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, seems to speak directly to *The Pioneers* both in its sympathetic treatment of birds and in its indictments of Puritan wastefulness. The poem does amplify the Franciscan idea of communion with nature considerably more than Cooper’s novel, however, by demonstrating both that the birds are in communion with God and that some men are able to regain communion with nature through them. For example, Longfellow notes that the birds, through their singing and twittering, are actually engaged in a form of divine praise:

The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud  
 Their race in Holy Writ should mentioned be;  
 And hungry crows assembled in a crowd,  
 Clamored their piteous prayer incessantly,  
 Knowing who hears the ravens cry, and said:  
 “Give us, O Lord, this day our daily bread!” (lines 12-17)

Clearly, Longfellow depicts these birds as both cognizant of scripture and able to invoke it, even though to the villagers their songs are nothing more than “some unknown language strange and sweet” (18). The implication of these lines is that the birds are more closely unified with God through their prayers than are the townspeople, to whom the crow’s caw is “Cassandra-like, prognosticating woe” (30), to which they are unhearing, like those Cassandra warned of impending doom. Longfellow painstakingly demonstrates that the “thrifty farmers” (27) of Killingworth are Puritans, noting about the Parson that “[t]he wrath of God he preached from year to year, / And read, with fervor, Edwards on the Will” (51-52); this parson likes to hunt and even to hit flowers with his cane because his “nature was to kill” (50). Similarly, the Deacon’s “voluminous neck-cloth, white as snow” (66) evokes the fine collars that Hester Prynne sews in *The Scarlet Letter*. The Squire, representing the wealthy of the community, evokes both an aristocrat with his “majestic tread” and perhaps even the name of Cooper’s Judge Temple when he emerges “from his house, a temple painted white” (41). When these leaders assemble with the farmers to discuss a plan to kill all of the birds, only the Preceptor rises in their defense. This scholarly figure, “trembling like a steed before the start” (83), offers an eloquent defense of “the street-musicians of the heavenly city” (94), arguing for the birds on a primarily spiritual level, reminding those assembled against them that they are divine creations: “Do you ne’er think what wondrous beings these? / Do you ne’er think who made them” (113-114). He paints a picture of a bird-less world, where their songs would be replaced by “the incessant stir / Of insects” (137-138), reminding them of the good that these “wingéd wardens” (146) do by controlling the insects on their farms, and concluding with a last spiritual appeal:

How can I teach to your children gentleness  
 And mercy to the weak, and reverence  
 For Life, which, in its weakness or excess,  
 Is still a gleam of God’s omnipotence,



Or Death, which, seeming darkness, is no less  
 The selfsame light, although averted hence,  
 When by your laws, your actions, and your speech,  
 You contradict the very things I teach? (153-160)

It is significant that this teacher focuses his appeal less on the earthly benefits of the birds, and more on the spiritual benefits of their presence, both because they are part of creation and because the stewardship or lack thereof of these birds will have real moral consequences for the children in the community. This respect for non-human life is especially evocative of the Franciscan ethos, both because he speaks to the communion that these birds have with their creator, noting their “habitations in the tree-tops even / Are half-way houses on the road to heaven” (119-120) and because he stresses the belief in nature as a place to be conserved. Longfellow may be better known for his acknowledgement of the Franciscan communion with birds in his 1875 “The Sermon of St. Francis,” in which Saint Francis feeds a flock of songbirds at Assisi “[w]ith manna of celestial words” (line 18), but the framework for his Franciscan understanding of nature had already been developed in his 1863 piece about the birds of Killingworth.

Just as Cooper and Longfellow use bird imagery to evoke a Franciscan communion with nature in their writings, Hawthorne employs a similar strategy in several tales and sketches within *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846). While he does not directly invoke Saint Francis as Longfellow does, Hawthorne certainly echoes similar themes in “Buds and Bird Voices.” For example, this nature-filled sketch, with images particularly of birds worshipping God, certainly parallels Longfellow’s “The Sermon of St. Francis” when Hawthorne observes that encountering crows in the woods makes him “feel as if I had intruded among a company of silent worshippers, as they sit in Sabbath-stillness among the tree-tops” (*Centenary* 10:154; *Mosses*). Hawthorne continues to observe that “their loud clamor increases the religious quiet of the scene instead of

breaking it” (*Centenary* 10:154; *Mosses*), again developing the idea of a natural world in communion with God, fitting well with a Franciscan ethos. The next lines of “Buds and Bird Voices” could be misinterpreted as undercutting this ethos, with Hawthorne observing that “[a] crow, however, has no real pretensions to religion, in spite of his gravity of mien and black attire; he is certainly a thief, and probably an infidel” (*Centenary* 10:154; *Mosses*). Though it seems as Hawthorne is dismissing the religious connections he has just constructed, I think it more accurate to read these passages as critical of the Puritan/Reformed tradition, as the “gravity of mien and black attire” suggest, with his critique aimed at those who would construct temples (like Judge Temple) or cathedrals that divorce man from the natural world. While church leaders might regard those who journey into the wilderness for spiritual edification to be “infidels,” Hawthorne here is speaking ironically, demonstrating the inherent failings in the mainline Puritan/Reformed tradition through the implausibility of a bird being unfaithful.

As “Buds and Bird Voices” continues, Hawthorne even more clearly depicts the birds in direct communion with God when he moves into his descriptions of “smaller birds,—the little songsters of the woods” (*Centenary* 10:154; *Mosses*). These “blessed birds” (*Centenary* 10:155; *Mosses*) who “claim human friendship by building their nests under the sheltering caves or among the orchard trees” (*Centenary* 10:154; *Mosses*) offer an opportunity for the people who listen attentively to them to commune with the Divine. Though Hawthorne self-effacingly claims that “these require a touch more delicate and a gentler heart than mine, to do them justice” (*Centenary* 10:154; *Mosses*), his extensive writing about their activities and their songs demonstrates a Franciscan connection with them. Significantly, Hawthorne notes that “indeed, all these winged people, that dwell in the vicinity of homesteads, seem to partake of human nature, and possess the germ, if not the development, of immortal souls” (*Centenary* 10:155-156;

*Mosses*). Here, Hawthorne makes abundantly clear the strength of the potential bond that can exist between man and nature, with the birds who live in proximity to people offering a means of accessing the divine through their “melodious prayers, at morning’s blush and eventide” (*Centenary* 10:156; *Mosses*), if only the people would listen to them. Returning to a Franciscan spirituality, then, would restore a connection between heaven and earth, through the songs of these spiritual birds. By going so far as to posit the possibility of the birds having souls, Hawthorne reflects Cooper’s anthropomorphizing of the birds and the trees in *The Pioneers*, adding an urgency to the need to respect and protect these winged creatures, no less children of the Creator than humans.

Hawthorne’s connections between nature and spirituality extend beyond his observations of birds and into a more comprehensive understanding of the natural world. His feelings about the spiritual possibilities of living in harmony with nature are perhaps best revealed in “The Old Manse” (1846), his reflections upon the more apparently mundane surroundings of his (and formerly, Emerson’s) famous home in Concord. Gatta notes in *Making Nature Sacred* that this Hawthorne sketch shares some ideas in common with the Transcendentalists’ beliefs that the wonders of nature can be found not only in remote untouched wilderness but also in one’s own backyard (92, 102). Just as Thoreau could find holiness in his sauntering around town, so Hawthorne in “The Old Manse” finds holiness exploring his home, as when he describes the “unexcitable and sluggish” (*Centenary* 10:6; *Mosses*) Concord River:

while it can glorify itself with so adequate a picture of the heaven that broods above it; or, if we remember its tawny hue and the muddiness of its bed, let it be a symbol that the earthliest human soul has an infinite spiritual capacity and may contain the better world within its depths. But, indeed, the same lesson might be drawn out of any mud puddle in the streets of a city; and, being taught us every where, it must be true. (*Centenary* 10:8; *Mosses*)

Hawthorne explicitly teaches his readers the spiritual value of finding one's cathedral in nature, with the Concord River, or any puddle anyplace, a ready symbol of the human soul and its potential, if only the observer notices it. A Franciscan communion with nature provides spiritual direction and development in the environment, enabling its communicants to discover the remnants of Eden on earth, with lessons about the soul fused into their daily experiences: in Hawthorne's view, "our Creator would never have made such lovely days and have given us the deep hearts to enjoy them, above and beyond all thought, unless we were meant to be immortal. This sunshine is the golden pledge thereof. It beams through the gates of Paradise, and shows us glimpses far inward" (*Centenary* 10:27-28; *Mosses*).

Hawthorne, it seems, shared much with the Transcendentalist view of nature, but his works depart from Transcendentalism in ways significant to this study. Gatta notes that Hawthorne's nature writings like "The Old Manse" reveal an "incarnational theology of God's creation" (*Making* 101), using "familiar Christian vocabulary to express his own semi-orthodox faith" (*Making* 103). When Hawthorne is considering the possibilities of birds having souls, or of the promise of eternal life in every beam of sunshine, he evinces a sacramental understanding of every aspect of nature, just as in the Franciscan tradition, where every aspect of creation provides an avenue to holiness. Thus, a mud puddle can provide a path to spiritual development and holiness that a man-made edifice cannot; in fact, the works of man can serve to pull people away from the sacredness of nature, as when Hawthorne notes that "the works of man's intellect decay like those of his hands" (*Centenary* 10:19; *Mosses*)—a skepticism of books worthy of Natty Bumppo. Gatta comments that "Hawthorne presses imaginatively to displace the moribund, formal religion of dead clerics with what he takes to be a more vital and 'natural' form of *religio*—that is, a connective or ligature to the divine origins of life" (*Making* 105). In his literary

explorations of his backyard, Hawthorne finds the glory of nature that Cooper and Longfellow tend to seek in settings far removed from their own American civilization, temporally and/or spatially. Though Hawthorne also dealt in the realms of the imagination and Puritan mythology, he found holiness incarnate in a backyard river, the song of a sparrow, or a city mud puddle.

Hawthorne's engagement with nature in *Mosses from an Old Manse* extends from sketches to stories, such as in "Roger Malvin's Burial" (1832), a story which highlights Hawthorne's imaginative vision of the interplay between nature and human characters. Hawthorne evokes "The Old Manse" in this story's opening paragraph, where readers find Roger Malvin and Reuben Bourne lying in the woods as "[t]he early sunbeams hovered cheerfully upon the tree tops" (*Centenary* 10:338; *Mosses*), seemingly to offer solace to the gravely wounded Malvin, whose "conviction that his pilgrimage was at an end" (*Centenary* 10:338; *Mosses*) inspires him to send Bourne home, leaving Malvin to die in the wilderness, "to rest beneath the open sky" (*Centenary* 10:340; *Mosses*). This opening passage is but one of the moments that illustrates James McIntosh's argument in "Nature and Frontier in 'Roger Malvin's Burial'" that "[t]he wilderness seems to elicit different responses at different times, depending on the occasion" (195). McIntosh's analysis, written before Gatta's *Making Nature Sacred*, notes that Hawthorne is not often regarded by critics as writer interested in nature or the frontier, an argument upheld by Barszcz (McIntosh 189; Barszcz 45). McIntosh notes, however, that Hawthorne engages frontier and nature themes more fully in "Roger Malvin's Burial" than in most of his other (and later) works, where he tends to offer more "journalistic" or allegorical treatments of nature (189). The changes in the natural environment in this story therefore highlight how the natural world interacts on a spiritual level with the characters.

While one might expect Hawthorne, given his brooding interest in his Puritan ancestry, to focus on the idea of the wilderness as a foreboding place into which one goes at immortal peril, his treatment of nature in his fiction reveals a greater complexity in his use of natural settings to create spiritual tones. For example, McIntosh observes that Hawthorne's understanding of nature in "Roger Malvin's Burial" is more nuanced than in the typical Puritan notion of the howling wilderness (197), and his observation is applicable to many more different moments in the story than those which he closely reads in his article. In addition to the example above of the sunbeams shining down on the dying Roger Malvin, reminding him of the promise of heaven, "there seemed a gloom on Nature's face, as if she sympathized with mortal pain and sorrow" (*Centenary* 10:345-346; *Mosses*) when Reuben Bourne leaves his dying companion in the forest, "Roger Malvin's hands...uplifted in a fervent prayer" (*Centenary* 10:346; *Mosses*). Nature, sympathetic to Roger Malvin in his dying moments, does not trust Reuben Bourne to keep his promise to return and bury Malvin, despite the flag Reuben has tied to a tree to mark the location: "[a]s he gave a parting look, a breeze waved the little banner upon the sapling-oak, and reminded Reuben of his vow" (*Centenary* 10:346; *Mosses*). Memorizing the rock on which Roger Malvin intended to scrawl his name so that "the traveller in days to come will know that here sleeps a hunter and a warrior" (*Centenary* 10:340; *Mosses*), Reuben allows his beloved Dorcas Malvin to believe that he did not leave Roger Malvin in the forest to die, but instead buried him with "a noble tomb-stone above his head" (*Centenary* 10:348; *Mosses*), her father enshrined in the forest. Dorcas, interpreting her new husband Reuben's words to fit her own wishes, spreads the news of her beloved's "courage and fidelity," leaving Reuben tortured by his "vow unredeemed, and that an unburied corpse was calling to him out of the wilderness" (*Centenary* 10:349; *Mosses*). Reuben seems to have fallen into the trap of those whose lives are

bent on subjugation of the natural world at the expense of communion with it, for “superstitious fears, of which none were more susceptible than the people of the outward settlements, forbade Reuben to go alone” (*Centenary* 10:349; *Mosses*) and fulfill his promise to the dying Roger Malvin. Further, Reuben had not learned to read (as Natty Bumppo might have done) the “pathless and illimitable forest” to return to Malvin’s body (*Centenary* 10:349; *Mosses*); though he had tied a handkerchief on a branch, “his remembrance of every portion of his travel thence was indistinct, and the latter part had left no impression on his mind” (*Centenary* 10:350; *Mosses*). Despite these problems, “he had a strange impression that, were he to make the trial, he would be led straight to Malvin’s bones,” suggesting that the “voice audible to himself, commanding him to go forth and redeem his vow” (*Centenary* 10:350; *Mosses*) is more in tune with nature than Reuben cares to acknowledge.

Because he is unfaithful to Roger Malvin, Reuben Bourne begins to experience difficulties in his efforts to subdue and control nature, as if the natural world is punishing him for neglecting his promise to his dying companion. Despite the prosperity of the Malvin farm under Roger’s care, Reuben “was a neglectful husbandman; and, while lands of the other settlers became annually more fruitful, his deteriorated in the same proportion,” and “his intervals of industrious attention to his affairs were but scantily rewarded with success” (*Centenary* 10:350; *Mosses*). Increasingly unhappy, unable to get along with his neighbors, Reuben finds himself “finally a ruined man” (*Centenary* 10:351; *Mosses*); thus the Bourne family, under Reuben’s leadership, is forced to “throw sunlight into some deep recess of the forest, and seek subsistence from the virgin bosom of the wilderness” (*Centenary* 10:351; *Mosses*), the moment McIntosh uses as an example in his article to demonstrate a more complicated understanding of nature. While McIntosh comments, seemingly humorously, that “the howling wilderness has a virgin

bosom!” (197), I think that a more sober reading ultimately fits better with his article.

Hawthorne, in his narration, speaks ironically when he says that Reuben must “throw sunlight,” knowing well that humans have no such control over the environment, and that Reuben’s decision to enter the forest is, in essence, the natural world forcing him to fulfill his long-neglected promise to Roger Malvin, and to thereby redeem his soul.

As nature and Reuben Bourne interact, Reuben is indeed drawn to the bones of the long-neglected Roger Malvin, where he pays for eighteen years of neglect at a terrible family cost, thereby gaining restoration of a relationship with nature and, through nature, to God. Reuben Bourne, traveling into the woods with his wife Dorcas and son Cyrus, strays from the family’s intended path, called by the resting place of Roger Malvin. Dorcas’s memory of the date as the eighteenth anniversary of her father’s death propels Reuben to meet his fate, and he stumbles into the dark, foreboding woods, where he can carry no sunlight, and where no promise of heaven shines down to comfort him. Though Reuben cannot throw sunlight into the forest, he “trusted that it was Heaven’s intent to afford him an opportunity of expiating his sin; he hoped that he might find the bones so long unburied; and that, having laid the earth over them, peace would throw its sunlight into the sepulchre of his heart [sic]” (*Centenary* 10:356; *Mosses*). Nature clearly acts here as the intermediary between sinful man and redemption in heaven, offering opportunity for expiation and communion. Startled from his hopes by a sound, Reuben shoots into the “thick veil of undergrowth” (*Centenary* 10:356; *Mosses*), only to recognize the site, with all the details seared into his memory, as the final resting place of Roger Malvin, marked by the tree to which he had tied his handkerchief, blighted in its upper branches by the broken promise of the man who had touched the branches eighteen years earlier. There, on the stone marking Roger Malvin’s unburied bones, lies the lifeless body of Cyrus Bourne, shot dead



by his father's blast into the darkness. As Dorcas wails over her son's body, "the withered topmost bough of the oak loosened itself in the stilly air, and fell in soft, light fragments" around and upon them (*Centenary* 10:360; *Mosses*), the tree offering itself as the long-promised grave covering. In this dreadful moment, the natural world acknowledges that at last, Reuben Bourne is redeemed: "[h]is sin was expiated—the curse was gone from him; and in the hour when he had shed blood dearer to him than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne" (*Centenary* 10:360; *Mosses*). The focus is not on the tragedy of young Cyrus's death, but instead on the salvation of Reuben Bourne's soul, thanks to the concerted efforts of the natural world to force him, at tremendous cost, to atone for his neglected promise. Reuben Bourne is thus redeemed from his self-imposed desire to ignore communications from nature, the intermediary between man and heaven, his son's blood and his own tears hitting the earth in sacrificial atonement. Reuben Bourne regains, at the end of his story, the ability to "read" the wilderness and is thus more able to, as McIntosh suggests, "feel a primitive pleasure in the way of life the forest enjoins and have intimation of a primitive, natural happiness" (198). Thus, Reuben Bourne becomes more evocative of the notion of a "natural man," one who loses virtue while living in an organized settlement and regains it only by returning to the New England wilderness.

While one can argue that figures like Reuben Bourne and Natty Bumppo evoke an understanding of a "natural man," most contemporaries of Hawthorne, Cooper, and Longfellow would have most readily associated the idea of "natural man" with America's "wild" indigenous peoples. Examining the works of these three authors reveals that they explore this dominant understanding of "natural man" in varying degrees. Hawthorne's work rarely touches on the idea of Native American "natural man," though he evokes the idea in unusual ways, while

Longfellow and Cooper use the concept much more directly, tying it to a Catholic understanding of the sacramental aspects of nature.

By the early nineteenth century, some European American writers and thinkers were embracing the view of American Indians as “noble savages,” a term certainly condescending by the standards of our own day, but admittedly more positive than understandings of Native peoples had been in the Puritan colonies of early America, where Indians were understood as devils in a howling wilderness, best fenced out and shunned. The term also provided more positive connotations than the racist views held by many white Americans in the new republic, still reeling from two centuries of frontier conflicts, the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812. As time and victory softened the memories of these conflicts, and as Enlightenment thinkers strove to create a hierarchical classification of the races, white Americans in particular looked at the diminished frontier, anticipating the work of Fredrick Jackson Turner, and reflected upon the possibilities once held in America as the unspoiled “garden,” with its original inhabitants no longer inhuman demons but rather “natural men” who remained closer to the ideals of human virtue that had been lost by white men living under the corrupt influences of a modern, industrializing world. Indians, thus, were deemed virtuous because of their perceived closeness to nature, a closeness that thinkers such as Rousseau, Franklin, and Jefferson increasingly feared had been lost as European American settlements grew and expanded (Vaughan 950; Smith 129, 218-219). This romanticization of Native Americans as noble savages, “natural men” with a superior connection to the natural world, went hand in hand with a Romantic idealization of nature itself.

In some nineteenth-century representations of “natural man,” the Indian is developed as an anachronism, indistinguishable from a permanently modified natural landscape. Longfellow’s

poem “The Indian Hunter” (1825) exemplifies this presentation of the “noble savage,” stripped of his humanity and agency. In this poem, a lone “Indian hunter, with unstrung bow, / Looked down where the valley lay stretched below” (lines 5-6). The Indian hunter has no interest in entering the town to which “[h]e was a stranger” (7), but silently observes “the populous haunts of men” (12) with farms and fields populated with workers and machinery. Longfellow foreshadows the fate of this solitary hunter, whose unsuccessful efforts on this autumn day leave him standing in the midst of dying foliage. Seemingly overcome by the destruction of “the home of his fathers” (26), filled with “burning thoughts flashed over his mind / Of the white man’s faith, and love unkind” (29-30), this hunter commits suicide by drowning himself in a lake, where a fisherman discovers his skeleton “wasted and white” like a fossil, yet “still grasping a hunter’s bow” (40, 42). Here, the hunter’s nobility is observed in his extinction, his suicide a noble acknowledgement that he and his people are no longer welcome in the modern world, relegated to a romanticized memory.

While Longfellow’s Indian hunter seems stereotypical, Cooper created Indian characters who are more recognizably human, possessed of free will and various degrees of self-control. While one could argue that many of Cooper’s Indian characters seem a bit one-dimensional, one could fairly make a similar argument about many of his non-Native American characters. In *The Last of the Mohicans*, readers first meet Chingachgook in conversation with Natty Bumppo on the edge of a settlement (*Last* 28-30; ch. 3), initially rather like the scene in Longfellow’s “The Indian Hunter.” Here, though the warrior is not alone, Cooper argues that the white settlers have taken the land from the natives in a way that Longfellow’s poem makes clear. Rather than despair, though, Chingachgook debates the details of history with Bumppo, causing the latter to remark that “[t]here is reason in an Indian, though nature has made him with a red skin!” (*Last*

30; ch. 3) Despite his propensity to reason, and despite Bumppo's acknowledgement of the Mohican history as compatible in many ways with the history of the settlers, Chingachgook acknowledges that his people have been decimated to the point that "when Uncas follows in my footsteps there will no longer be any of the blood of the Sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans" (*Last* 33; ch. 3). Though the rest of the novel indicates (often through the thoughts of Bumppo himself, as noted above), that Chingachgook and Uncas are not quite Natty Bumppo's spiritual or racial equals, they are worthy of a familial connection, what Bette S. Wiedman in her article "White Man's Red Man" refers to as "a free masonry that transcends race" (19). This shared bond allows Munro, at Cora's funeral, to acknowledge to the native mourners "that the Being we all worship, under different names, will be mindful of their charity; and that the time shall not be distant when we may assemble around His throne without distinction of sex, or rank, or color" (*Last* 347; ch. 33). Similarly, this shared bond allows Bumppo to join Chingachgook at the grave of young Uncas, whose death means that his father is truly the "last" Mohican, and pledge his brotherhood: "no, Sagamore, not alone. The gifts of our colors may be different, but God has so placed us as to journey in the same path" (*Last* 349; ch. 33). Chingachgook and Hawkeye stand opposite each other at the burial site, holding hands: "in an attitude of friendship these two sturdy and intrepid woodsmen bowed their heads together, while scalding tears fell to their feet, watering the grave of Uncas like drops of falling rain" (*Last* 349; ch. 33). Their brotherhood sealed as they mourn the young warrior whom they both loved, Bumppo and Chingachgook reveal that despite racial differences, both are recognizably human and worthy of respect.

The more developed and powerful Indian archetype that Cooper created did not necessarily contradict the intensified racist views against Indians that students of history and

literature rightly associate with Jacksonian America, in which respect for Native peoples was acceptable, to a degree, as long as the Indians were safely “removed” in time or space (Lepore 204-212). Thus, just as Longfellow’s Indian hunter is acceptably revered by the fisherman who discovers his bleached bones in the sandy lake bottom, so can Cooper’s writings, seemingly full of a color-blind vision of full equality, be admired, as when Tamenund’s words close *The Last of the Mohicans*: “The pale faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red men has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans” (*Last* 350; ch. 33). Here, with all threats removed, readers in Jacksonian America could appreciate “natural man” on the verge of extinction.

Though Cooper’s treatment of Indians implies the inevitability of their decimation, his acknowledgement of Native Americans’ ability to reason, to exercise free will, to share affection, and to worship all come together to offer an alternative to Puritan views, which had largely written off indigenous peoples as beings who were at best very little predisposed to Christianity. For Puritans and most other early American Protestants, Indians could only begin to appreciate Christianity if they dropped their naturally barbarous and impious cultural habits, replacing them with the manners and morals of English culture (Axtell 44-62). Cooper, in contrast, suggests in works like *The Last of the Mohicans* that Indians possess a natural theology, one which predisposes them to openness to the mysteries of God in a sacramental nature, thus building on the idea of “natural man” in a way that is compatible with Catholicism. For example, Cooper opens *The Last of the Mohicans* with a sweeping historical and geographical glance at his setting, focusing upon the Lac du Saint Sacrament (the Lake of the Blessed Sacrament known as Lake George to the English), the “holy lake” that was “exclusively selected by the Jesuit missionaries

to perform the typical purification of baptism” (*Last* 11; ch. 1). Cooper suggests that the Indians’ own natural theology predisposes them to be open to the mysteries of God in a sacramental nature, hence the acknowledgement of the holiness of the lake, not at all unlike the holiness that Hawthorne later found in the Concord River. In these connections between natural man and a sacramental nature, Cooper seems connected to the Jesuit belief that the sensory nature of Catholic sacraments (explored more fully in the previous chapter) would prevail over Indian spirituality, but only if initially couched in Indian culture and rituals (Axtell 68-71).

Just as Cooper’s work connects the idea of natural man to concepts of sacramental nature, so does the work of Longfellow, who links Catholic sympathy with Indian spirituality in *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855). Hiawatha joyfully welcomes “the Black-Robe chief, the Prophet” (22.59) to his community, inviting the Jesuit missionary to share his message. Hiawatha comments that the arrival of the Jesuits “[h]as removed both rock and sand-bar” from the lake (22.87). Hiawatha intuitively accepts the message of the Jesuit, though the Jesuit “[s]tampered in his speech a little, / Speaking words yet unfamiliar” (22.95-96) as he proclaimed “the purport of his mission” and evangelized the eagerly listening Indians, who immediately accept these strangers as emissaries of “the Master of Life” and thus worthy of following (22.151). Once the Jesuit message is delivered, Hiawatha is freed by their arrival to go “[o]n a long and distant journey, / To the portals of the Sunset” (22.178-179). Urging his people to “[l]isten to the truth they tell you” (22.200), Hiawatha sets off into the west, somewhat like a Native Natty Bumppo, having cleared the way for a new order of life in which he cannot take part—a religious pathfinder, he sails “[t]o the Land of the Hereafter!” (22.267) filled with an intuitive faith in the “truth” of sacramental religion, yet a man apart, unable to participate in the newly Christianized culture.

Hawthorne deals less with indigenous peoples in his works than do Cooper and Longfellow, but his works do reveal some interesting, though admittedly veiled, understandings of the idea of “natural man.” In “Sketches from Memory” (1846), a selection from *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Hawthorne addresses this seeming oversight in his works:

It has often been a matter of great regret to me, that I was shut out from the most peculiar field of American fiction, by an inability to see any romance, or poetry, or grandeur, or beauty in the Indian character, at least, till such traits were pointed out by others. I do abhor an Indian story. (*Centenary* 10:429; *Mosses*)

Hawthorne’s statement is curious on many levels: how could he regret that he had not written a story of the type he abhorred? Nonetheless, given both the popularity of the *Leatherstocking Tales* and his friendship with Longfellow, it seems most likely that Hawthorne was referencing the writings of Cooper and Longfellow when he notes that positive “traits were pointed out by others.” While it is true that Hawthorne develops few Indian characters in his works, he does still engage the concept of “natural man,” albeit in a more distanced form. Hawthorne’s engagement with “natural man” deals with characters who are not outwardly present as Indians, but who, upon close examination, represent Indians in interesting ways.

One such work where Hawthorne engages the idea of “natural man” and Indian conversions occurs in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (1837), a story collected in *Twice-Told Tales*. The story of the destruction of Thomas Morton’s outlaw settlement in early colonial Massachusetts ends with the decision of Governor John Endicott to try to redeem Edgar and Edith, the Lord and Lady of the May, a newlywed couple whom he considers to be salvageable neo-pagans. Endicott orders that they be fully immersed into Puritan material and religious culture, with “garments of a more decent fashion” put upon them, and Edgar’s hair cut “in the true pumpkin-shell fashion” (*Centenary* 9:66; *Twice-Told Tales*). His punishment is significant in that the changing of clothes, cutting of hair, and immersion in a “civilized” material culture

was the Puritan regimen for potential Indian converts (Axtell 59). In Hawthorne's tale, the young married couple therefore serves not just as an allegorical representation of the shattered innocence of youth, but also of natural man dragged to conversion into Reformed civilization. As Hawthorne's narrator summarizes, "[t]heir foes were triumphant, their friends captive and abased, their home desolate, the benighted wilderness all around them, and a rigorous destiny, in the shape of a Puritan leader, their only guide" (*Centenary* 9:66; *Twice-Told Tales*). Here, Edgar and Edith stand in for the last remnants of a conquered people.

Other aspects of "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" also support a reading of the story as Hawthorne's engagement with the concept of "natural man." Its description of the festivities at Merry Mount evokes pre-Christian paganism and animistic worship in several ways, with a real bear cavorting with the revelers, who are themselves described as "midway between man and beast" in costumes as varied as an "Indian hunter" or "a Salvage Man" (*Centenary* 9:56; *Twice-Told Tales*), all seeming to their Puritan observers as "ruined souls, with whom their superstition peopled the black wilderness" (*Centenary* 9:56; *Twice-Told Tales*). At the same time, the story evokes a pre-Reformation folk tradition of English carnival and feast day celebrations, mentioning "minstrels, not unknown in London streets; wandering players, whose theatres had been the halls of noblemen; mummers, rope-dancers, and mountebanks, who would long be missed at wakes, church-ales, and fairs" (*Centenary* 9:59; *Twice-Told Tales*), along with the bonfires to mark "the eve of Saint John" and other such celebrations (*Centenary* 9:60; *Twice-Told Tales*). While it is true that certain parts of Catholic tradition stood against the practice of animistic rituals and beliefs, some Catholics, such as the Jesuit missionaries to the Americas, believed in reinterpreting these pre-Christian traditions in the context of their Catholic mission. Further, Binde explains in setting out his third view of nature—a view of nature as home to



supernatural powers—that “[a]lthough Roman Catholic views on nature are rooted in a conceptual trinity of society, nature, and divinity, some of these views appear not so very different from those reported from non-Western ‘societies of nature’” (25-26). Binde’s analysis thus further complements this understanding of Hawthorne’s engagement of the idea of “natural man” in “The May-Pole of Merry Mount,” with Edgar and Edith as the last of the native peoples to be subdued, the threat of the larger force eliminated, the supernatural forces seemingly channeled properly through the imposition of manners and material culture.

Hawthorne also invokes the idea of “natural man” through the use of material culture itself, focusing on Indian artifacts revered as “relics” of a bygone era. In “The Old Manse,” Hawthorne certainly echoes the sentiments of Longfellow’s “The Indian Hunter” when he comments that his property stands where “in some unknown age, before the white man came, stood an Indian village” (*Centenary* 10:10; *Mosses*), and that one could find in the freshly plowed soil the evidence of their settlement:

You see a splinter of stone, half hidden beneath a sod; it looks like nothing worthy of note; but, if you have faith enough to pick it up, behold a relic! Thoreau, who has a strange faculty of finding what the Indians have left behind them, first set me on the search; and I afterward enriched myself with some very perfect specimens (*Centenary* 10:10-11; *Mosses*).

Just as the fisherman gazed with awe at the Indian hunter’s whitened bones still clutching the bow, so Hawthorne finds remnants of a removed people that can thus be safely revered, interestingly as relics. His reference to Thoreau undoubtedly evokes the romanticizing of these bygone people, but referencing them as relics infuses them with a Catholicized sensibility that would have been rejected by Puritans and most of their Protestant descendants in America. Hawthorne can thus marvel at these defused weapons turned relics while declaring that “[t]he Old Manse is better than a thousand wigwams” (*Centenary* 10:11; *Mosses*).

Binde's third area of focus, the supernatural in nature, goes well beyond a Puritan understanding of the wilderness as a demon-filled darkness to be avoided at all costs. Hawthorne explores the ruinous potential of the wilderness most explicitly in "Young Goodman Brown," the well-known story of the man who ignores his wife's pleas to not venture out at night, both fearing "a devilish Indian behind every tree" (*Centenary* 10:75; *Mosses*) before Goodman Brown encounters "he of the serpent" (*Centenary* 10:76; *Mosses*) along with many members of his community, all worshipping the devil after dark in the woods where he loses his immortal soul. Such a strongly negative view, however, is contradicted by Hawthorne's more nuanced works that reflect a variety of positive spiritual qualities of nature, not at all unlike the Catholic practice of imbuing natural sites and phenomena with spiritual power. This tradition reflected far more than a pre-Christian European legacy, however. The nineteenth century saw a proliferation of shrines and associated pilgrimages in response to Marian apparitions or to saints, such as Saint Philomena, whose remains were discovered in the Roman catacombs in 1802 and who was beatified in 1837 based on her "wonder-working" attributions. These shrines were often located along rural by-ways or even in more remote areas with glens, springs, grottoes, and mountaintops all attributed with miraculous, often healing, powers. Pilgrims to these shrines, as part of their worship, were well known for their physical interactions with nature at the sites, washing in springs, rubbing themselves with dirt, and kneeling directly on the ground. These shrines were built in, and yet inextricably part of, the natural world.

Cooper witnessed and was fascinated by this type of "natural" worshipful interaction during his travels in Europe. As discussed in the previous chapter, the pilgrims processing in honor of Our Lady of Einsiedeln, the Black Madonna, profoundly impacted Cooper during his travels in Switzerland. Cooper was particularly impressed by the willingness of the pilgrims to

withstand “the pain and labour with which these poor people had traversed plains and mountains to reach the shrine” (*Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* 169; Letter 16). Inspired by his observations of these pilgrims, Cooper chose to set his novel *The Heidenmauer* (1832) around a Benedictine monastery and shrine placed in a grandiose natural landscape, “seemingly as retired as if it had been chosen in one of our own solitudes of the wilderness” (25). In *The Heidenmauer*, Cooper describes a landscape filled “with all the signs of God before the eyes, and yet with none of the common means of enjoying his bounty, from having lost the clue to his intentions” (39), evoking the revelatory potential of nature that he more fully developed in *The Leatherstocking Tales*.

Cooper’s experience at Einsiedeln was but one of his experiences with Catholic supernatural belief. Similarly, in Italy, Cooper visited Loretto, a shrine purported to contain the childhood home of Jesus, transported miraculously to Italy from Nazareth, where he noted that “I cannot express to you the feelings with which I saw my fellow-creatures kneeling at this shrine, and manifesting every sign of devout reliance on the truth of this extraordinary legend. One woman, a well-dressed and respectable female to all appearances, was buried in the recess of the fireplace, where she remained kneeling, nearly an hour, without motion!” (*Gleanings in Europe: Italy* 265; Letter 28). He likewise observed a procession of pilgrims praying for relief from drought at a series of shrines in Rimini, commenting that “[t]here is probably no essential difference between these prayers and those of our own Church for a similar favour; though the formalities observed on this occasion were singularly addressed to the senses” (*Gleanings in Europe: Italy* 269; Letter 28). In his writings, Cooper revealed a growing fascination with some of the more visceral expressions of Catholic worship and devotion, as well as his own his attempts to reconcile those with his own social and cultural prejudices.

Cooper was not the only American of his day with a growing interest in the Catholic legacy of natural shrines and pilgrimages. In his book *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (1989), John Sears discusses an emerging literary and entrepreneurial promotion of certain grandiose natural sites in America, sites which “provided points of mythic and national unity” for an increasingly pluralistic American society (7). While Sears claims that these sites carried religious overtones that were “broad enough to appeal to people of any persuasion” (7), Hawthorne’s account of his own visit to Niagara Falls anticipates some of the reverence and self-consciousness that he would later feel upon his immersion into the world of Gothic cathedrals and the sacramentals of Catholic Europe. In “My Visit to Niagara” (1835), Hawthorne begins his account of his “pilgrimage” by building an almost ecstatic sense of anticipation, noting that he willfully averted his gaze from the falls when he had his first opportunity to glimpse them from a distance. After delaying his direct encounter with the falls for as long as possible, he finally joins other tourists/pilgrims to observe the site from various vantages, only to come away with a telling mixture of awe and anti-climax:

Oh, that I had never heard of Niagara until I beheld it! Blessed were the wanderers of old, who heard its deep roar, sounding through the woods, as the summons to an unknown wonder, and approached its awful brink, in all the freshness of native feeling. Had its own mysterious voice been the first to warn me of its existence, then, indeed, I might have knelt down and worshipped. But I had come thither, haunted with a vision of foam and fury, and dizzy cliffs, and an ocean tumbling down out of the sky—a scene, in short, which nature had too much good taste and calm simplicity to realize. (*Centenary* 11:284; *Snow-Image and the Uncollected Tales*)

Just as he would later marvel (as shown in the previous chapter) at how profoundly holy the signs of Catholic devotion must have been to those who first developed and used them—before they were diluted by modern skepticism and hypocrisies—so he suggests in this sketch that a sacramental nature loses much of its spiritual power when couched in the garish tastes of those who feel compelled to add their own artifice to it.

Hawthorne's commentary on Italian shrines and pilgrimages that he observed more than twenty years after his sketch of Niagara Falls likewise establishes connections between Catholic devotion and natural landscapes, with Hawthorne similarly struck by roadside shrines, a theme he works into *The Marble Faun* (1860), a novel inspired by his travels in Italy. In "Scenes by the Way," a chapter describing Kenyon and Donatello's travels through rural Tuscany, Hawthorne paints vivid images of the dappled countryside, of peasant women laboring in the fields, and of buzzing, tightly knit villages. As Kenyon and Donatello roam Tuscany, they encounter shrines frequently, so many that "the idea seemed to strike Donatello of converting the otherwise aimless journey into a penitential pilgrimage" (*Centenary* 4:296; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32). Whether before "great black Crosses, hung with all the instruments of the sacred agony and passion," or before Marian "places of wayside worship," Donatello kneels and prays, inspiring Kenyon, "heretic as he was," to "likewise put up a prayer, rendered more fervent by the symbols before his eyes" (*Centenary* 4:296; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32). Kenyon finds himself drawn in by the sight of these little shrines, compelled by Donatello's devotion and inspired by thoughts of those who constructed them and who worshiped there: "[i]t was beautiful to observe, indeed, how tender was the soul of man and woman towards the Virgin Mother, in recognition of the tenderness which, as their faith taught them, she immortally cherishes towards all human souls" (*Centenary* 4:297; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32). Even in his own reflections, Hawthorne found these roadside shrines as potentially useful even to someone as hesitant about Catholic devotion as himself:

It would be a good idea to place a comfortable and shady seat beneath all these wayside shrines, where the wayfarer might rest himself, and thank the Virgin for her hospitality; nor can I believe that it would offend her, any more than other incense, if he were to regale himself, even in such consecrated spots, with the fragrance of a pipe or cigar. (*Centenary* 14:272; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 June 1858)

For Hawthorne, who could not enter a confessional, and who hesitated at engaging himself with Catholicism, in contrast to someone like Cooper who expressed no fears about kneeling in a Catholic Church, he reveals that perhaps, sitting in front of a roadside shrine, he might have been able to engage, ever so slightly, with Catholic devotion embedded in the landscape. As Hawthorne demonstrates in his novel and in his notebooks, he found opportunity for authentic devotion in shrines integrated into the natural landscape.

In both *The Marble Faun* and his notebooks, however, Hawthorne expresses disappointment when these wayside shrines are tainted by artifice. Kenyon's only disappointment with these roadside shrines, significantly, appears when he notes that some of the shrines they visit are adorned with flowers "that (being artificial) never bloomed on earth, nor would ever fade" (*Centenary* 4:297; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32). Using phrasing pulled from his *French and Italian Notebooks*, Hawthorne reveals that he thinks these fake flowers seem to make a mockery of the "offerings of roses, of whatever flower was sweetest and most seasonable; some already wilted and withered; some, fresh with that very morning's dew-drops" (*Centenary* 14:272; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 June 1858; *Centenary* 4:297; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32), tainting the natural beauty and authentic devotion possible in a natural shrine. This disappointment upon finding artifice suggests, possibly, that Donatello, a "pre-lapsarian" innocent, cannot find true consolation in a religion bent too much by man's artifice, or possibly that modernity, and the move towards settlement in industrializing communities, has changed Italy just as it has changed America in the days since "those customs were first imagined and adopted" (*Centenary* 4:297; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32). Again, Hawthorne lifts from his personal reflections to phrase Kenyon's solution to the problem of artifice, envisioning

flower-pots, with living plants...or even that rose-trees, and all kinds of flowering-shrubs, might be reared under the shrines and taught to twine and wreath themselves

around; so that the Virgin should dwell within a bower of verdure, bloom, and fragrant freshness, symbolizing a homage perpetually new. (*Centenary* 4:297; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32; adapted from *Centenary* 14:272; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 June 1858)

Here, Kenyon desires to renew the devotion of travelers by invigorating the natural beauty of these shrines in such a way that people will no longer be tempted to leave artificial flowers, the best representation of the inadequacy of human efforts to replicate the sacramentality of the natural world. As the chapter concludes, Hawthorne comments that “it was a wise and lovely sentiment, that set up the frequent shrine and Cross, along the roadside,” as travelers like Donatello “doubtless found an efficacy in these symbols” (*Centenary* 4:298-299; *Marble Faun*, ch. 32). Hawthorne’s attraction to these shrines in Italy, given his comments about organized religion in “The Old Manse,” could lead one to argue that his critique of the artificial flowers is aimed at the artifice of Puritanism and American Protestantism as much as at Catholicism as practiced in the nineteenth-century Italian countryside.

While in Italy, Hawthorne also indulged a long-term fascination with Marian imagery, including Marian apparitions, which had connections to the animistic influences that remained strong in nineteenth-century Catholicism. The nineteenth century marked, in many ways, a resurgence of Marian apparitions, with famous occurrences at several European sites, including Rue du Bac (where Catherine Labouré received instructions to create the Miraculous Medal that persists as the most widely circulated Marian medal to this day), La Salette, and Lourdes. In *American Madonna* (1997), John Gatta focuses upon Hawthorne’s usage of Marian typologies, arguing that his fascination stemmed from a desire for “a reconstituted Protestantism that might accept more fully the religious value of divine femininity without...succumbing to the authoritarian rigidity and institutional corruption of Roman Catholicism” (8). Gatta also notes that Hawthorne’s fascination with Mary should not be taken as a sign of latent Catholicism,

particularly before his European encounters with Catholicism, because the notion of the Virgin Mother has pre-Christian pagan antecedents and is not unique to the Catholic tradition alone (*American Madonna* 8). Still, Hawthorne's engagement with Marian imagery has a profound connection to the reverence of nature, just as it evokes emerging nineteenth-century understandings of "true womanhood."

Hawthorne presents what seems to be a sympathetic, Marian-influenced depiction of animistic Catholicism in "The Vision of the Fountain" (1837), a sketch set in a visibly Protestant New England village. Dismissed by critics for its "incredible sentimentality" in a conventional "gift book" style designed to appeal to women readers (Crowley 48, 51), the story offers mystical descriptions of a spring, pastures, trees, and a farmhouse hearth, all visited by a "Vision" of a young woman, an ethereally angelic figure, causing the narrator to feel "like one that had caught a glimpse of Heaven, and could take no more joy on earth" (*Centenary* 9:216; *Twice-Told Tales*). The narrator's desperate search for another glimpse of this "Daughter of the Light" (*Centenary* 9:219; *Twice-Told Tales*) transforms him into a type of pilgrim, seeking another "Vision," filled with both agony and ecstasy in his quest. While critics like Crowley read this story as one of Hawthorne's weaker efforts (48, 59), I believe the short tale bears a closer look, for the narrator seems to experience what could only be described as a divine or angelic presence: "My heart knew her; it was the Vision; but, so distant and ethereal did she seem, so unmixed with earth, so imbued with the pensive glory of the spot where she was standing, that my spirit sunk within me, sadder than before. How could I ever reach her?" (*Centenary* 9:216; *Twice-Told Tales*). The narrator's sadness is answered with a sudden, rainbow-creating shadow, causing the narrator to regain his joy: "I would not despair of her return; for, robed in the rainbow, she was the emblem of Hope" (*Centenary* 9:216; *Twice-Told Tales*). Gatta reads this



sketch as an example of Hawthorne's tendency to depict the divine Madonna in the "mythological shape of a pre-Christian water goddess or earth mother" (*American Madonna* 14). Nevertheless, I would argue that Hawthorne's depiction in this sketch of a supernatural occurrence, followed by a sensory experience and a symbolic promise, fits well with a Catholic understanding of a sacramental and stimulating natural world.

Longfellow's works also reflect Binde's third Catholic view of a spiritually alive natural world in both European and American settings. He offers many depictions of pilgrims and saints, and even saintly pilgrims, who commune closely and even viscerally with a spiritualized natural landscape. For example, the young pilgrims in "The Children's Crusade" (1882) persist on their quest to reach the far off Holy Land on foot from Cologne, making holy the earth with drops of their own blood: "Faint not, though your bleeding feet / O'er these slippery paths of sleet / Move but painfully and slowly [sic]" (lines 115-117). Their blood sanctifies the very trails that try fruitlessly to guide them homeward, with the waterfall itself urging the children to turn back: "Oh return, while yet you may, / Foolish children, to your home, / There the Holy City is!" (110-113) Nature itself responds to the devotion of the children with an active effort to guide them to safety. In a similar and more famous act of visceral devotion, Evangeline wanders "[b]leeding, barefooted, over the shards and thorns of existence" (2.1.732) in her arduous and sanctified quest for her betrothed, Gabriel.

Figures like Evangeline and Natty Bumppo, among others, reveal themselves in a natural world filled with the immanent grace of God, yet a world also filled with less benevolent spirits, thus making it possible to lose one's way. Though holy figures like the crusading children of Longfellow may receive direct intervention from the supernatural landscape, such occurrences are less common in a world where so many are unable to read the natural world like a book, their

senses clouded by living in a “civilized” world with man-made inventions that often serve as obstacles rather than connections to God. Thus, to keep pilgrims on the right path, guides such as Evangeline and Natty Bumppo—individuals possessed of exceptional strength, determination, insight, and devotion—are necessary to help their fellow men and women on the trails to their own salvation. Thus, writers like Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, following along the lines of a Catholic sensibility, infuse their works with action-oriented saints to help the world, and the people in it, move in the right direction.

“Holy Men and Women, Full of Faith and Good Works”: Sainthood and Salvific Sacrifice

Chapter 3

In order for the American people to embrace the continent as “an abode of divine presence” (Binde 18), rich with the potential to cultivate transcendence, salvation, and egalitarianism, they needed trailblazers to help them create paths through the wilderness so that they could find spiritual and social edification. The American people, in other words, often believed that they needed physical and spiritual guides to help them along the journey to achieve their “manifest destiny.” Just as a garden in general would not bear fruit without tending, the spiritual benefits of nature would not yield fruit without works. Thus, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, having established a reverence for the holiness of the American landscape, demonstrated in their writings that they recognized both the need for work to be done and the need for certain inspirational and holy people, marked by their devotion and service, to do that work. All three of these writers acknowledged a need for living saints: not orators, theologians, or other lofty individuals, but saints of action to do the hard work of building communities, making paths into the wilderness for others to travel. These writers created men and women of action who could put their hearts and their hands to work, building a nation and connecting to God, immanent in the wilds, as they did so.

The virtue of hard work is important both to Catholic ideas about salvation and to Jacksonian ideas about democracy. All of the authors studied here, and most particularly Hawthorne, struggled with the Reformed religious traditions of Calvin and Luther and their impact on the American experience. Authors like Sacvan Bercovitch and George McKenna have well documented the pervasive influence of Puritanism on the formation of American culture, yet

the Reformed tradition emphasizes per Luther that salvation is *sola fide*, based on faith alone, with Calvin limiting that salvation to a select few predestined for salvation before birth. James Sellers, in “The Almost Chosen People: A Theological Approach to American Society” (1965), points out that in the centuries after the Reformation, the original Protestant concept of salvation *sola fide* proved too rigid for more action-oriented Western cultures like that in Jacksonian America (266-269). While Luther and Calvin meant only to emphasize that human wholeness comes from the mercy of God, the implementation of their theology led to an increasing belief that works on earth are of no utility for those who seek salvation, because human actions and abilities, in this view, only reflect man’s ultimate unworthiness in the face of God’s transcendent majesty and sovereignty. Sellers correctly points out that both orthodox Lutherans and Calvinists were social activists, but their theology led them to believe that meaningful good could be done only by the redeemed, those already empowered by or predestined to God’s saving grace, and that the Reformers therefore “fell back upon a conception of unredeemed man that equated natural activity with hopelessness and sin” (267). Consequently, the doctrine of *sola fide* set up a “cleavage between faith and culture” that was

only intensified by the two-values view of good and evil that is bound up with the *sola fide* teaching. According to orthodox Protestantism, man is either lost or blessed, and there is no gradation, no half-way point in between. Man in his *natural* state, and, by implication, the nations, his society, and his culture, are lost (Sellers 270).

Thus, Sellers makes clear that even though Reformed churches viewed good works as the evidence of visible sainthood (268-269), there was no way that a person seeking salvation could increase his or her faith through works, whether works of reparation or works of free charity.

Though the powerful Reformed tradition did not find any salvific effects of actions, other orthodox and non-orthodox traditions in Jacksonian America found spiritual merit in good works. Sellers contrasts the limitations of *sola fide* to the “more moderate Catholic appraisal of

man and culture, which understands ‘natural’ man as capable of limited, though not of saving, fulfillment” (271). In other words, Catholic theology recognizes that a person may increase his or her faith through good works; the works themselves are not salvific if there is no faith, but the two are intrinsically connected. Through living a life of good works as a demonstration of one’s faith, a person can join in the work of the *communio sanctorum*, or the communion of saints. This communion includes the living and the dead, with the dead either in heaven or in a state of anticipatory purification in purgatory before entering heaven (*Catechism* 946-953). Additionally, Catholics believe that the living and the dead work together in that the common effort to live in union with God and to love one’s neighbor through good works on earth is shared by all three groups in their earthly pilgrimages (Mark 12:31; *Catechism* 953). Further, all three groups (the living and the two groups of dead) unite in prayer for one another, thus the living and the dead have a means of spiritual communion via the communication of prayer, and this prayer goes in both directions. Believers on earth can, in prayer, ask for the intercession of those who have already died, and the dead can pray for the living on earth—and if those dead individuals are saints in heaven, then their prayers have intercessory value for those who feel less comfortable turning directly to the divine for assistance with an earthly weakness or problem. Calvin’s idea of salvation as *sola fide* thus is a far more limited understanding of the connection between works and salvation, for Calvinist visible sainthood is more of a possible sign of God’s favor, rather than a means of working to live a life like that called for in the scriptures, modeled by the works of the saints who have already left earth for the kingdom of heaven. For Catholics, then, the idea of visible sainthood is not a radical concept, because it has a fundamentally different meaning: anyone and everyone is called to visible sainthood through a life of faith and good works. What is radical about Calvin’s idea of visible sainthood is that it is limited to a seemingly arbitrarily

select group whose work offers them no opportunity for spiritual growth or evangelization. Thus, the impact of good works on the soul, of faith working through love, can lead an individual to greater faith and, thus, to salvation, and the impact of these good works can help to increase the faith of others, thereby increasing the possibility that “the nations, his society, and his culture,” to use Sellers’s words, might move closer to achieving salvation thanks to the good works modeled by that individual.

In the nineteenth century, Americans of many different faith traditions, both old and new, were challenging the original Reformed orthodoxy of *sola fide*, some more overtly than others. Sellers points out that in particular, the *sola fide* notion of salvation connected to the Reformed tradition was less and less satisfying for a post-Enlightenment society that emphasized the potential powers of humanity and the importance of human action (268). According to Sellers, *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*, its fundamentalist offshoot, “ha[ve] often led to manifestly anti-democratic resistance to political reform” (269), and even to reluctance of the Reformed churches to combat social injustices (270). The democratization of American politics and society thus occurred in spite of, not because of, the traditional Reformed beliefs in *sola fide* and predestination.

Catholic theology offered one of the many possible ways for nineteenth-century Americans to reconcile their hopes for salvation with individual action, social activism, and the difficult labors necessary to forge a nation. Conditions in the Jacksonian era magnified the struggle between Reformed views of work and those of other traditions, because by the nineteenth century, the United States had fully become what both Sellers and Edward T. Hall “call an “ageric” culture (from *agere*, to act),” where one must work and act in order to accomplish individual and community goals (Sellers 268; Hall 153). This America required

strength, action, and movement, and the orthodox Protestant tradition, particularly the Calvinist belief in predestination that seemed to preclude free will, was simply no longer sufficient. The doctrine of *sola fide*, emphasizing as it does grace as a gift passively received, thus stood in opposition to the work needed to create a new nation, so many Americans were looking for ways to reconcile their spiritual and temporal views of work. These ongoing debates over the respective merits of faith and works were certainly not lost on writers of the nineteenth century, and Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Cooper all created characters that demonstrate the struggle to reconcile the different paths to salvation. Creating characters whose work leads to both temporal and spiritual benefits brought these three writers into an intersection between a civic ideal of rugged individualism and a more perceptibly Catholic ideal of active and beneficial “intercession” on the part of a special, demonstrably holy person somehow set apart from the community that he or she serves.

Some of these action-oriented saintly figures appear in explicitly Catholic contexts, where readers might be more likely to expect to encounter them, such as in Cooper’s European novels. Both *The Headsman; or, The Abbaye des Vignerons. A Tale* (1833) and *The Bravo: A Tale* (1831) feature ageric saints in Old World settings, though the characters clearly display the energy that would also serve them well in the New World. The most obvious example of such an ageric figure is Father Xavier in *The Headsman*, set in Switzerland. Father Xavier, almost always accompanied by his faithful dog, Uberto, is universally admired in a novel that on the whole connects Catholic characters (and non-Catholic characters) evenly with virtues or with vices. Father Xavier, an extension of his Augustinian monastery, is well known to the people of Switzerland, with one Calvinist peasant commenting that

I never knew thee or any of thy convent question the frozen traveler of his faith, but all are fed, and warmed, and at need administered to from the pharmacy with brotherly care,

and as Christians merit. Whatever thou mayest think of the state of our souls, thou on thy mountain there, no one will deny thy tender services to our bodies (226-227; ch. 13).

For Cooper's American readers, Father Xavier and his loyal dog are iconic images of liberal Catholic hospitality to travelers in difficult terrain, so inseparable that Father Xavier and Uberto seem to be equally revered and perhaps interchangeable in the eyes of the Swiss people. Father Xavier appears in the novel in a critical supporting role, furthering the plot by preserving the traveling party of main characters. As he guides this group of travelers to safety, through treacherous landscapes populated with unsavory individuals (378-407; ch. 23-24), Xavier also plays a role in an important moral journey of the Swiss nobleman Melchior, convincing him to allow the supposedly low-born and cursed Sigismund to marry his daughter (504-507; ch.31), demonstrating an egalitarian and democratic disposition, prejudiced by neither class nor creed. Father Xavier evokes no fears of tyranny or hierarchy. Though he lives in a monastic community, he is depicted as out and with the people, acting as an individual agent, making the lives of those he encounters safer and better, be they Catholic or Protestant, Swiss or international. To be fair, Cooper does offer Conrad, a murderous Catholic trafficker in indulgences, as a foil of sorts to Father Xavier, but Conrad's acts of ignominy bring no shame to the ageric Catholics in the novel. In fact, his trade in indulgences sets him apart as someone who is not a true worker, but merely a charlatan, cementing the ageric Father Xavier as a heroic supporting character and an easily accepted model for Cooper's readership.

Similarly, in *The Bravo*, Cooper offers his readers explicitly Catholic characters who help Venetians navigate (and even escape) the treacherous canals of the city and thus, symbolically, navigate and escape the tyranny introduced by corruption into the Venetian republic. Both the fisherman Antonio and the purported *bravo* (or assassin) Jacopo struggle against the oppression of the Venetian government, and both become martyrs in the fight for justice. Father Anselmo,



the Carmelite spiritual adviser to the novel's heroine, Violetta, is spurred into action through witnessing the assassination of Antonio, killed for challenging the government's impressment of his grandson into galley servitude, and he quells a mob of angry fishermen whose riotous behavior allows sufficient cover for Violetta and her governess to escape the city. Though successful in his efforts to free Violetta and her entourage from the control of the government, Father Anselmo is unsuccessful in his efforts to save Jacopo, who is beheaded by the doge lest he reveal the secrets of the corrupt state. Despite his limited success, Father Anselmo emerges as one of the heroic figures of *The Bravo*, willing to champion the oppressed and fight for liberty while protecting travelers from danger. Both Father Xavier and Father Anselmo, then, are Catholic men of action, ageric figures of civic intercession whose faith allows them to uphold republican ideas, thus broadening their appeal to an American readership.

But for many of those nineteenth-century American readers who had moved past the Puritanical concept of "visible sainthood" for a predestined elect, it was harder to perceive ageric holy men and women in rustic American settings than in the shrine-dotted landscapes of Europe. Thus, connecting salvific actions and saintliness was far more challenging for Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Cooper in their creation of more demonstrably American characters and settings. Despite the potential difficulties, all three authors managed to connect faith and works in their writings, albeit more directly in some cases than others. Longfellow, in his novel *Kavanagh* (1849), explicitly rejects Reformed tradition and embraces Catholic belief in ageric saints, particularly Saint Christopher, in order to associate good works with faith. He also anticipates this theme in *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847), setting acts of charity on the margins of civilization, whether on the frontier or in ministering to the stricken in the midst of an epidemic. Likewise, Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) offers a challenge to Puritan and Deist belief

alike when he situates his “able” (*Centenary* 1:161; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13) Hester Prynne on the edge of her community, ministering to both the spiritual and temporal needs of those who live within the town itself, and manifesting traits that, though previously overlooked, link her to the Catholic St. Christopher story in thought-provoking ways. Hester thus stands in contrast to the “saintliness” of Hilda in *The Marble Faun* (1860), whom Hawthorne links more directly but less convincingly to Catholic notions of sainthood. Cooper, even before his explorations of ageric sainthood in his European novels, developed convincing American prototypes for monastic figures, revealing an interest in the idea of a spiritually consecrated life associated with Catholic saints and missionaries. Harvey Birch, the itinerant and misunderstood protagonist in *The Spy* (1821), demonstrates Cooper’s interest in the heroic implications of eremitic monasticism, and his archetypal American frontiersman, Natty Bumppo, similarly functions as one whose untutored faith and role as a protector and defender of travelers to the west faith certainly mimic that related by Longfellow in his retelling of the legend of Saint Christopher. All three of these authors sought, through their characters, ways to evoke the Catholic understanding of the intersection between faith and good works, moving beyond concepts of *sola fide* and predestination.

In *Kavanagh*, Longfellow attempts to fulfill his Universalist vision for an ideal, unified church, and does not hesitate to draw from Catholic tradition in order to do so. Set in the evolving nineteenth-century New England village of Fairmeadow, the novel sees its title character, the young minister Arthur Kavanagh, infuse new spiritual life into a community constrained by the familiar limits of the Reformed tradition. Kavanagh’s predecessor, Pendexter, ministers to his flock sternly and distantly, not unlike a radically transcendent God himself. Pendexter is too wrapped up in the writing of his farewell sermon “to notice the extreme and

hopeless humility of his old parishioner, and the unintentional allusion to the inefficacy of his prayers” (31; ch. 6) when his sexton reports to him that prayers for the old parishioner’s wife were “of no use” (31; ch. 6). If one believes that faith alone, not works, is the means to salvation, then it follows that all works, no matter how good or prayerful, are ultimately fruitless.

Pendexter, though, does not acknowledge, even in his farewell, any meaningful good done by his “ungrateful people” (32; ch. 6), choosing instead to briefly mention the kindnesses of a few church women to his deceased wife before launching into a sermon evocative of Increase Mather or Jonathan Edwards, and

finally telling the congregation in general that they were so confirmed in their bad habits, that no reformation was to be expected in them under his ministry, and that to produce one would require a greater exercise of Divine power than it did to create the world; for in creating the world there had been no opposition, whereas, in their reformation, their own obstinacy and evil propensities, and self-seeking, and worldly-mindedness, were all to be overcome! (35; ch. 7)

In a sermon like Pendexter’s, little hope is offered for salvation, making a reader wonder little that his flock “returned home in very various states of mind. Some were exasperated, others mortified, and others filled with pity” (36; ch. 8). Significantly, none of the congregation finds motivation to reform, to become less self-seeking, or to turn away from the concerns of the world. The congregation is written off by its spiritual leader, and thus by God, as completely fallen, unable to do anything to make itself better, so all actions are useless. Pendexter’s faith is in a wholly distant, completely angry God, one whose disgust with the sins of mankind leads neither to acknowledgement of good works, however small, nor to mercy, revealing Longfellow’s critique here of the Reformed tradition, more particularly, of New England Puritanism and its Congregationalist offshoots. There are no visible saints in Fairmeadow, and the residents are as happy to be shed of their minister “as when one gets rid of an ill-fitting garment” (46; ch. 10).

In the wake of Pendexter's departure, Longfellow offers Churchill and Kavanagh to illustrate how individuals can respond to God in this typical American religious environment created by Pendexter and ministers like him. Churchill, Fairmeadow's young, sympathetic, and intellectually curious school master, demonstrates the consequences of following the individualistic implications of the Reformed tradition to their fullest extreme, isolating himself from his community in an effort to forge an individual relationship with God, much like the patriarch in Charles Brockden Brown's novel *Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798). Just as the elder Wieland built his own temple to reason, one where only he could worship and where he was ultimately struck down by a lightning-bolt-wielding angel (Brockden Brown 6-19; ch. 1-2), so Churchill brings the pulpit home from the minister-less church and sets it up in his study, inscribing "his many meditations with a pencil on its white panels" (Longfellow, *Kavanagh* 59; ch. 13). His gloomy demeanor and his pithy observations, echoing Benjamin Franklin's regimen for order and virtue (59-63; ch. 13), seem an introspective diary penciled on the pulpit in an effort to somehow channel the word of God from Heaven, hoping to make a divine presence seem tangible, yet reflecting little more than his own perceived inadequacies as a poet, the calling he feels yet cannot fully answer to due to his beleaguering duties as a schoolmaster. Churchill, like Pendexter, serves as a foil for Arthur Kavanagh, Longfellow's seemingly ideal minister.

Kavanagh enters into Fairmeadow like a breath of fresh air, preaching "such sermons! So beautifully written, so different from old Mr. Pendexter's!" (55; ch. 12). His topics focus on everyday concerns and works, as when he states that "every good thought, word, and deed of a man, not only was an offering to heaven, but likewise served to light him and others on their way homeward!" (56; ch. 12). Unusual, indeed, is Kavanagh's focus on earthly works, far removed

from the excoriations of Pendexter and others in the Reformed tradition. Kavanagh brings with him a sense of hopefulness and brightness, possibly a response to Churchill's "perpetual riddle of the real and the ideal" (6; ch. 1), the dilemma that keeps him from following his inner desire to be a man of letters, living such that "the trivial things of life postponed the great designs, which he felt capable of accomplishing, but never had the resolute courage to begin" (7; ch. 1).

Kavanagh, as the ideal minister, brings to his congregation an emphasis on the holiness of everyday work, the notion of earthly labor as a spiritual calling. Conversely, Churchill finds no vocation in his work as a schoolmaster, despite its overt connections to service through the formation of virtuous youth for the church and for the nation. While this theme of virtuous work is not entirely removed from the Reformed tradition, its significance is magnified in Longfellow's use of the *Lives of the Saints*, a text popularly used to catechize children, particularly the Saint Christopher legend, to link *Kavanagh* closely to a Catholic vision of the sacramental nature of everyday work.

Longfellow references the *Lives of the Saints* to both illuminate Kavanagh's background and to demonstrate that a failure to honor the virtues of everyday labors is one of the key shortcomings of the Reformed church, particularly in the Calvinist tradition. In so doing, he demonstrates that in his Universalist vision, the veneration of the saints is beneficial to people of faith, and should be reintegrated into the Reformed vision of religious life. Kavanagh's mother centered his religious formation on the *Lives of the Saints*, and Longfellow tells his readers directly that "the lives of holy men and women, full of faith and good works" were "ever afterward...associated together in his mind. Thus holiness of life, and self-renunciation, and devotion to duty, were early impressed upon his soul" (90-91; ch. 18). Longfellow never strays into any concerns, so typical of outsiders peering into the Catholic worship tradition, that

Kavanagh and his fellow Catholics could be worshipping these saints. He clearly states that saints are models, not idols, to Kavanagh, and that “the spiritual world became real” to him, with the young boy growing comfortable with the knowledge of angels and saints living in eternity yet immanently present to him, developing an incarnational faith (91; ch. 18). Of all of these traditions, the story of Saint Christopher is most compelling to Kavanagh, undoubtedly because it offers Longfellow a way to sanctify the work necessary to preserve and nurture the young American republic, forging westward despite the dangers of travel and settlement.

The legend of Saint Christopher lends itself well to Longfellow’s interests in creating a uniquely American identity to complement a uniquely American literature. Longfellow devotes several pages of *Kavanagh* to a detailed retelling of the story of the giant man Christopher, whose quest for the “greatest king” to serve led to his conversion to Christianity on the advice of a “holy hermit” (91; ch. 18). The hermit advised Christopher to enter into a lifetime of fasting and prayer,

but the giant replied that if he fasted he should lose his strength, and that he did not know how to pray. Then the hermit told him to take up his abode on the banks of a dangerous mountain torrent, where travelers were often drowned, and to rescue any that might be in peril....And the Lord looked down from heaven and said, “Behold this strong man, who knows not yet the way to worship, but has found the way to serve me!” (92; ch. 18)

So that Christopher would know of his favor in heaven, he received a visit from the Christ child himself in the course of his duties. Christopher ferried the Christ child across the raging river. After struggling beneath the weight upon his shoulders, he received his reward for his life of service: “Thou hast borne the whole world upon thy shoulders, and Him who created it. I am Christ, whom thou by thy deeds of charity wouldst serve. Thou and thy service are accepted. Plant thy staff in the ground, and it shall blossom and bear fruit!” (93; ch. 18). Through his service to strangers, Christopher earned his redemption; his inability to pray and fast had no

bearing on his favor from God. The story of Saint Christopher turns the Reformed emphasis on faith over works on its head, because Christopher used his works to demonstrate his faith in ways consistent with Catholic teaching yet misunderstood by those Protestants who would not distinguish between the works of a Christopher and the selling of an indulgence. Longfellow fixes upon the Saint Christopher legend to restore this distinction, demonstrating that “active charity and a willingness to serve” (93; ch. 18) are the keys to Kavanagh’s ministry and thus to a truly universal church.

Kavanagh’s desire to work for Christ propels him into his vocation as a minister, and thus sets him squarely opposite Churchill, who finds no fulfillment in his job (not his vocation) as a schoolmaster. Central to the difference is that Kavanagh realizes “that the life of a man consists not in seeing visions, and in dreaming dreams, but in active charity and willing service” (96; ch. 18). Thus, Kavanagh finds a measure of contentment wherever he might be, whether in school, in ministry, or in his studies, even after the pursuit of “Reason” pulls him away from the “many dusky dogmas, many antique superstitions” (96; ch. 18) of Catholicism, because what Longfellow sees as beneficial, Kavanagh’s desire for service, remains untouched. Thus, the course of the novel shows Kavanagh’s intellectual and social growth, both as a minister and as a member of the community, as he descends from his study in the tower of the church to marry the town’s most attractive maiden and travel to Italy and the Holy Land, sites of the origins of his faith. Churchill, on the other hand, is unable to make any progress as a character, and finds no more satisfaction in his life at the close of the novel than at its opening, burdened by his students and tormented by his perpetually unwritten “romance,” and thus prevented from answering his call:

He had not advanced one step,—not one. The same dreams, the same longings, the same aspirations, the same indecision. A thousand things had been planned, and none

completed. His imagination seemed still to exhaust itself in running, before it tried to leap the ditch. (180; ch. 30)

Churchill seems trapped in a life of study without purpose, demonstrating the flaws of an overly bookish, rather than ageric, life. Churchill, constrained by his Reformed tradition and further bound by the pithy reasonable observations penciled on his pulpit, is unable to achieve any of his aspirations because he is seemingly afraid to take the risk of answering his calling. On the other hand, Kavanagh, like Saint Christopher, is able to traverse long distances both physical and intellectual, because his Catholic upbringing allows him to understand that his work can be offered up as Christian service. Kavanagh was willing to abandon his ancestral home and much of his ancestral faith for Christ, but Churchill is unable to make himself actually put pen to paper to answer his calling, so “[o]ther hands wrote the books he dreamed about” (180; ch. 30) while he remained frustrated in life and possibly unredeemed for eternity.

For Longfellow, the neglect of talent and ambition has grave consequences not only for the individual, but also for his or her community. Neither Pendexter nor Churchill is able to truly see the community as committing acts of love and self-sacrifice, and thus neither fulfills his calling. In contrast, lonely Alice Archer emerges as more than just the pitiful confidant of Cecilia Vaughn, Kavanagh’s love interest, but as a virtuous protector of the community through self-sacrifice, when she keeps secret that she had received Kavanagh’s carrier-pigeon letter to Cecilia and thought, for one brief moment, that he loved her. In order to preserve the community, Alice carries her love for Arthur to her grave:

Kavanagh never knew what wealth of affection for him faded from the world when she departed; Cecilia never knew what fidelity of friendship, what delicate regard, what gentle magnanimity, what angelic patience had gone with her into the grave; Mr. Churchill never knew, that, while he was exploring the Past for records of obscure and unknown martyrs, in his own village, near his own door, before his own eyes, one of that silent sisterhood had passed away into oblivion, unnoticed and unknown. (168; ch. 28)



Alice here serves as a virtuous force who sacrifices her own desires for the sake of community preservation, choosing to keep silent her love for Kavanagh in order to give him a future with Alice; Longfellow calls her a martyr in recognition of her sacrifice.

Kavanagh is also a protector of community and republican ideals, if in less apparent ways. He serves to help those in his community make connections with one another in several instances. He devotes himself fully to his calling, both in making visits to all of the homes of his parishioners and in crafting his messages from the pulpit (101-102; ch. 19), where “[h]e did not so much denounce vice, as inculcate virtue; he did not deny, but affirm; he did not lacerate the hearts of his hearers with doubt and disbelief, but consoled, and comforted, and healed them with faith” (102; ch. 19). He literally tears down “the partition wall between parish and church” in order to unify his congregation with each other, not just in union with him through visits. Significantly, his flock includes even the carrier pigeon that travels between Alice and Cecilia when it seeks refuge in his study from an attacking kingfisher. Kavanagh acts as a conduit for community when he rescues the bird and sends it off on its way to safely complete its errand, and to complete Kavanagh’s as well (152-153; ch. 26). After his marriage to Cecilia, the newlyweds take their honeymoon as “a sacred mission” (172; ch. 29) to fulfill Longfellow’s Universalist vision, as stated in the text, but also to make a pilgrimage to the roots of faith, in “Italy and the East” (172), not turning back on the roots of faith but returning to the Old World to bring his message as a New World minister. After a three-year absence, Kavanagh and his bride return to find Fairmeadow much changed, but Kavanagh returns to building community through visits and gentle conversations, not even giving up on Churchill, still stuck “precisely where he had left him” (180; ch. 30). Using the Christopher legend as a lens, we can see how Longfellow valued both physical and intellectual service as essential components of strengthening the new nation,

carrying forward what is beneficial from the old world, including elements of Catholicism, yet leaving behind what is not clearly aligned with the ideal of a democratic republic.

The poem *Evangeline*, in which the title character devotes her life to consecrated service after spending her youth searching for her bridegroom along the frontiers of America, reveals that Longfellow was playing with the Christopher legend before fully articulating it in *Kavanagh*. *Evangeline*, a pure maiden of eighteenth-century French Acadia, is separated from her fiancé Gabriel on the eve of their formal betrothal, when tyrannical English soldiers seize their idyllic village, where “dwelt together in love these simple Acadian farmers,—/ Dwelt in the love of God and of man” (1.1.52-53). As in *Kavanagh*, Longfellow clearly establishes in *Evangeline* a protagonist perfectly raised in the Catholic faith. *Evangeline*’s formation leads her into a life of ministry, but her journey is expanded to consume much of her life as a wayward traveler, becoming like the seeking Christopher. *Evangeline*’s journey lasts so long because when she initially takes the veil, her commitment to her earthly fiancé takes precedence over offering herself to her avowed bridegroom, Christ. *Evangeline*, though every young man in her village “as he knelt in the church and opened his missal, / Fixed his eyes upon her, as the saint of his deepest devotion” (1.1.105-106), loves only Gabriel Lajeunesse, and it seems that this hard working blacksmith’s son and farmer’s daughter are poised to be the ideal Acadian family, raising children to populate their virtuous society. With their marriage documents drafted by the notary, all is prepared for Gabriel and *Evangeline* to vow themselves to one another, but the seizure of their property by the British and their forced removal from their homes as prisoners create chaos, as “[b]usily plied the freighted boats; and in the confusion / Wives were torn from their husbands, and mothers, too late, saw their children / Left on the land, extending their arms, with wildest entreaties” (1.5.569-571). *Evangeline* and her father, left ashore with the remaining

refugees, weep with the other Acadians at the devastating loss of their homes. Adding insult to injury, this remnant watches the British soldiers set fire to their homes, a sight too much for Evangeline's father to survive. Burying him on the shore, Evangeline is left radically alone, an orphan betrothed to an absent fiancé.

Evangeline's sudden aloneness is significant in that the popular pot-boiler novels of Longfellow's day struggled to come to terms with young women veiling themselves as brides of Christ. Here, the sudden absence of an earthly fiancé creates for Evangeline a unique challenge and space. She is free to refuse other suitors, despite her apparent availability, saying "[w]hither my heart has gone, there follows my hand, and not elsewhere" (2.1.715). Encouraged by Father Felician, her "friend and father confessor" (2.1.718), to remain true to her beloved, Evangeline is thus freed to wander the frontiers of a new world, with and without male escorts, liberated by her consecration to Gabriel and thus placed "beyond desire," to use the phrasing of David Greven, whose path-breaking study *Men Beyond Desire: Manhood, Sex, and Vocation in American Literature* (2005), focuses on "the inviolate male," defined as "emotionally, sexually, and psychically unavailable either to women *or* men" (1). Working within scholarly conversations about masculinity, Greven focuses upon literary characters who seem to defy nineteenth-century American ideals of Christian masculinity in their decisions to not marry. Adding a religious perspective, however, shifts the meaning of a life "beyond desire" and makes it applicable both to men and to women, while allowing still another way for these characters to be interpreted. Perhaps Evangeline is but one example of a person intentionally setting herself "beyond desire" when the loss of her fiancé leaves her in need of an alternative path for her life. Evangeline would not seem to be emotionally or sexually unavailable, as she was engaged to be married. The disappearance of Gabriel, however, forces her to create a new path for herself, one in which

she is unavailable to any other individual man, but available to all men and women in her community through her self-consecration. Evangeline, as a betrothed woman seeking her lost love, enters into a liminal space in which other women cannot travel—she is at liberty to move freely, to live alone, and to set herself apart, yet she is not castigated for her separation. On the contrary, her inviolability opens the door to a new life of ageric sainthood, where she can minister to the poor, the suffering, and the dying—tasks that a married woman and likely mother could never complete. Thus, her travels are important, both to her and to her nation, much more meaningful than what Franchot dismisses as “directionless pursuit and spiritual suffering” (203). Evangeline’s search for her fiancé offers Evangeline possibilities for a life unlike that of most other women in nineteenth-century America, yet she is paradoxically a model for nineteenth-century American womanhood, all because she is “beyond desire.”

Evangeline’s journey demonstrates that her unique status as an avowedly single woman does not bring freedom from earthly sufferings. Evangeline traverses the American frontier as “a maiden who waited and wandered, / Lowly and meek in spirit, and patiently suffering all things” (2.1.681-682). She follows the trail of her beloved, a reversal of the typical captivity narrative where a woman is kidnapped by Native peoples and redeemed by white men or by what the famous Puritan captive Mary Rowlandson referred to as “the Sovereignty and Goodness of God.” Here the virtuous Evangeline has no fear from immigrant or Native, chasing rumors of Gabriel through the wilderness. Evangeline’s pursuit of her betrothed carries her from Spanish settlements to Jesuit missions, from the Ozark Mountains to the forests of Michigan, but Gabriel is always just beyond her reach. “Bleeding, barefooted, over the shards and thorns of existence” (2.1.732), Evangeline literally offers her body and her blood as a Christ-like sacrifice to her beloved, eventually making her way down the great rivers of America to Louisiana, only to be

lying asleep and unseen when Gabriel passes by in his own boat on the Atchafalaya River, for “Angel of God was there none to awaken the slumbering maiden” (2.2.840), the not-yet-vowed Evangeline still hoping to marry and end the quest that pulls her across the nation. Once Evangeline arrives at the Acadian refugee settlement on the Bayou Teche and is reunited with many of her former neighbors, she learns that Gabriel, “[t]hinking ever of thee, uncertain and sorrowful ever” (2.3.948), had indeed passed within reach of her on his way into the wilderness. Evangeline weeps under the majestic oak trees of St. Martinsville for so narrowly missing her beloved Gabriel.

Evangeline never gives up her love for Gabriel, but over the years, her consecration to her beloved pulls her into the life of a consecrated bride of Christ. She does not help travelers through raging waters like a Saint Christopher, but she displays a Christopher-like resolve to fulfill her calling as she understands it, one that causes her to remain at the Jesuit mission in the wilderness in the unfulfilled expectation that Gabriel will return to it on his route home. Departing the mission without any companion or chaperone, the “wandering maiden” (2.4.1240) travels more of the American interior, growing older and more alone, until she settles at last in Philadelphia, recognizing that her search is “to recommence no more upon earth, uncomplaining” (2.5.1268). Giving up her search for Gabriel allows her to take on a new bridegroom without betraying her long-lost betrothed; as a Sister of Mercy, she is able to love and serve both:

He had become to her heart as one who is dead, and not absent;  
 Patience and abnegation of self, and devotion to others,  
 This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her.  
 So was her love diffused, but like to some odorous spices,  
 Suffered no waste or loss, though filling the air with aroma.  
 Other hope had she none, nor wish in life, but to follow  
 Meekly, with reverent steps, the sacred feet of her Saviour. (2.5.1281-1287)

In seeing Gabriel as “one who is dead, and not absent,” Evangeline is able to fulfill at last what Father Felician had hinted all along may be her real calling. The priest encouraged her, in the early years of her separation from Gabriel, to “accomplish thy labor of love, till the heart is made godlike, / Purified, strengthened, perfected, and rendered more worthy of heaven!” (2.2.726-727).

While Evangeline understood these words to validate her search for her earthly beloved, they can also be interpreted in light of the close of the poem to indicate that her long journey is necessary as an extended spiritual lesson. Evangeline’s devotion to Gabriel is so strong that she is unable or unwilling to give up her quest until “faded was she and old” (2.4.1246). Only in her later years is she receptive to another calling, one of service to the poor. In *Kavanagh*, Longfellow notes that Christopher received his calling from a hermit in the wilderness. Evangeline finds no such direction in the forests primeval of the American frontier, but only achieves a revelation amid the anonymous crowds of the early American republic’s great metropolis of Philadelphia, where “[s]o fell the mists from her mind, and she saw the world far below her, / Dark no longer, but all illumined with love” (2.5.1273-1274). Evangeline resolves to serve the poor and the needy in the teeming city, traveling in the night to seek not her beloved, but the sick and the lonely. I suggest, however, that perhaps Evangeline was called to a life as a fully consecrated bride of Christ all along, because only in service in Philadelphia is she able to share the affections that she had kept tightly inside, freeing her so that “her love diffused” like incense, “filling the air with aroma” (2.5.1284-1285). As a Sister of Mercy, Evangeline is haloed with “[g]leams of celestial light [that] encircle her forehead with splendor, / Such as the artist paints o’er the brows of saints and apostles” (2.5.1315-1316). Only as a Sister of Mercy does

Evangeline find any measure of peace, and only as a Sister of Mercy does she receive a sign of favor, evoking the visit of the Christ Child to Saint Christopher.

Evangeline, while caring for the residents of Philadelphia during “a pestilence [that] fell on the city” (2.5.1298), receives a fleeting reward for her selfless acts of service. Entering into the almshouse to tend to the sick and dying one Sunday morning, Evangeline hears a voice deep within her that announces “[a]t length thy trials are ended” (2.5.1330). Not fully understanding the message, Evangeline continues her morning rounds until she recognizes a dying patient as her long-lost fiancé Gabriel. Evangeline rushes to his side; the aged lovers share a brief moment of recognition, “and Evangeline, kneeling beside him, / Kissed his dying lips, and laid his head on her bosom” (2.5.1372-1373). Embracing her dead fiancé, Evangeline returns to her consecrated life: “as she pressed once more the lifeless-head to her bosom, / Meekly, she bowed her own, and murmured, ‘Father, I thank thee!’” (2.5.1379-1380). In this moment, Evangeline recognizes that she has received this brief reunion with her beloved as a heavenly reward for her purity, patience, and service, just as Saint Christopher received a visit from the Christ Child as thanks for his earthly labors.

In order to cement Longfellow’s portrayal of Evangeline as that of a heroic, saintly service, it is important to note Longfellow continues with this theme and uses similar language in his 1857 poem “Santa Filomena.” Returning in this poem to “dreary hospitals of pain, / The cheerless corridors, / The cold and stony floors” (lines 18-20) like those Evangeline walked, “the speechless sufferer turns to kiss / Her shadow,” seeing the woman in the poem as a heavenly, not earthly, creature (26-27). In “Santa Filomena,” Longfellow explicitly states that heroic figures, through their works, bring the possibility of uplift, and even salvation, to the communities they serve:

Honor to those whose words or deeds  
 Thus help us in our daily needs,  
 And by their overflow  
 Raise us from what is low! (9-12)

As these lines show, the good works of others can cause an increase in virtue in those served when their “hearts, in glad surprise / To higher levels rise” (3-4). Thus, he falls in line with a more Catholic sensibility of the positive impact that works can have upon increasing faith. In *Evangeline*, his heroine is not Saint Filomena, the Roman martyr whose remains were discovered in 1802 and who was declared the Great Wonder Worker of the nineteenth century by Pope Gregory XVI in 1837, but the connection seems clear in that Longfellow believes ageric “wonder workers” like Saint Filomena are necessary to forge the new nation of America. *Evangeline* and “Santa Filomena” show that for Longfellow, this kind of ageric service seems to be particularly the domain of “[h]eroic womanhood” (“Santa Filomena,” line 40) when put into action in America, much as it is for Hawthorne, who also transfers ageric service most effectively onto a female protagonist.

The Christopher legend also emerges in Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, possibly influenced by Hawthorne’s readings of *Evangeline* and *Kavanagh* during the drafting phase of his novel. At a dinner in Cambridge in 1840, Hawthorne’s friend Horace Conolly told Hawthorne, Longfellow, and others the story of an Acadian couple tragically separated on their wedding day, hoping Hawthorne would seize upon the storyline, but the uninterested Hawthorne passed the plot inspiration on to Longfellow (Maine Historical Society). In his 1847 review of the “sweet and noble” poem, Hawthorne praised Longfellow for “transfiguring *Evangeline*, now old and gray, before our eyes, and making us willingly acquiesce in all the sorrow that has befallen her, for the sake of the joy which is prophesied and realized within her” (qtd. in Hoeltje 234). Similarly, Hawthorne wrote to Longfellow on June 5, 1849, that he found *Kavanagh* to be



“a most precious and rare book—as fragrant as a bunch of flowers, and as simple as one flower” (*Centenary* 16:269). However, he did express concerns that the book would not be well received: “It is entirely original...a true work of genius, if ever there were one, and yet I should not wonder if many people (God confound them!) were to see no such matter in it” (*Centenary* 16:269; 5 June 1849). As Hawthorne was drafting *The Scarlet Letter* in 1849 and 1850, it seems plausible that Longfellow’s works influenced his own, so it is not surprising that Hester Prynne takes on the role of a Christopher figure, both in her appearance and in her selfless service to others in a hostile terrain.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, it is clear that Hawthorne intends that both his characters in colonial Boston and his readers perceive Hester Prynne as a looming, larger-than-life figure. She enters into the novel from the darkness of the prison, yet she “repelled” the town-beadle, emblem of the theocratic legal system, “by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free will” (*Centenary* 1:52; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 2), unflinching in the face of her impending spectacle. Shaking off any fleeting impulse to hide her scarlet letter, Hester, described as “tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale” (*Centenary* 1:53; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 2), climbs the scaffold, to tower over the crowd, “displayed to the surrounding multitude, at about the height of a man’s shoulders above the street” (*Centenary* 1:56; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 2). In her moment of punishment, Hester stands as a giant, tall and unflinching, able to “see” Old England off in the distance (*Centenary* 1:58; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 2). Hester “sustained herself as best a woman might, under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes” (*Centenary* 1:56-57; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 2), quite literally bearing the weight of her world as she holds her child aloft, remarkably like the giant Saint Christopher.

*The Scarlet Letter's* triptych of scaffold scenes, at the beginning, middle, and the end of the novel, reinforce Hester's super-human strength and her service as Dimmesdale's guide to salvation. In the first scene, she stands alone with Pearl, refusing to name Dimmesdale as the father of her illegitimate child because she is vowed to secrecy, but also perhaps because the path to salvation for Dimmesdale requires that he freely and openly acknowledge the illicit relationship. Hester's strength and guidance are revealed again when she, Pearl, and Dimmesdale secretly climb the scaffold at night, holding hands so that "[t]he three formed an electric chain" (*Centenary* 1:153; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 12), marked by a meteor shooting through the sky and creating a red letter "A" in the heavens, a sight crippling to the weak minister (*Centenary* 1:152-156; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 12). As the novel concludes, the action returns to the scaffold, where Dimmesdale begs Hester to share her strength with him: "Thy strength, Hester; but let it be guided by the will which God has granted me!...Come, Hester, come! Support me up yonder scaffold!" (*Centenary* 1:253; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 23). Like Saint Christopher, Hester obliges the traveler on his spiritual journey to repentance and salvation, carrying him through the treacherous crowd and sharing her strength with him so that he can make his final confession, before cradling his weight in her arms as he dies (*Centenary* 1:253-257; *Scarlet Letter* ch. 23).

Even an intermediary scene with Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale in the forest, where they consider running away from Boston, is compatible with the novel's Christopher allusions. When Hester proposes running away, she offers Dimmesdale another avenue to the salvation that can only come by openly acknowledging his relationship with Hester and Pearl, though one that admittedly does not require his confession to his community. Hester and Pearl seek a personal relationship; Pearl asks Dimmesdale several times if he will hold her hand (*Centenary* 1:153; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 12), and Hester possibly wants to hear Dimmesdale wish to end his aloneness

with her (*Centenary* 1:212; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 28). When Dimmesdale enters the forest, he travels feebly, weak of step and clutching his heart, yet is momentarily strengthened when he entertains the possibility of a more honest life with Hester and Pearl (*Centenary* 1:188-189, 216; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 27-28). Recognizing, however, that running away is not a full and satisfactory solution to Dimmesdale's larger transgression against the community of Boston, they decide against fleeing, and Dimmesdale's crippled posture and poor health resurface, along with a rush of evil desires to commit further sins and thus bury his adultery even further back in his past and in his consciousness (*Centenary* 1:217-225; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 30). Just as Christopher sought many paths before finding the right way, so do Hester and Dimmesdale, but Hester's strength ultimately makes the journey possible for both of them.

Not only is the character of Hester Prynne imbued with giant-like qualities and notable strength, but she also achieves redemption, at least in the eyes of the townspeople, through a life of service to others. Hester Prynne, over the course of seven years (with seven being the Biblical number signifying perfection), is transformed in the eyes of the community, which has softened its view of her due, in part, to "the blameless purity of her life, during all these years in which she had been set apart to infamy.... With nothing now to lose, in the sight of mankind, and with no hope, and seemingly no wish, of gaining anything, it could only be a genuine regard for virtue that had brought back the poor wanderer to its paths" (*Centenary* 1:160; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13). The wandering Hester is fully transformed here into the patron of wayfarers and wanderers. She devotes her life to ministering to others in need through acts of physical service: feeding the hungry, tending the sick, caring for those for whom no one else cares, with her scarlet letter taking on an entirely new meaning for the residents of Boston:

Hester's nature showed itself warm and rich; a well spring of human tenderness, unailing to every real demand, and inexhaustible by the largest. Her breast, with its badge of

shame, was but the softer pillow for the head that needed one. She was a self-ordained Sister of Mercy; or, we may rather say, the world's heavy hand had so ordained her, when neither the world nor she looked forward to this result. The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfulness was found in her,—so much power to do, and power to sympathize,—that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength (*Centenary* 1:161; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13).

This passage, rich with Christopher-like imagery, demonstrates how Hester, weighed down by “the world's heavy hand,” lives out the life of the Saint Christopher legend. She incorporates into her life selfless service to others, and in the process, achieves virtue and holiness, even “blameless purity” (*Centenary* 1:160; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13), despite her sentence of seven years earlier. Not at all unlike the giant pagan-turned-saint Christopher, whose quest led him to his duties by the raging river, Hester stations herself in her little home on the edge of the community, entering in darkness and ministering to those in need, a source of spiritual light much as Longfellow's heroines are in *Evangeline* and “Santa Filomena.” Just as Christopher could traverse a dangerous river, so Hester's letter seemingly “imparted to the wearer a kind of sacredness, which enabled her to walk securely amid all peril” (*Centenary* 1:163; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13), allowing her to use her strength to help those less fortunate around her. Of great importance is the reference to the Sisters of Mercy, both because Longfellow's *Evangeline* becomes a member of this same order and because the Sisters of Mercy, who arrived in the United States in 1843, were commonly known as “walking nuns,” as they were the first order of nuns in the United States who were not cloistered, but were allowed to move freely in their communities, taking a fourth vow of service to others in addition to the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (Fialka 20, 29, 35-39). Able Hester Prynne is still human; when Hawthorne states that her “scarlet letter had not done its office” (*Centenary* 1:166; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13), he references her long-kept promise to the evil Roger Chillingworth to not reveal his

identity to Dimmesdale, a promise that she, “[s]trengthened by years of hard and solemn trial” (*Centenary* 1:167; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13), is now strong enough to recognize as harmful and break, regardless of the potential earthly consequences for her. Her able service has brought her redemption, and she breaks her promise to Chillingworth in order to lead Dimmesdale to the virtuous path of Christ, motivated by both earthly and spiritual affections, purified by her service.

In the conclusion of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne continues to serve her community as a guide to those in need after her obligations to Dimmesdale and to her child Pearl are fulfilled. Hester and Pearl disappear from their community for a time after Chillingworth’s death, presumably to assume Pearl’s inheritance in England, but Hester returns to Boston with her sacred “A” intact, where “the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world’s scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too” (*Centenary* 1:263; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 24). Hester’s role shifts in her later years in that she is sought out in her home by members of the community, particularly women, as they “brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel” (*Centenary* 1:263; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 24). It seems that here, the “A” takes on a new meaning entirely, and Hester serves the remainder of her days as an *anchoress* for Boston.

A fuller examination of the idea of an anchorite/anchoress is needed to explain how Hester Prynne can be understood as serving in a role that was traditionally Catholic, yet was also familiar to writers and readers steeped in a Puritan tradition. The terms anchorite/anchoress derive from the Latin *anchoreta*, with a meaning of retiring from a place, as Hester Prynne retires from the central settlement of Boston to live on its fringes, first as part of her sentence and later voluntarily. Like Evangeline, she also lives a life “beyond desire,” in that her status as an

adulteress, with neither her husband nor her liaison acknowledging their relationships to her, renders her effectively inviolate though bound to no single husband. Thus, her scarlet letter liberates her from the traditional role of a Puritan wife, and she is able to bind herself to service to her community, though somewhat differently from Evangeline. Both Evangeline and Hester live out their lives in solitude, but Hester's life mirrors most closely that of a traditional anchoress. Tom License, in *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (2011), documents how anchorites grew increasingly important to medieval English communities because they "interceded for people, gave spiritual advice, and mediated divine grace" (98), much as Hester does when visitors bring their troubles to her. In medieval England, certain kinds of anchorites, whom License calls "hermit pioneers," became very popular figures as "*eremi cultores*: 'cultivators of the wilderness'" (98). These spiritual mediators served to clear land for settlement, "bringing harmony to chaos" (License 98), much as Hester does in Hawthorne's novel, living on the fringes of Boston in the liminal space of the frontier, where she is afforded opportunities for independence from and service to her community. Just as medieval English monks began to regard anchoritic service as a possible way to sainthood (License 112), so Hester Prynne becomes something of a saintly figure to the community that had once condemned her.

Hawthorne also associates Hester with other qualities of an anchoress. Historically, the role of an anchorite/anchoress came to include the "anchoring" of a spiritual community, as when a person was sealed into a cell attached to the walls of a church. Perhaps the best known example of such an anchoress is Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth-century English eremitic woman whose writings were being reprinted and studied in the mid-nineteenth century. Julian of Norwich is not (to my knowledge) mentioned specifically in Hawthorne's writings, but since

Birrell notes that she was well known to Thoreau, Alcott, and the other Transcendentalists, and since Hawthorne's publisher and correspondent William Ticknor reprinted Julian's work in 1864, it seems likely that Hawthorne would have been familiar with her life and her work (Birrell 216-222). Hester's strong personality and charisma, evident from the opening pages of the novel, make her fit this analogy well. Just as an anchoress was sealed away by a bishop into a cell, so Hester transforms from a "self-ordained Sister of Mercy" (*Centenary* 1:161; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 13) into a self-ordained, consecrated life as an ascetic hermit, receiving visits from those in need, her cell her cottage, sealed not by the insignia of a bishop but by her scarlet letter. Hester's works lead her to the life of an eremitic monastic, helping wayfarers make their spiritual journeys to heaven and their earthly journeys in the colony of Massachusetts Bay.

Hawthorne was clearly intrigued by the idea of consecrated life. Well before his readings of Longfellow's works and his development of Hester, Hawthorne, like Longfellow, had begun to associate his own life and craft with a form of monasticism that might somehow have relevance to the wider world. In *Fanshawe* (1828), his first novel, Hawthorne had made his titular protagonist grow frustrated with the futility of his collegiate studies, thinking to himself that intellectual pursuits were nothing but "destructive labor" (*Centenary* 3:350; *Fanshawe*, ch. 2). This rejection of book learning in favor of active life experience could perhaps be dismissed as the romantic musings of a young man infatuated with a beautiful woman, Ellen Langton, but it could also be understood as an expression of the Jacksonian self-made ideal, where satisfaction in life arises from accomplishing good works, not from relying solely on texts. Ellen falls into a trap laid by an enemy of her father, and following the instructions in a forged letter, flees the safe home of her guardian, Dr. Melmoth, at whose college Fanshawe is a student. In Melmoth's response to Ellen's disappearance, Hawthorne demonstrates the problems with a life of the mind:

Melmoth is utterly incapable of responding properly to the crisis at hand. Thus, his exasperated and more practically-minded wife is forced to tell the hapless Melmoth exactly how to search for her, going so far as to question his manhood: ““Oh, I love to see a man with the spirit of a man! but you’—And she turned away in utter scorn” (*Centenary* 3:406; *Fanshawe*, ch. 6). Though learned in what seems to be traditional high-brow Protestantism, Melmoth’s knowledge is wholly useless, reinforcing his student Fanshawe’s frustrated premonition about what could await him if he focuses on the life of the mind as prescribed by his faith. Here, then, Hawthorne is considering the ideal of the self-made man as more American, more practical, and more useful than the aristocratic intellectual.

Fanshawe continues on with the effort to free Ellen from her captor, yet in developing his plot, the young Hawthorne found a forum for his developing religious concerns in addition to his political concerns. In a landscape evocative of the twisted mountain paths and caves of Charles Brockden Brown’s *Edgar Huntly* (1799), Hawthorne places Ellen with her captor in a dark and foreboding wilderness. Far from the cathedral-like forest primeval of Longfellow, Hawthorne’s savage landscape fits more closely with the Puritan notion of a demon-filled, untamed natural world beyond the safety of settlements. As Ellen faces her captor and her apparently impending doom, Hawthorne uses these two characters to voice some interesting theological concerns. Her kidnapper taunts Ellen, inviting her to “[s]hriek, and see if there be any among these rocks and woods to hearken to you!” Ellen replies that “There is, there is One,” pointing skyward to invoke the presence of God. In response, the kidnapper says, “But if there be an Ear that hears, and an Eye that sees all the evil of the earth, yet the Arm is slow to avenge. Else why do I stand before you as a living man?” (*Centenary* 3:442; *Fanshawe*, ch. 8). Here, Hawthorne reveals concerns about the very nature of God that persist in all of his subsequent works. In asking why



God does not respond more actively in this world to the presence of evil, Hawthorne probes the very nature of intercessory prayer, weighing it against notions of Calvinist predestination from his Puritan heritage, Deist ideas that had pervaded intellectual circles since the founding of the nation, and the Unitarian sentiments he may have encountered at Bowdoin College or elsewhere in the community. Of course, whether for dramatic purposes or theological purposes, God seems not entirely absent from this particular wilderness: Ellen's captor is startled by a rock Fanshawe throws at him, and his flight ends when he falls off a cliff to his death (*Centenary* 3:442, 450-452; *Fanshawe*, ch. 8-9). As the novel draws to a close, it seems most plausible that Fanshawe and Ellen will live happily ever after, but such is not the case. In a final plot twist, Ellen voices her desire to marry her heroic savior, but he refuses her, tearfully withdrawing back into his life of intellectual solitude, incapable of denying the life to which, perhaps, he has been predestined: a life of studying to death (*Centenary* 3:457-460; *Fanshawe*, ch. 10).

Fanshawe is therefore a monastic figure in a sense: his free will seems limited, yet he, like Alice Archer in *Kavanagh*, steps aside for others to forge a life together, as when his friend and companion in the chase Edward Walcott marries Ellen and they live happily ever after. Yet Fanshawe's monasticism does not offer the hopeful possibilities that Hawthorne later provides for Hester Prynne; Fanshawe's reclusiveness anchors him to nothing, and he dies alienated from himself and the world. While it can be challenging at best to read any work of fiction as overtly biographical, concerns voiced in *Fanshawe* do mimic what Brenda Wineapple documents in her biography of Hawthorne: that in his anxiety about his writing career, Hawthorne expected, perhaps hoped, to die before the age of twenty-five, as he believed suited the "busy idlers of the world" who spent their lives squirreled away with their books (qtd. in Wineapple 78). Perhaps, too, Hawthorne here reveals his skepticism of Transcendentalism, seeing the individualistic and

idealistic explorations of Thoreau and Emerson as leading more to isolation than to true spiritual growth. Thus, *Fanshawe* reflects at its core both an attraction to and a fear of monasticism, and it contains the seeds of key themes related to religion, democracy, and the ramifications of a reclusive life that Hawthorne later developed in his better-known and more expertly crafted works, making it worthy of greater attention than it has received from critics.

Just three years before young Nathaniel Hawthorne published *Fanshawe* in 1828, his fellow Bowdoin College student Longfellow was also pondering the social and spiritual implications of choosing a career as a writer, a career he associated with the trappings of monasticism. As an eighteen-year-old college senior, Longfellow published five essays in the *U.S. Literary Gazette* under the collective title of “The Lay Monastery.” In the first of these essays, subtitled “The Author,” Longfellow developed his monk analogy:

I am melancholy, but studious thought has made me so, and not those cares which tire men of the world. It is a melancholy of that kind which had nothing of malevolence or austerity about it;—it is but that pensive shade, which, to him who loves to muse, gently mellows down the hard features of society, and gives still-life serenity to a bustling world. As I sit in my silent cloister, surrounded by a multitude of books—mute but eloquent companions,—and look out upon mankind as they toil on in the thoroughfares of life, the calm and quiet feeling of my retirement becomes spiritualized from self-employment to a glowing philanthropy. The world is full of suffering, and I feel a charity for those who have known that misery which I have not known; and I endeavor to remember how ineffectual that charity is, which begins and ends in feeling! (*Works*, v.2, 357-358)

Longfellow, despite his self-proclaimed melancholy, offers a more hopeful estimation of the life of a writer in his self-imposed “cloister” than what Hawthorne envisions in *Fanshawe*. While Hawthorne saw only the possibility of literally writing oneself to death, Longfellow sees, in his “Lay Monastery,” the opportunity for a form of service. While he is not out working in the same ways as those about whom he writes, he perceives an opportunity for “glowing philanthropy” through his writing, because his “retirement” from the world allows him an opportunity to serve

the world through his work, and because keeping his thoughts to himself would make his philanthropic desires all the more “ineffectual.” In order to fulfill his goal of deepening that “same spirit that animated our fathers in their great struggle for freedom” (366), a goal articulated in his third essay in the series, “The Literary Spirit of Our Country,” Longfellow announced his lofty ambition of helping to forge a distinctly American literary tradition. In an era where few Americans made their livings as creative writers, then, Longfellow and Hawthorne both engaged ideas of serving as American anchorites themselves, walled away in their cloisters scribbling, dependent upon alms from others to sustain them as they shut themselves away in monastic service. Of the two, though, Longfellow saw possibilities for such a life even as a college senior, while the recently graduated Hawthorne was perhaps somewhat more jaded by the challenges he faced upon leaving the safety of Bowdoin for the “real world.”

Though James Fenimore Cooper was a few years older than Hawthorne and Longfellow, he too was engaging notions of eremitic monasticism in his writings in the 1820s, well before his more polished treatments of monasticism in his European novels. For Cooper, exploring the possibilities of democracy was a career-long endeavor that brought him gradually (and likely accidentally) into an exploration of Catholicism. Religious references pervade many of Cooper’s works, beginning with his first novel, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821). Cooper in this work creates as his main character Harvey Birch, a traveling peddler/merchant who secretly works for General Washington during the American Revolutionary War. Perhaps the most compelling religious analysis of *The Spy* emerges from Barton St. Armand, who argues that Birch is Cooper’s reworking of the popular legend of the wandering Jew, condemned for mocking Christ as he approached his crucifixion (350). St. Armand deftly explains Birch’s ability to escape seemingly impossible circumstances and cheat death, as well as his job as a

peddler, as evidence of Cooper's invocation of this legend (350-354). *The Spy* also allows Cooper to critique Puritanical religion, as when Birch disguises himself as what readers are likely to interpret as a Puritan minister and visits the imprisoned Captain Henry Wharton, particularly when Birch sends for "the book" that evokes images of Cotton Mather's *Pillars of Salt*, a compilation of Puritan execution sermons designed to inspire repentance (451; ch. 28). The disguised Birch is rebuffed by his American captors as more likely to terrify the prisoner than to console him on the eve of his execution, and yet the act is convincing enough that an elaborate escape plan (with Wharton trading clothes with his slave) is executed instead (438-459; ch. 33). These two evocations of the Judeo-Christian tradition lend credence to the argument that Cooper was, in *The Spy*, experimenting with many different religious systems, seeking what might be best for America as it venerated its recent revolutionary successes.

Still, other aspects of *The Spy* demonstrate more clearly the intersections between monasticism and democracy. At this point in his career, Cooper was likely not intentionally evoking Catholicism in the ways that he did in his European novels, but there are certainly elements of monasticism in Harvey Birch that offer an alternative to St. Armand's "wandering Jew" analogy. Birch's solitary service to his nation requires him to leave the people he loves, sacrificing the prospect of marriage and family. However, like other characters discussed here, Birch's forsaking of traditional notions of home and family allows him to bind himself in service to his nation, becoming another spiritual cultivator of the wilderness, in this case the challenging terrain of a revolution where loyalties are difficult to ascertain. When Birch is suspected of spying, he offers no testimony to the contrary; his loyalty to Washington demands absolute secrecy, and so he commits good works for the sake of the new nation without betraying what he does.

The emphasis on works as evidence of one's salvation could be interpreted in two ways. It is possible, for example, that Birch is fulfilling the tenets of Calvinist predestination, in that his good works are merely visible evidence of his salvation. St. Armand subscribes, at least in part, to this interpretation, because he discusses Birch as bearing the sins of his father and thus undergoing a spiritual "chastisement" to purify himself and his family of their sins (355-358). While this reading is interesting, it seems unlikely, given Cooper's efforts in the novel to critique Calvinism, as in the prison confession scheme, where the ministerial visit offers no consolation to the condemned. Thus, it seems more possible that Cooper is engaging the possibility of works as a means of salvation, not as evidence of salvation—one could even argue that the works could be part of the redemptive chastisement if one rejects the doctrine of predestination, allowing St. Armand's argument to still stand. In the liminal zone between Patriots and Loyalists, security is elusive, families are divided, and fates of both individuals and communities seem uncertain, so within this context the pro-democratic Cooper emphasizes the ability of his heroes (Harvey Birch, Henry Wharton) and villains (Wellmere, the Skinners) to make ethical and moral decisions, allowing readers to see good qualities and bad qualities on both sides of the front, indicating that the Revolution and its outcome are not part of some predestined plan, something reflective of his own Anglican heritage and its greater emphasis on free will, which likely left him suspicious of the austerity of the Puritan tradition. It seems logical that Cooper's strong favoring of republican self-government would lead him to reject predestination, as the very notion contradicts democratic notions of the self-made man, free will, liberty, and reason. The ministerial scenes in *The Spy* further support this interpretation. Interestingly as well, Birch never marries in *The Spy*, despite having long held a secret love for Frances Wharton Dunwoodie. His spiritual chastisement and his loyalty to the new nation—which St. Armand

argues is sanctioned through the divine figure of George Washington (358-359)—require him to live out his life in solitude, forever wandering, rejecting the material rewards offered to him, treasuring only the evidence of his self-made salvation in a note from the deified Washington, which effectively canonizes Harvey Birch as an American saint who sacrificed himself for his nation through self-denial. While Cooper was still ten years away from writing novels with characters who take vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, it seems that the idea of a saintly monastic figure—one whose works are salvific—was developing slowly in his consciousness. Cooper may not have wrestled with concerns about his own ability to make a living as a writer, as did Longfellow and Hawthorne in their works in the 1820s, but he nonetheless shared with them an interest in the idea of life of monastic service to one's nation, forging a way in the wilderness for others, whether that wilderness be the physical frontier, the hazardous terrain of a revolution, or the murky depths of the human soul.

Of course, when a student of nineteenth-century American literature thinks of a solitary figure mediating the boundary between settlement and frontier, the character who comes to mind immediately is not one of Hawthorne's or Longfellow's creations (or even Cooper's Harvey Birch), but instead is Cooper's Natty Bumppo. This iconic American frontiersman is well known for his rugged, radical individualism. For this analysis, however, Natty Bumppo, in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Pathfinder; Or, The Inland Sea* (1840), and *The Prairie* (1827), often acts as a Christopher-like guide to travelers, whether reuniting families or helping others journey westward to settle the frontiers of an expansive new nation. Anticipating some of Cooper's more overtly Catholic characters, particularly Father Anselmo in *The Bravo*, Bumppo demonstrates the compatibility between Catholic spirituality and democratic individualism.

Natty Bumppo is best known to many readers as Hawk-eye in *Last of the Mohicans*, the guide who offers to escort Cora and Alice Munro to their father at his post as commander of Fort William Henry in the dangerous New York wilderness during the French and Indian War. Accompanying the Munro maidens are Major Duncan Heyward, a young British officer whose training has not prepared him to lead a trek through the American frontier, and David Gamut, a psalm-singing Yankee music teacher, whose purpose is to demonstrate the deficiencies of the Reformed tradition in the American wilderness, where a less “churched” but more spiritual Hawk-eye is of greater utility. In this group, Hawk-eye finds a party vulnerable, in both body and spirit, to the diabolical Magua, a Huron war chief who strives to capture the travelers and literally take them off their intended path. When Cooper writes of “the gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of events that glowed in the bosom of the sisters” (115; ch. 12) after one of their timely rescues by Hawk-eye, it seems that he subscribes to a fairly traditional view of a Reformed tradition, with the “Disposer” intervening to save the traveling party predestined for safe arrival; however, Cooper quickly sets up a complication that prohibits such a reading.

In order for *Last of the Mohicans* to sufficiently demonstrate the compatibility between Catholic spirituality and an individual and community advancement open to all Americans, it must reject the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Immediately after the rescue of the traveling party, when Hawk-eye remarks that “'twas all fore-ordered, and for the best!” (116; ch. 12), Gamut mistakenly believes that Hawk-eye “hast caught the true spirit of Christianity [sic]. He that is to be saved will be saved, and he that is predestined to be damned will be damned! This is the doctrine of truth, and most consoling and refreshing it is to the true believer” (116; ch. 12). Here, seemingly, is an opportunity to affirm the Reformed doctrine of predestination, yet Hawk-

eye will have none of it. Growing uncharacteristically angry, he ceases his humoring and teasing of Gamut, replying that

[d]octrine, or no doctrine... 'tis the belief of knaves, and the curse of an honest man! I can credit that yonder Huron was to fall by my hand, for with my own eyes have I seen it; but nothing short of being a witness, will cause me to think he has met with any reward, or that Chingachgook, there, will be condemned at the final day (116-117; ch. 12).

Hawk-eye asserts boldly that he does not believe in predestination, instead affirming the power of his own actions within the Maker's broader creation. While John T. Frederick in his book *The Darkened Sky* has interpreted this passage as indicative of a kind of Deistic, even pre-Christian belief (13), it actually underscores the importance of human actions and agency in a way that meshes with a Catholic understanding of the interweaving of faith and charity. Gamut, in turn, is upset by Hawk-eye's "audacious doctrine" (117; ch. 12), and insists that Hawk-eye "name chapter and verse" to support his assertion (117; ch. 12), a stance he would surely be less likely to take with someone he considered to be pagan or Deist than with someone who actively engages in such theological debates. Clearly, Gamut serves here as a foil, allowing Hawk-eye to state, in effect, the Catholic-leaning theology of a woodsman:

"Book!" repeated Hawk-eye, with singular and ill-concealed disdain; "do you take me for a whimpering boy, at the apron string of one of your old gals; and this good rifle on my knee for the feather of a goose's wing, my ox's horn for a bottle of ink, and my leathern pouch for a cross-barred handkercher to carry my dinner [sic]! Book! what have such as I, who am a warrior of the wilderness, though a man without a cross, to do with books!" (117; ch. 12)

This passage allows Hawk-eye to articulate his personal theology, one which requires no books to demonstrate to him that there is a God. Hawk-eye has learned his faith in the forests, though he is "a man without a cross" (63; ch. 7). While this saying is rightly read by most scholars as Cooper's effort to ensure that readers remember that Natty Bumppo is white, with no mixed ancestry, it can take on a secondary, possibly unconscious meaning here. Bumppo is neither



Protestant nor Catholic; he makes claim to neither the Moravian settlers who sheltered him as a boy nor to the French Jesuits who minister to the native peoples, trappers, and traders. His religion is imbued in him through his experiences in the cathedral of the wilderness, not at all unlike Kavanagh's early education in the forests or Hester Prynne's transformation on the edge of the woods. While Gamut immediately dismisses Hawk-eye when he discovers that he "battled with a disputant who imbibed his faith from the lights of nature, eschewing all subtleties of doctrine" (117; ch. 12), Gamut clearly adheres to the doctrine of predestination to dismiss the redemptive value of works. Bumpo, on the other hand, offers the possibility that a path to salvation exists for one who, like Saint Christopher, does not know how to pray due to a lack of formal education. Cooper's readers, like his traveling party, are wise to remain with Hawk-eye to find the path to safety, following the unlearned man who offers his services to them.

Hawk-eye's services to settlers continue in *The Pathfinder*, when Natty Bumpo, now nicknamed "Pathfinder," guides, once again, a party including a young woman going to visit her father, a British soldier. Once again, the British travelers, their purportedly friendly Indian guides, and the Pathfinder are chased by Indians who wish to literally take them off course. In this novel, however, the escorted Mabel Dunham catches the attention of both Bumpo and Jasper Western, a sailor along for the journey. Bumpo continues the Christopher-like service to travelers that is so clearly outlined in *The Last of the Mohicans*, with the analogy made stronger in *The Pathfinder* by his navigation of several dangerous rivers, waterfalls, and lakes. The Pathfinder makes clear to his sailor sidekick Jasper that they will be aided in their travels by "The Lord!—He who has so often helped others, in greater difficulties. Many and many is the time that my head would have been stripped of hair, skin and all, hadn't the Lord fi't of my side [sic]. I never go into a skirmish, friend mariner, without thinking of this great ally [sic]" (31;

ch. 2). Bumppo's devotion to his God and confidence in his work, therefore, are increased since his service in *Last of the Mohicans*, and as a result of his confidence, Bumppo feels able to clearly understand his earthly purpose: that "his life had been cast in the wilderness, and the land of his birth needed his arm and experience" (*Pathfinder* 419; ch. 26).

However, Cooper invites a moment of potential destabilization in order to test Natty Bumppo's confidence in his vocation. *The Pathfinder* is unique amongst all of *The Leatherstocking Tales* in that it is the only novel in which Natty Bumppo falls in love, but this genuine life experience does not impede him in fulfilling his life's calling. Immediately after assuring readers of the confidence that Bumppo has in his call, Cooper writes that "the desire of rising above his present situation, never disturbed the tranquility of Pathfinder...until he became acquainted with Mabel" (419; ch. 26). Pathfinder's life in the wilderness is rendered less appealing when he meets Mabel, because he is tempted to give up his calling and settle down: "distrust of himself, reverence for her, and the wish to place her in a situation above that which he then filled, had caused him some uneasy moments" (419; ch. 26). He is, in sum, tempted to stop finding paths for others.

The love story in *The Pathfinder* is significant for several reasons. First, it proves to readers that Natty Bumppo is fully human, and is not immune to human longings for companionship, just as a consecrated individual's desires do not diminish because of the vows he or she might have taken. Vows are promises to overcome such desires and impulses that keep an individual from fulfilling his or her vocation. Second, Pathfinder demonstrates longing for far more than just a physical relationship with Mabel; he desires everything he has given up—a home, community, creature comforts, family, love, companionship, the opportunity to be one of the travelers he helps. As Cap observes, "[t]his is an uncertain and uncomfortable life of yours,

master Pathfinder, what between the fresh-water and the savages” (430; ch. 27); few are cut out for such an arduous life, and it would be unreasonable for readers to expect Pathfinder never to waver in his commitment. Adding to the romantic complications, Natty and Jasper have both, as it turns out, fallen for Mabel, and over the course of several chapters, they learn of their shared focus of affection, but gallantly avoid an argument, delaying any such discussions due, in part, to the imminent death of Mabel’s father. As if this were not enough dramatic intrigue, Sargent Dunham, on his deathbed, joins together the hands of Jasper and Mabel, thinking he is commending his bride to Pathfinder, thus forcing the two young men to discuss their shared affections (443; ch. 28). Pathfinder confesses his idyllic vision of settlement to Jasper, revealing that his true temptation is to abandon his call to serving the need of his nation:

I counted on you, Jasper, I counted on you, I did—and thought, now, that Mabel and I intend to dwell in a cabin of our own, that some day you might be tempted to choose a companion too, and come and settle in our neighborhood. There is a beautiful spot, about fifty miles west of the garrison, that I had chosen in my mind, for my own place of abode; and there is an excellent harbor about ten leagues this side of it, where you could run in and out, with the cutter, at any leisure minute; and I’d even fancied you, and your wife, in possession of the one place, and Mabel and I in possession of t’other. We should be just a healthy hunt apart; and if the Lord ever intends any of his creatures to be happy on ’arth, none could be happier than we four (445; ch. 28).

This passage proves that Natty longs for a life where his call is not so lonely and difficult. He wishes he could be like the typical American settlers whom he has helped in his life. He wishes, in other words, for a different vocation, for a life free of suffering.

Natty is unexpectedly shaken out of his reverie by his confidant, when Jasper reveals his own love for Mabel, and the two each gallantly offer to defer to the other’s desires (445-447; ch. 28). Jasper, unwilling to step in when a dead man’s last wishes are at stake, defers to Pathfinder, who takes the unorthodox step of calling Jasper and Mabel together to force them to acknowledge the feelings each holds for the other, announcing “I *must* be wild; I’ll not attempt to

deny it” (453; ch. 29). Natty Bumppo seems to recognize fully the true temptation here is designed to pull him away from his call, describing his feelings as having “tender and bewitching voices” (453; ch. 29), evoking the Sirens, if not agents of the Devil. Telling Mabel that her father “left me your protector, and not your tyrant” (455; ch. 29), Pathfinder reconciles himself to his commitment to his vocation, and thus to democratic ideals as a pathfinder for the nation that needs “his arm and experience,” even though he suffers over what he relinquishes, confessing that he “feel[s] something pulling at my heart strings which seems hard to undo” (456; ch. 29). Despite his sadness over love lost, Pathfinder reminds himself that God has other plans for him: “men have their gifts...but I’d forgotten that it did not belong to mine, to please the young, and beautiful, and I’arned [sic]. I hope the mistake has been no very heavy sin” (458; ch. 29). Having wavered but not fallen, Pathfinder assures Mabel he “shall always remember how near I was to being undesarvedly [sic] happy” (459; ch. 29) and, with tears rolling down his rugged cheeks, blesses Mabel before disappearing into the wilderness (460; ch. 29), where “he was almost overcome with a sense of his loneliness” (462; ch. 30). His resolve returns, however, in speaking to the grieving Indian widow June, whom he encounters sitting atop her husband’s grave: “[w]hen the Manitou of a pale-face wishes to produce good in a pale-face heart, he strikes it with grief, for it is in our sorrows, June, that we look with the truest eyes into ourselves” (463; ch. 30). These words are meant just as much for her as for himself; he recognizes his desires as a trial to make him stronger, and returns to his vocation as “a being of great purity of character” (470), destined to help others populate the west, but, like Moses, unable to settle himself in the Promised Land. In this recommitment to his vocation, Bumppo sacrifices love and comfort for the benefit of others and to preserve civic virtue, much like Harvey Birch, Alice Archer, and Fanshawe.

As this reading of *The Pathfinder* demonstrates, in order for Nathaniel Bumppo to fulfill his duty as the Saint Christopher-like guide for westward expansion, he must make both personal sacrifices and sacrifices for others. Most notable of these sacrifices is his bachelorhood, discussed at length in David Greven's *Men Beyond Desire* in his analysis of "Natty's inviolate manhood" (89), and noted above in his magnanimous decision to give up his love for Mabel Dunham so that she may marry his friend Jasper Western. Greven's assertion that "[w]hat Cooper fashions for Natty is a two-pronged escape, from both homosocial bonding and heterosexual love" (89), is a compelling cultural analysis of how Bumppo defies the normative standards of the day. However, I propose building upon Greven's cultural analysis of the inviolate frontiersman by integrating the spiritual calling of a Saint Christopher-like life, thus allowing for discussion of *The Prairie*, a work that does not fit well with Greven's discussion.

*The Prairie* evokes *The Last of the Mohicans* when it introduces Duncan Uncas Middleton, grandson of Duncan and Alice Munro Heyward of the earlier work. Cooper constructs a parallel narrative in many ways, echoing the kidnappings and pursuits of some forty years prior, with Bumppo lending his wisdom and assistance to the travelers despite his now advanced age. At the close of the novel, however, Bumppo asks for assistance in returning to the wilderness, choosing to die as he has lived, in "a clearing...one of the Lord's making" (370; ch. 33), despite the protests of those whom he has helped. Bumppo refuses their offers of shelter and care because "it cannot be; no, it can never be" (371; ch. 33). Greven's cultural analysis of Bumppo's rejection of marriage, of children, and of settlement is clearly insufficient here, because Cooper reveals that Bumppo's desires are spiritual in nature. Bumppo is called to his life in the unforgiving frontier, mediating between Natives and settlers, making straight the paths for Europeans to settle the nation, rather like a cross between Saint Christopher and John the

Baptist. His mission is to help others settle, but not to settle himself. This reading is cemented in Bumpo's assertion that "the Lord has made me for a doer and not a talker, and therefore do I consider it no harm to shut my ears to your invitation" (371; ch. 33) to remain in community. Bumpo's call is to the wilderness, to isolation, to a monastic life on the frontier. In his final conversation with Paul Hover, he clarifies that his call is unusual, and not for everyone:

Much has passed atween us on the pleasures and respectableness of a life in the woods, or on the borders [sic]. I do not now mean to say that all you have heard is not true, but different tempers call for different employments. You have taken to your bosom, there, a good and kind child, and it has become your duty to consider her, as well as yourself, in setting forth in life. You are a little given to skirting the settlements but, to my poor judgment, the girl would be more like a flourishing flower in the sun of a clearing, than in the winds of a prairie. Therefore forget any thing you may have heard from me, which is nevertheless true, and turn your mind on the ways of the inner country. (373; ch. 33)

In this passage, Bumpo lays out how he has answered a call to "skirt the settlements," and in order to respond to that call, he has remained unattached to community and to woman. Paul's decision to wed thus closes the door on the vocation to which Bumpo was called, and Paul is to seek another path to salvation in "the ways of the inner country."

True to his call until his dying breath, Bumpo takes leave of the last travelers he has escorted through peril, expecting that he and his dog have one more winter left until "the Lord...order his angels to sound forth my name" (374; ch. 33). When Middleton and Paul venture out to check upon their elderly friend, they find him taking his last breaths in a chair constructed for him by Pawnee Indians, with the setting sun falling upon his face, his soul on the verge of departing the body "that had never been corrupted by vice, or undermined by disease" (379; ch. 34). In his last moments, Bumpo declares to the Pawnee warrior Hard-Heart, his adopted son, and thus to the Natives and settlers reverently gathered around him, "Pawnee, I die as I have lived, a christian man [sic]" (381; ch. 34). No more is there a question about Bumpo's faith as there was for David Gamut in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Significantly, Bumpo evokes

the Christopher narrative when discussing his final judgment, reminding readers of the favor placed upon the man who did not know how to preach or pray, but who achieved sainthood through using his strength as an offering to God: “according to my gifts He will judge my deeds....What I have done, He has seen” (374; ch. 34). Bumpo is “reaping the rewards of a life remarkable for temperance and activity, in a tranquil and placid death” because he has made his life into a work of sacrifice for God and for America (380; ch. 34). In this peaceful passage into eternity, Bumpo does make one request of Middleton:

Let me sleep where I have lived, beyond the din of the settlements! Still I see no need why the grave of an honest man should be hid....Put no boastful words on the same; but just the name, the age, and the time of the death, with something from the holy book. No more, no more. My name will then not be altogether lost on ‘arth; I need no more [sic] (383-384; ch. 34).

In the end, the man known variously as Pathfinder, Hawk-eye, and a host of other honorific nicknames wants to be memorialized by his Christian name, with his earthly works validated by the honor of a marked grave, so that for generations to come, his grave may be “often shown, to the traveler and the trader, as a spot where a just white-man sleeps” (386; ch. 34). Middleton reminds readers once again of Bumpo’s service to travelers, and Bumpo tells Middleton that he remembers all of those whom he has aided, and that “there is not one among them all, that I could wish to overlook” (381; ch. 34). In the final moment of Bumpo’s life, as Middleton, Hard-Heart, and the others keep vigil around the dying man, Natty Bumpo rises out of his chair, with the startled watchers jumping to his aid, and shouts “Here!” to the bewilderment of all in attendance in the last seconds before he dies, standing up (385; ch. 34), in his final ageric act. In a spiritual analysis, Bumpo is clearly answering his call one last time, responding to the mission given to him by God. As the elderly native Le Balafre states, “[a] valiant, a just, and a wise warrior has gone on the path, which will lead him to the blessed grounds of his people! When the

voice of the Wahcondah called him, he was ready to answer” (386; ch. 34). Bumppo, as a Saint Christopher figure, has answered the call through his actions throughout all of the *Leatherstocking Tales*, eschewing the comforts of settlement in order to help others settle and forge a new nation.

Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Cooper thus all created heroic characters whose lives reflect the Christopher legend recounted in *Kavanagh*. In their writings, all three authors are clearly engaging in the spiritual struggle to reconcile the relationship between faith and good works, feeling that the Reformed emphasis on faith alone has left at least some of the faithful wanting more than the promise of salvation *sola fide*, possibly because the coupling of the doctrine of *sola fide* with that of predestination seems hollow, if not indeed “the curse of an honest man” (Cooper, *Last* 116; ch. 12). The uncertainty of being part of the predestined elect creates anxiety and discontent, and the Christopher legend offers an alternative path for those who fear that their inability to preach and to pray could be a sign of non-election. A virtuous life, offered up in service to others, is thus a gift to an incarnate God who is immanently present on earth, not as a God whose hand always actively intervenes, but as one who is present through both the action of the server and in those served. These holy men and women, thus, are the first saints of the American frontier, with the graves of Hester Prynne and Natty Bumppo, like the oak tree under which Evangeline wept for her losses, dotting the landscape as shrines for travelers, possibly even for pilgrims.

Service, even sainthood, takes on many forms in the Catholic tradition, and thus the raw, untutored, heroic individualism of a Natty Bumppo is not the only means of connecting the possibilities of saintly intercession to America’s literary or cultural imagination. After all, two of the most revered individuals in the communion of saints are Mary and Joseph, whose acts of



saintly devotion, ultimately, consisted of welcoming and raising a child. Thus, anchoritic and eremitic figures are particularly adaptable to a nation whose landscape offers remote, wild, and frontier settings, but they are not the only types of saints who emerge in the works of Cooper, Longfellow and Hawthorne, as all of these authors also created individuals whose striving for sainthood occurs in less far-flung settings. Harvey Birch does much of his good work for the fledgling republic in Westchester County, not far from New York City; Hester Prynne regularly engages with the community of Boston; Evangeline ultimately ends her wanderings in Philadelphia; and Kavanagh settles in Fairmeadow. In all four of these instances, we have ageric saint figures working, at least in part, in areas far less untamed than Natty Bumppo's home beneath the stars.

In Hawthorne's case, the desire to explore ageric sainthood inspired a setting about as far removed as possible from the American wilderness: a Marian shrine atop a tower in the heart of Rome. This shrine serves as home to Hilda, a pure and innocent New England maiden who plays a prominent role in *The Marble Faun*. As Hawthorne initially wished to title the novel "St. Hilda's Shrine" (Wineapple 318), it is obvious that he actively considered how sainthood, shrines, and Catholicism could offer benefits to "a daughter of the Puritans" (*Centenary* 4:54; *Marble Faun*, ch.6) when writing his fullest and most direct application of sainthood to one of his characters.

As noted earlier, Hawthorne had grown much more aware of and interested in the material aspects of Catholic sacramentality in the decade between writing *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*, an interest sharpened by his experiences traveling in Europe, particularly in Rome. Recognizing the appeal of Rome to American tourists, Hawthorne created a novel that incorporates elements of a travelogue or guidebook, complete with a map, so that readers of his

novel who visited Rome, either in actuality or from their armchairs back in New England, could more fully appreciate the sights and streets of Rome. In many ways, *The Marble Faun* thus offers a window into Hawthorne's experiences with the Old World, where he discovered that, as Wineapple notes, the past was ever present in Rome, just as it was in Salem (319-321). For someone haunted by the ghosts of the past as Hawthorne was, the novel reveals that an extended sojourn in Europe offered no relief from his reflections on the past; as Longfellow noted, *The Marble Faun* is filled "with the old, dull pain in it that runs through all Hawthorne's writings" (qtd. in Wineapple 319).

One possible reason for this pervasive sadness is that Hawthorne, in his explorations of Rome's churches and shrines, was ultimately frustrated by his inability to grasp the Marian ideal upon which he modeled Hilda. For most of the novel, Hilda is, quite simply, a perfectly pure Puritan girl, dressing all in white, living high in her tower above the grime of the streets of Rome, as almost the living embodiment of the Virgin Mary whose shrine she tends, charged with keeping an eternal lamp burning before the image of the Blessed Virgin "at a height above the ordinary level of men's views and aspirations" (*Centenary* 4:52; *Marble Faun*, ch. 6). Hilda's friends refer to her "hermitage" as "The Dove-cote" (*Centenary* 4:53, 56; *Marble Faun*, ch. 6), where Hilda both physically and psychologically lives "above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels for [her] nearest neighbors" (*Centenary* 4:53; *Marble Faun*, ch.6). Hilda, apparently free of human weaknesses, is innocent, virginal, humble, devoted, loyal, and gifted with uncanny abilities as a copyist. In her perfection, she is the foil to Hester Prynne: while Hawthorne introduces both women to his readers as they stand elevated above their communities, Hester stands on a scaffold of shame as a convicted adulteress, while Hilda is enshrined in a monument to sinless virginity. While it seems that Hawthorne might find

such a woman to be the perfect friend and companion to others in his novel, the unfolding of *The Marble Faun* reveals that Hilda's perfection renders her nearly incapable of developing deep and lasting human relationships. As Miriam points out early in the novel, Hilda's "innocence is like a sharp steel sword.... [y]our judgments are often terribly severe, though you seem all made up of gentleness and mercy" (*Centenary* 4:66; *Marble Faun*, ch. 7). Hilda, in her perfection, cannot truly sympathize with anyone who is fully human and imperfect; her freedom from sin leaves her radically alienated from everyone else around her, until she is truly nothing more than "one of the spectacles of the Eternal City" (*Centenary* 4:62; *Marble Faun*, ch. 7), just like the shrine in which she lives. Hester begins as a more real character than Hilda because Hawthorne constructs Hester as flawed from the outset, someone with whom Hawthorne, haunted as he was by his own perceptions of sin, could more readily identify. On the other hand, Hilda is the most complete example of Greven's conception of a person "beyond desire," for she is truly inviolate and unavailable to anyone emotionally, just as she is physically unattainable in her tower, where she resides as a vestal virgin consecrated to the Virgin Mary, in a union with ancient Roman beliefs.

Consequently, like other consecrated characters, Hilda enjoys a freedom typically not afforded a respected woman in the mid-nineteenth century. Hawthorne describes how

She dwelt in her tower, as free to descend into the corrupted atmosphere of the city beneath, as one of her companion-doves to fly downward into the street;—all alone, perfectly independent, under her own sole guardianship, unless watched over by the Virgin, whose shrine she tended;—doing what she liked, without a suspicion or a shadow upon the snowy whiteness of her frame. (*Centenary* 4:54; *Marble Faun*, ch. 6)

Hawthorne, in his narrative, attributes Hilda's freedom to the license allowed to artists in Rome, but it seems likely that the meaning has layers beyond what he states overtly in the novel. Hilda's inviolability offers her freedoms like those enjoyed by Hester and Evangeline in that all three are set apart, much like Greven's model of the man who is "beyond desire," but only Hilda fits the

model of a woman truly emotionally unavailable, and at a terrible cost. Readers like Barbara Wineapple sum up Hilda's unappealing nature succinctly, seeing her essentially as a "prig" (325). If Hilda is indeed modeled after the Virgin Mary, then Hawthorne saw the Virgin Mary as utterly useless as an intercessor, for she must lack, as Hilda lacks, any sympathy towards man. It would be far better for a saintly female character to be modeled after Mary Magdalene, as Hester Prynne may well be, for in her sinfulness emerges a tempering of her heart and a capacity for mercy.

Further, Hilda's talents, though widely acclaimed, are limited to the copying of famous paintings; she is incapable of creating her own art, just as she is unable to "talk learnedly about pictures" or even to have "much to say about what she most profoundly admired" (*Centenary* 4:62; *Marble Faun*, ch. 7). Her performance of the rituals of her shrine, like the performance of copying artwork, is all mimicry without meaning, even if exquisitely executed. Hilda is, in all aspects of her life, a copyist; in her perfection, she is unable to be an authentic woman, whether a working artist or a faithful worshipper. She is nothing like the devotees at shrines that Hawthorne had described in his *French and Italian Notebooks*, for she has no reason to approach a saint "in an agony of grief and contrition" (*Centenary* 14:60; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb. 1858). Such a reading is supported by Patricia Marks, who argues that Hilda as a "saint" is "too virginal, too self-centered, too unwilling to embrace the world" (511). In this analysis, the very qualities which put a woman on a pedestal leave her unable to uplift those at her feet, a far cry from both Catholic ideas of sainthood and nineteenth-century American ideals of true womanhood.

Hawthorne, after shaking the very foundations of the cult of these ideals, re-stabilizes them by humanizing Hilda through exposing her to the realities of human sin and consequent

suffering. Hilda finds herself tormented, not by a sin of her own commission, but by witnessing the faun-like Donatello murder a Capuchin monk who stalked Miriam in the catacombs and on the streets in an effort to resume a former romantic liaison. Haunted by her secret knowledge, and unable to gain any comfort from her prayers before the Divine Mother—perhaps because her hollow copying has not impressed upon her any true ability to seek intercession—Hilda wanders through St. Peter’s Basilica, praying and weeping before various statues, all to no avail. Finally, she flings herself into the confessional, desperately seeking expiation, but her relief, it seems, is as fleeting as her companion doves at her shrine. The priest denies Hilda the secrecy of the confessional because she is not a Catholic, though he tempers his refusal to offer absolution with comforting promises that he has no need to share her secret story. Because of Hilda’s incomplete resolution in the confessional, she becomes permanently acquainted with sin, and she emerges from the confessional fully human.

Hilda’s transformation is noted immediately by her friend Kenyon, who is entranced by “this bright, yet softened image of religious consolation” (*Centenary* 4:364; *Marble Faun*, ch. 40), yet terrified that she has “flung her angelic purity into that mass of unspeakable corruption, the Roman Church” (*Centenary* 4:366; *Marble Faun*, ch. 40), a seemingly paradoxical remark that reveals perfectly Hawthorne’s ambivalent feelings about Catholicism. Hilda likewise speaks for Hawthorne when she assures Kenyon she is no Catholic, though she finds that “Catholicism seems to have a great deal of good,” limited only by the humanity of its clerics, for if they “were but a little more than human, above all error, pure from all iniquity, what a religion it would be!” (*Centenary* 4:368; *Marble Faun*, ch. 40). As they leave the church, Kenyon marvels again at how whatever crisis led Hilda to the confessional has changed her for the better, for he “had never found her so delightful as now; so softened out of the chillness of her virgin pride” (*Centenary*

4:370; *Marble Faun*, ch. 40). Hilda's tempered innocence only increases Kenyon's attraction to her, allowing him to fall so much in love with her that, even when he knows not what depravity may have befallen her during her convent captivity later in the novel, he asks her to marry him, and she accepts his proposal, at last "coming down from her old tower, to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband's fireside" (*Centenary* 4:461; *Marble Faun*, ch. 50).

It is left to the reader to wonder just what kind of saint Hilda has become. John Gatta in *American Madonna* (1997) argues that Hilda, even though she "softens a little toward the end," remains too self-righteous, making her "the very antithesis of maternal compassion" (29), suggesting her limits as an ageric saintly figure, unless one takes the perspective that Hawthorne intended Hilda's great "works" to develop after her return to America, once installed as the saint tending Kenyon's fireside instead of the candles before the Virgin Mary. Such a reading is supported by Conrad Shumaker, who argues that Hawthorne infuses the engagement of Hilda and Kenyon with his memories of his own courtship of his wife Sophia, who had saved him "from a world of shadows and soulless machines" (83) in installing herself as his own "household saint." Shumaker argues that Hawthorne wrote *The Marble Faun* because "he had to show one last time that the pattern [of the cult of domesticity] did offer to the heirs of the Puritans both a kind of personal salvation and a way for America to retain its unique place in history" (83). While Shumaker implies that Catholicism offered to Hawthorne a kind of salutary feminine influence to the excessively masculine traditions of Puritanism, *The Marble Faun* somewhat dampens such an influence by suggesting a fundamental inaccessibility of the Virgin Mary as a feminine ideal. Hawthorne found great power in Catholicism's opportunity for an individual, "too humble to approach his God directly, and therefore asking the mediation of some

saint, who stands beside his infinite presence” (*Centenary* 14:60; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb 1858), but he hesitated at devotion to the Virgin Mary, who seemed less human to him, clearly, just as he balked paradoxically at the clerical hierarchy, who seemed all too human to him. For Hawthorne, perfection was a double-edged sword, and ultimately he chose to side with those who had at least brushed with sin to cut open the Gordian knot of his simultaneous attraction to and revulsion with Catholicism, though in doing so, he perpetuated, as Longfellow noted, the thread of sadness that tied all of his works together.

Hawthorne, thus, offers in his works both an individualistic ageric American saint in Hester and a more domestic fireside saint in Hilda. Longfellow similarly offers in *Evangeline* and *Kavanagh* saints who experience periods of ageric individualism and more settled domesticity, while Cooper strongly prefers the masculine, intrepid, ageric sainthood of European monastics, Harvey Birch, and especially Natty Bumppo. If Catholic understandings of saintly intercession and leadership could be applied to both a Jacksonian democratic cult of rugged individualism and an emerging domestic cult of “true womanhood” (Welter 151), it might stand to reason that Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne could actually deem Roman Catholicism to be more compatible with mid-nineteenth-century American ideals than most of their fellow American Protestants were willing to acknowledge.

“All Is Not Therefore Rottenness That Wears a Cowl”: Consecrated Life and Civic Virtue

Chapter 4

In his *French and Italian Notebooks*, Hawthorne, though filled with ambivalence towards Catholicism, wondered what its practices could offer to his America:

It is for Protestants to inquire whether some of these inestimable advantages are not compatible with a purified faith, and do not indeed belong to Christianity, making part of the blessings it was meant to bring. It would be a good time to suggest and institute some of them, now that the American public seems to be stirred by a Revival, hitherto unexampled in extent. (*Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858)

For Hawthorne, the “inestimable advantages” of Catholicism included the opportunities for individual acts of prayer and devotion, the sacramental act of confession, the daily openness of churches and cathedrals, and the availability of intercessors in the veneration of the saints, all addressed in previous chapters of this study. More broadly, however, Hawthorne seems to suggest in this passage that Catholicism could be compatible with the ethics of mid-nineteenth-century America, particularly with the concept of democratic “revival.” Even though Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Cooper all created characters who suggested compatibility between Catholicism and heroic individualism, with Cooper’s Natty Bumppo a veritable archetype of rugged masculinity infused with a Catholic spirituality, these ageric saints, reflecting eremitic monasticism in their lives, were never meant to represent “typical” Americans. Hawthorne’s inquiry, however, allows the opportunity to explore the possibility of a larger compatibility of Catholicism with Jacksonian America’s confident, even aggressive, assertion of the powers and potential of the “common man.” However, assessing the compatibility between Catholicism and American society in the Jacksonian era was, and remains, a complicated undertaking.



In order to fully explore the possibilities for American society that Catholicism may have demonstrated to Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, some significant qualifications must be considered. First, it was entirely possible for American Protestants to admire the accomplishments of heroic saints and other charismatic Catholic individuals while continuing to reject the institutional and/or cultural aspects of Catholic faith and Catholic communities. Such a division echoes Franchot's overall argument in *Roads to Rome* (1994), in which she attempts to tease apart Catholic faith practices from "Romanism," which she identifies as a rhetorical construct to denote the varied historical, political, aesthetic, and gendered aspects of Catholicism, weaving these threads together into an understanding of Catholic "Otherness" (xviii). Just as this study strives to correct how separating Catholicism from Romanism in the American imagination has led to discounting of spiritual exploration on the part of American Protestant writers, so too it argues that admiration of individual Catholics did not mark the limits of Catholic interrogation for Hawthorne, Longfellow, and Cooper. On the contrary, these three authors sought to explore what parts of Catholicism could prove beneficial to the "common man," whether defined as self, as their reading audience, or as both. Second, American political culture in the nineteenth century was no more monolithic than it is today, and thus it is misleading to assume that the tenets of "Jacksonian democracy" were universally accepted by all Protestant Americans of the Jacksonian era, as even the diverging preferences of these three authors reveal. Nonetheless, an understanding of key trends in political and cultural thought is needed to explore how Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne explored the possibilities for the integration of Catholicism into American society.

Though the American political landscape from 1820 to 1860 was often fractured and contentious, virtually all Americans—whether partisan Democrats who supported Jackson and

his legacy or National Republicans or Whigs who were opposed to Jacksonian principles—understood themselves as “republicans” (in the lower case). They held in common a powerful sense of pride in the United States as the modern world’s first, largest, and most dynamic republic, worthy of the inheritance of its founding fathers and notable in its distinction from the Old World as a government based (to one degree or another) on the representation of the people it governed, fulfilling the promise of the American Revolution. While the concept of republicanism is often used interchangeably with that of democracy, the two terms are not, and have never been, entirely synonymous. From the early years of the American republic, the celebration of “the common man” against forces of aristocratic tyranny has dueled with a more elitist apprehension of mass ignorance, demagoguery, mobocracy, and other tyrannies associated with the rule of “the common man.” Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne lived and wrote during a period of American history when these tensions were especially high and frequently alarming, particularly as the nation seemed to lurch deeper into the sectional crisis over the future of slavery. All three writers, like many members of their communities and their reading audiences, were proud republicans and active in civic and political circles, though they differed significantly in their political affiliations, their social prejudices, and their desires for the future of the republic they held dear.

Thus, instead of studying how Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne engaged Catholicism through a lens of American democracy, it is more fruitful to study how they viewed Catholicism through their understandings of civic virtue. Far more than democracy, the concept of civic virtue was, and had always been, at the heart of American republicanism, and the promotion of civic virtue likewise cut across political party and other issue-based divisions. Historian Gordon Wood demonstrates that in conceiving of an independent republican society, free from the

corruption of Britain and of other Old World monarchies, the founders of the new nation had looked to antiquity, where they found the classical Roman concept of *virtus* as a model for preserving their own fledgling society from both political tyranny and moral degradation (92-109). American republican notions of civic virtue, therefore, had implications for more than just the country's political institutions and processes; civic virtue had significant implications for the public and private behaviors of American citizens, both as individuals and as members of communities.

In the America of Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, there was a longstanding and all but inseparable connection between civic virtue and Protestant Christianity. While civic virtue in the Roman Republic predated Christianity, and while prominent Deists like Thomas Jefferson managed to keep Christianity at arm's length, evangelical Christians of the early American republic worked actively and quite successfully toward forging a synthesis of their own religious beliefs with civic virtue. With the explosion of Protestant Christian revivalism in the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century—a movement that occurred simultaneously with the dramatic expansion of the political franchise for white American men of all social classes—the synthesis between civic and religious life became all the more powerful, causing civic virtues and Christian virtues to be considered as one and the same. According to Mark Noll in *America's God* (2002), by the mid-nineteenth century, a consensus that melded republicanism with evangelical Protestantism and “commonsense moral reasoning” (as opposed to scholarly reasoning) had developed to dominate the discourse of American civic life (615). As professed republicans and Christians, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne certainly joined, to at least some degree, with most other members of America's literary elite in promulgating this consensus.

In other ways, though, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne diverge from the Protestant-republican consensus in their literary treatments of Roman Catholicism. Most Protestant Americans in the age of Jackson perceived Roman Catholicism's institutional hierarchies as overly rigid and its dogmas as timeworn and irrational; it was a faith that had several strikes against it. Moreover, as the nativist movement developed as a cultural and political response to the rising tides of Irish immigration and to increasing economic volatility, Roman Catholicism seemed, for many Americans, to be even less compatible with American civic virtue. Of course, as Franchot notes, this trend accounted for much of the illicit thrill that Protestant writers and readers felt in their engagement with "Romanism," their construction of Catholicism as a culturally defined "Other." Relatively few of these writers and readers, however, seemed to give serious consideration to the possibility that certain virtues of Catholicism might not merely deserve to survive in America, but also might be able to strengthen American republicanism in various ways. Of these few, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne stood out as particularly noteworthy, and in their own literary encounters with Roman Catholicism, both in Old World and American settings, they were able to find virtue in Catholic institutions—including clerical celibacy, a hierarchical priesthood, and coenobitic monasticism—that seemed so repugnant to American nativists and most fetishists of Romanism. In the process, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne often felt compelled to infuse their literary works with political arguments against the phobias of anti-Catholic American nativists.

Cooper was the first of these three authors to address the interplay between religious and civic virtue in his writing. Born in 1789, just a few months after George Washington took office as the first president of the American republic, Cooper, noted as one of the first Americans to make a living through his creative writing, was approximately half of a generation older than

Longfellow and Hawthorne, though their writing lives did overlap enough for us to consider them contemporaries. Cooper's early literary impulses as a historical romancer, much like an American version of the British writer Sir Walter Scott, led him to mine the relatively brief history of the fledgling republic as a means to celebrate the potential of a newly coalescing and powerfully distinctive American civilization. His debut novel set during the Revolutionary War, *The Spy: A Tale of Neutral Ground* (1821), demonstrates a staunchly nationalistic understanding of virtue in the character of Harvey Birch, who refuses payment for his work as a counterspy for General Washington and accepts keeping his service secret, despite the ignominy he expects to suffer for concealing his true identity as a servant of the American republic. As discussed in the previous chapter, Birch's character does evoke Catholic concepts of heroic sainthood and martyrdom, but Cooper did not overtly address the connection between Catholicism and civic virtue in most of his early novels set in colonial or early republican America, including *The Pioneers; or, The Sources of the Susquehanna* (1823), *The Pilot: A Tale of the Sea* (1823), *Lionel Lincoln; or, The Leaguer of Boston* (1825), and *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish: A Tale* (1829). These novels do show Cooper's admiration for patriarchy and fondness for the possibilities of divine retribution, though usually in the context of Puritan and Calvinist traditions that weighed heavily in his consciousness as a result of his experiences at Yale. Prior to his studies at Yale, as Frederick explains in *The Darkened Sky* (1969), Cooper had been raised by parents who converted from Quakerism to the Episcopalian Church for reasons of social respectability (4), and Cooper's own youth had been marked by "comparatively unreflective deism" (26). When Cooper married into a prominent New York Episcopalian family, however, he increased his support for his father's Episcopal mission church in Cooperstown, which Frederick explains as a decision more to keep his wife and her family happy than out of any true

religious appeal he might have found there (5). It is significant that Cooper did not grow up in a Reformed tradition grounded in the works of either Luther or Calvin, for his fairly ecumenical background might have allowed him, so early in the history of the American republic, to engage different Christian traditions, including Catholicism.

Cooper the writer first engaged Catholicism more directly in *The Prairie: A Tale* (1827), depicting rituals, sacraments, lay followers, and a priest, Father Ignatius. As discussed earlier in this study, Cooper's Catholic characters in *The Prairie* are caricatures, in many ways little more than props for Cooper's development of a creole setting, adding flavor to the "ease, indolence, and wealth" (156; ch. 15) that he associates with the newly acquired territory of Louisiana. In creating Middleton's encounter with Father Ignatius, who tries to convert him to Catholicism, the "moral" of the story seems to be that the virtuous young American Protestant must endure with patience the overtures of the priest, outwitting him "with no weapons more formidable than common sense" in order to secure his prize in Inez and thus in Louisiana (158; ch. 15). Cooper also infuses Father Ignatius with some stock, lecherous overtones in his depiction of the priest as a manipulative figure trying to worm his way into the betrothal between Middleton and Inez, as when he professes to Don Augustin, the father of the bride, that he believes that "the entering wedge of argument had been driven into" Middleton's mind, laying a foundation for his future conversion, a profession that Cooper describes as "a species of pious fraud, for which no doubt the worthy priest found his absolution in the purity of his motives" (159; ch. 15). In this early Cooper depiction of a Catholic character, Father Ignatius serves as a foil to the virtuous Middleton, who effectively colonizes Spanish Louisiana in his marriage to "the richest heiress on the banks of the Mississippi" (158; ch. 15), bringing American civic virtue to supplant the Old World indolence in French and Spanish America. Though Cooper had, by 1827, created

characters who demonstrate some positive aspects of Roman Catholic spirituality, he did not fully consider the possibilities for compatibility of Roman Catholicism and American civic virtue until after his travels in Europe.

Cooper did not travel to Europe with the purpose of learning more about Roman Catholicism; instead, he traveled as a way to enhance his own European reputation and work in American consulates. However, in his capacity as an emerging literary celebrity, Cooper acted as a *de facto* ambassador for American republicanism, working to assert America's promise and stature in the eyes of still-skeptical European elites. He also worked to inspire expatriate American artists to be more innovatively and boldly "American" in their works, as evidenced in an 1829 letter to Horatio Greenough, a Bostonian sculptor working in Italy:

We must break the chain of mental dependence which enslaves us, and having so long acted, begin to think, for ourselves. Three fourths of the opinions of Europe are perfectly conventional, and are adopted to suit circumstances they cannot change, however they may wish it, and yet our puritans in politics and religion stand ready to swallow all they say, provided they are free from tythes and kings themselves [sic]. (*Letters and Journals* 1:395; 5 Nov. 1829)

Cooper called upon Greenough to help him shake up "the courts of the opinions of Europe," sharing his frustrations that the cultural "puritans" of America were content to mimic the styles of the Europeans, resisting opportunities to make their culture as distinctive as their government (*Letters and Journals* 1:395; 5 Nov. 1829). Such calls echoed concerns expressed broadly by Cooper and others in the early nineteenth century about the need for a distinctively American novel to serve the nation's effort to create its own literary heritage. It is thus feasible to argue that Cooper saw himself as a kind of missionary of American republicanism, seeking to convert Catholic Europe to American republican ideals.

Once Cooper experienced Roman Catholic devotion during his travels in Europe, however, his understanding of Catholicism changed significantly. The more he saw of Europe,

including its churches, cathedrals, and pilgrimage sites, the more he began to back away from stereotypical and prejudicial feelings towards Old World sensibilities, even the feelings against Catholicism so common amongst Americans. Cooper wrote quite a bit in Europe, and in these writings—whether his published travelogues or his three “European” novels—he gives a clear sense that he was not just trying to instruct European readers in the virtues of American democratic republicanism, but that he was also working out what lessons he and his fellow Americans could “glean” from his ruminations on European customs, including the customs and practices of Roman Catholics. Though Cooper may have envisioned himself as a missionary of republicanism, he unexpectedly found himself drawn in by the spiritual practices he encountered in Catholic Europe.

As this study has already demonstrated, Cooper was drawn to Catholic sites and structures, pulled in by their aesthetic beauty but also, seemingly unexpectedly, attracted to actions of the worshippers he encountered there. For example, Cooper’s *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland*, where he documented his transformative visit to Einsiedeln, indicates that he was all the more profoundly moved by the devotionals of the pilgrims he observed because of their conduct and bearing throughout their pilgrimages. Acutely aware of class distinctions, he indicates in his writing that he expected to see superstitious and ignorant peasants dominate the crowds at the shrine, with perhaps some European royalty mixed in, as he anticipated that devotions to the shrine and other shrines like it “are fast falling into disrepute with all classes of society but its two extremes” (*Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* 168; Letter 16). However, in his observations of the actual pilgrims, he is surprised by certain aspects of their bearing. First, he remarks that “some of the men had noble, classical faces; and I can recall one or two, who, bending on the stones with naked knees, heads inclined, and eyes humbly but steadily riveted on



the bronzed image, were perfect models of manly submission to an omnipotent and incomprehensible Power” (*Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* 170; Letter 16). These pilgrims are manly, yet still devout, their masculinity uncompromised by their devotion. The emphasis on “classical” features and manliness evokes ideas of the Roman republic, the model for early American concepts of both republicanism and of civic virtue, a far cry from commonly held preconceptions of peasants as docile, degraded, and blindly superstitious. That the fervor of these pilgrims does not reduce their dignity is significant, as it indicates that one can still be virtuous and manly while submitting oneself to a higher power. These pilgrims, in short, are not cowering or effeminate, but are rugged individuals, worthy of respect. Likewise, the peasant women on the pilgrimage “seemed respectable and more human than usual,” revealing that in looking beyond their “wretched” peasant clothes, Cooper perceived more nobility of character than he had expected from people of low social standing (*Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* 170; Letter 16); even poor peasants were not necessarily cowering in their submissiveness to higher authority.

Similarly, in his *Gleanings in Europe: Italy*, Cooper relates his observations of the pilgrims at Loretto, where “[o]ne woman, a well-dressed and respectable female to all appearances, was buried in the recess of the fireplace, where she remained kneeling, nearly an hour, without motion” (265; Letter 28). Here again, his ideas of class distinction begin to break down: if the dirty peasants at Einsiedeln retain dignity, and if the noble woman at Loretto retains her dignity despite getting as dirty as a peasant while kneeling in a fireplace, then it is possible for members of both the very rich and the very poor classes of Europe to maintain virtue in their stations and their beliefs. Catholicism worked for these people, so perhaps Catholicism could be compatible with the spiritual development equally dignified, virtuous Americans, even manly and virtuous American men like Cooper himself.

Cooper's *Gleanings in Europe*, in sum, reveal some significant shifts in his literary depictions of Catholicism. In *The Prairie*, all of the Catholic characters are, to a degree, effeminate. While femininity seems appropriate for the "blushing and timid" Inez (160; ch. 15), the beautiful and delicate bride of Middleton whose "meekness" allows her faith to sustain her in her captivity as "penitence for her sins" (287; ch. 26), it seems less so for Father Ignatius, who crumbles when Protestant migrants dare to challenge his beliefs, choosing instead to silence his flock, prohibit the Bible, and otherwise retreat from rational questioning (159; ch. 15). In his response to challenges to his belief system, Father Ignatius responds with fear, demonstrating a lack of manly civic virtue that would allow him to fight openly for his beliefs, even at great personal sacrifice. Father Ignatius, here, is no better than an ignorant peasant, unable to match wits or reason with the patient Middleton or the Protestants settlers who follow him into creole Louisiana. In contrast, Cooper's emerging admiration for European Catholicism seems male-gendered, in his particular emphasis on the "manly" qualities of the devotees he encounters. In demonstrating that a man can retain his manliness while submitting himself earnestly to his faith, Cooper is building an interesting bridge between masculinity and virtue, both civic and religious. Just as Harvey Birch in Cooper's *The Spy* submits himself completely to the authority of George Washington, sacrificing his reputation to the creation of an ideal state and thus demonstrating civic virtue, so too these penitents can submit themselves to God, sacrificing their comfort as they kneel before the shrine, demonstrating religious virtue in their devotion to an all-perfect power.

In addition to Cooper's admiration for "manly" Catholics, he also seems, in his *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland*, to be particularly struck by the ways in which Roman Catholicism cuts across class lines, inculcating moral courage and virtue despite great

inequalities in the socio-economic positions of its devotees. At Loretto, at Einsiedeln, and at the other shrines he visited, Cooper discovered that peasants and nobles alike went through the same pilgrimage rites. "All drank at the fountain" in front of Einsiedeln Abbey (*Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland* 168; Letter 16), driven by a desire to drink from the same fountain from which they believed Jesus himself drank when he consecrated the site, and their shared experiences in performing sacramental rituals transcended class distinctions to bond them together as a people, without collapsing social stratifications. Cooper was not a leveling democrat, as observed by D. H. Lawrence in his discussion of Cooper's "white" novels, where Lawrence notes that the social inequalities present in works such as *The Spy* belie notions of true democratic egalitarianism (39-49). Lawrence sees Cooper, perhaps a bit unfairly, as an aristocratic snob, but Cooper was not anticipating the works of Marx; instead, he strove to authentically portray class distinctions in his early novels just as he strove to authentically portray them in his observations of Europe. Cooper appreciated the refinements of social and cultural elites, provided that they were couched in virtues that could help them use their powers to preserve order, justice, and benevolence in society.

Cooper's changing attitudes towards Roman Catholicism did set him at odds with many of his fellow Americans at home and abroad. For example, Cooper's good friend Samuel Morse traveled in the same circles as Cooper, visiting many of the same places, yet witnessing the same devotions that softened Cooper's attitudes only served to harden Morse's anti-Catholic prejudices. Franchot comments that as Morse traveled around Europe painting, he selected Catholic subjects, including "Chapel of the Virgin at Subiaco," an 1831 piece depicting a woman kneeling before a roadside shrine (200-201). In this painting, Morse portrays devotion at a shrine perched on a mountain. Morse does not reveal the interior of the brick shrine, focusing instead on

the landscape and the devout woman kneeling, her cap, bright gown, and white sleeves giving her an air of wealth that contrasts with the shepherds tending their sheep nearby. Franchot offers this painting as an example of how Morse considered Catholic devotion to be simply part of the European landscape (200), noting that his writings about Catholicism “advertised a melodramatic thematics of abduction, claustrophobic interiority, and precipitate surrender” (200) that resonated powerfully with his American admirers, despite what seems to be an aesthetic appeal of Catholicism in his paintings. Perhaps Morse in his painting only depicts the side of the roadside shrine to distance himself from the devotion to the Virgin inside, while Cooper plunges headlong into grappling with Catholic devotion in his European novels, using his creative energy to explore how religious and civic virtue are cultivated in Roman Catholicism. In other words, Morse’s paintings and writings confine Catholicism to an outdated, “Old World” social order alien to America, while Cooper was working to see Catholicism’s relevance to themes of republican virtue in the Europe and the United States of his own time.

Cooper’s European novels, *The Bravo: A Tale* (1831), *The Heidenmauer; or, The Benedictines* (1832), and *The Headsman; or, The Abbaye des Vignerons* (1833), all demonstrate a manly Catholic devotion that can foster civic virtue by transcending class boundaries without upending the social hierarchy. Significantly, almost all of the virtuous, heroic Catholic characters in these novels are men. For example, in *The Bravo*, Antonio Vecchio, the poor fisherman desperate to save his grandson from impressment into a Venetian galley, acts with honor and dignity throughout his efforts to secure his grandson’s freedom, working his way up to an audience with the masked Council of Three to plead for the child (171-186; ch. 12). His efforts ultimately anger the corrupt rulers of Venice and cost him his life, largely because Antonio cannot “speak in favor of the power which I know to be unjust” (164; ch. 11), despite Jacopo

urging him to “feign it, or thy suit will fail” (164; ch. 11). Antonio cannot let go of his desire for civic virtue in the corrupt government, stating “[i]t would be better, however, if there were less force used here in Venice, in a matter of simple right and wrong. But the great love to show their power, and the weak must submit” (164; ch. 11). Cooper uses this confrontation between the virtuous commoner Antonio and the corrupt ruling council of Venice to comment extensively of the nature of a republic, noting that in Venice and other places like it, “the name of a Republic...has so frequently been prostituted to the protection and monopolies of privileged classes” (165; ch. 11) that it has no true representation of its people, and no civic virtue. Cooper comments further that the founders of Venice “believed their state had done all that was necessary to merit the high and generous title it assumed” (166; ch. 11), but “was, in truth, a narrow, a vulgar, and an exceedingly heartless oligarchy” (166; ch. 11), with power ultimately concentrated in the “despotic and secret” Council of Three (169; ch. 11), a group whose unchecked authority had, in its “substitution, of a soulless corporation for an elective representation” (170; ch. 11), led to the utter disregard for “the laws of natural justice and the rights of the citizen” (170; ch. 11). Cooper’s juxtaposition of common Antonio’s nobility and hard work in the canals with the indolent corruption of the masked rulers of Venice serves to demonstrate that true manly and civic virtue lies with the honest fisherman.

Cooper continues his critique of the falsely republican rulers of Venice in *The Bravo* through the fiercely independent, yet vowed, Father Anselmo, a Carmelite priest instrumental in paving the way for true democratic republicanism and the inculcation of civic virtue. In many ways, Cooper recreated his archetype Natty Bumppo as Father Anselmo: Anselmo is charged with protecting two young women (one marriageable, one not), just as Bumppo was in *Last of the Mohicans*, yet here he shepherds his charges through a watery wilderness of canals, where

the enemies wear masks instead of war paint. Dekker would disagree with this reading, proposing in *Cooper the Novelist* (1967) that Antonio is the leather-stocking figure and “the real hero of the novel,” with his home on the open, sunny waters symbolic of his refuge from the corrupt city, much as Bumppo seeks refuge in the woods (132). Still, I argue that while both Antonio and Anselmo may resemble Natty Bumppo, reading Father Anselmo as a recast Natty Bumppo offers interesting insights into *The Bravo*. Anselmo offers a positive portrayal of an overtly Catholic monastic, one whose masculinity is not stripped away by his vows. Anselmo is strong and brave, unafraid of fighting, willing to throw back his cowl and look the enemies of democracy in the eye, whether to offer funerary prayers for the martyred Antonio, defying the tyrants and taming a factious mob at the same time, or using his holy office to provide a secret wedding and means of escape to his charge Violetta and her betrothed Don Camillo, whose defiance of the state seems to make him a self-made democratic man in spite of his aristocratic background.

Though Father Anselmo is consecrated to a life of monastic celibacy, the storyline hints at a long-passed romantic interest between him and Violetta’s governess Donna Florinda, not to titillate, but to make Father Anselmo more human, much like Natty Bumppo’s love interest serves to do in *The Pathfinder*. Cooper’s hints at this past relationship are subtle, as when Father Anselmo and Donna Florinda fade into the background as Don Camillo sings to Donna Violetta from a gondola beneath her balcony. As all of them listen to his song of courtship, Father Anselmo’s face reveals an expression “rather that of one who knew the dangers of the passions, than of one who condemned them” (206; ch. 14), and he “receded a pace, like one pricked in conscience” (209; ch. 14) when Don Camillo dares to say “[h]ad he been human, he would have loved; had he loved, he would have never worn a cowl” (208; ch. 14). Father Anselmo’s

familiarity with romantic affection is of tremendous importance in the context of his Catholicism. First, Father Anselmo is depicted here as a man whose heterosexual masculinity is undiminished by his vows, setting him well apart from the portrayals of lecherous, predatory, unmanly priests that dominated anti-Catholic discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. This reading of Father Anselmo as both a man who chooses to set himself apart from love interests and as a recast Natty Bumppo offers a challenge to Leslie Fiedler's reading of Bumppo as simply bound "to a lonely life in a state of nature" (210), allowing both of them agency to make conscious choices to serve travelers, pilgrims, and lost souls. Father Anselmo is clearly a manly man who has made choices that allow him to better serve as an instrument of civic and religious virtue; in supporting the marriage of Camillo and Violetta, Father Anselmo thus promotes republican virtue. Father Anselmo selflessly serves republican values, sacrificing his own personal comforts and interests to do so, much like Harvey Birch in *The Spy*. In *The Bravo*, then, Cooper interestingly connects the rites and rituals of Catholicism to defiance of oppression rather than to acquiescence with it, clarifying Catholicism's compatibility with the revolutionary spirit that would safeguard republican virtue from tyranny.

Cooper continues his exploration of the intersections between Catholicism and virtuous republicanism in *The Heidenmauer*, combining the theme of manly civic virtue with the communal implications of shared Catholic devotional experiences. After the political struggle over a vineyard claimed by both Count Emich and the Abbot of Limburgh spirals out of control, and a drinking contest between the count and abbot proves insufficient to resolve the controversy, a hostile mob invades the Abbey at Limburgh and burns its church. Later, in an effort to restore civic harmony, a group of penitential citizens of the nearby town of Durkheim embark on a somber pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of the Hermits in Einsiedeln,

processing together across the foreboding mountains. The penitent pilgrims are from various social strata, with Father Arnolph and Count Emich leading the procession, followed by Burgomaster Heinrich Frey and Dietrich the blacksmith, and more successive pairs of pilgrims to represent the village, with young and old, rich and poor, men and women all wearing similar cloaks to suggest their unified purpose despite their socio-economic distinctions (358-364; ch. 24). Casting aside their typical formalities, they address each other familiarly, as when Heinrich and Dietrich call each other “Brother Pilgrim” despite their different stations in life, even though Dietrich the blacksmith finds that “the familiarity goes nigh to choke me!” when he must refrain from saluting his fellow pilgrim Heinrich as “worshipful Burgomaster” (363; ch. 24) Despite their different stations in their home community, they travel as pilgrims, united by the common experience of the long journey to Einsiedeln, a place Count Emich notes holds “special virtue, to draw men so far from their homes to do it honor” (360; ch. 24).

As the pilgrims in *The Heidenmauer* hike to Einsiedeln, Cooper uses the opportunity for Father Arnolph to tell the history of the shrine, revealing in the process his own reasonability and manly virtue. Readers of *The Heidenmauer* are, at this point in the novel, familiar with Father Arnolph as the deliverer of the sermon at Mass early in the work, in which he revealed himself as “charitable and full of love” (157; ch. 8). Here, Father Arnolph leads the penitents on their pilgrimage, stopping periodically to kneel, while those following him, “accustomed to these sudden demonstrations of zeal, gladly rested their limbs” (359; ch. 24). Arnolph alone is strong enough to pray with “religious reverence” (359; ch. 24) at the sight of Einsiedeln in the distance. Emich asks Arnolph to tell the history of Einsiedeln, and as Arnolph recounts the story of the founders of Einsiedeln, he notes that they were not merely superstitious peasants, but learned, reasonable men. When the chapel was divinely consecrated, for example, Bishop Conrad of



Constance and his companions “suddenly heard divine music most sweetly chanted by angels. Though sore amazed and impressed, they were still sufficient masters of their reason to discover that the unseen beings sang the prescribed formula of the consecration” (362; ch. 24) for which they prepared: this was the miracle that pilgrims were arriving to commemorate when Cooper made his visit. Arnolph explains that the bishop and others gathered, though witness to a miracle, were “sufficiently masters of their reason” to conclude that Bishop Conrad no longer needed to consecrate the shrine, having witnessed its heavenly consecration, but the bishop continued forth with the service to placate “the demands and outcries of the ignorant,” before being sharply rebuked by “a clear voice [that] three times admonished him of the blasphemy” (362; ch. 24), a lesson that the wise upper classes should not, even when well-intentioned, consider caving to the tyranny of the majority in matters of religion or of government, lest they incur civic or divine displeasure. Bishop Conrad heeded the warning, and thus the pilgrims travel to Einsiedeln every September to commemorate the divine consecration of the chapel. When Emich responds to this supernatural tale by asking if there are any “especial favors accorded to those who come hither” (362; ch. 24), the disappointed Arnolph’s silence speaks volumes, as he is unwilling to engage the superstitious belief in indulgences or any other “temporal gifts or political considerations” that Emich, still too focused on earthly goals, seeks. Arnolph clearly has learned from the story of the divine voice that chastised Bishop Conrad, and will not address this ignorant request. For readers who might still be skeptical of the story of the consecration of the chapel, Cooper resumes his narrative interjection by reminding readers “that the belief of these supernatural inferences of Divine Power forms no necessary part of doctrine, even in that Church which is said to be most favored by these dispensations” (363; ch. 24). In other words, Cooper wanted his readers to know that enlightened, reasonable people could be Catholics, or could find utility in

Catholicism, and were not required to cave to what they might perceive as superstition. Father Arnolph, a virtuous, holy, and manly man, believes the story, and he (along with others who share in his belief) is to be respected for his acceptance of this divine miracle, even by American Protestant tourists who intend to witness a spectacle as curious onlookers, not as active participants.

Father Arnolph is but one example of manly civic virtue in *The Heidenmauer*, a trait which Cooper demonstrates can transcend rank and class. For example, the Burgomaster of Deurckheim, Heinrich Frey, is instrumental in restoring civility and order after the monastery at Limburg is sacked by Count Emich and other members of the community, leading the negotiations for reparations in a desire “to look only to a quiet and friendly future” (338; ch. 22) with Father Arnolph, who is unafraid to enter the negotiations in the town-hall alone, “calmly removing his cowl” (334; ch. 22) to enter into talks with his fellow men. Despite their disparate social positions, the “Brother Pilgrims” Heinrich and Dietrich serve to encourage each other as they grow tired and apprehensive on their trek to Einsiedeln to atone on behalf of their community. When the blacksmith Dietrich wryly remarks that he wishes “the penances and pilgrimages, and other expiations of the Church, would be chiefly left to women,” Heinrich tries to boost his spirits, reminding Dietrich that “it behoveth us to hold out manfully [sic]” as they accept their penance, which consists of “some kneeling, and a few stripes that each is to apply to his own back” (364; ch. 24). These men, therefore, display manly civic virtue and fraternal support for each other in their acceptance of their communal penance, willing to accept personal pain as a necessary sacrifice for the good of their community. Led by the virtuous Father Arnolph, these men follow the path of the pilgrimage into their imperfect rites of pilgrimage, Heinrich and Dietrich distracted by their debts to their community and desiring to complete their

tasks as quickly as possible, while Arnolph alone “prayed devoutly, and with sincere mental abasement” (373; ch. 25). Arnolph, here, serves as a model of religious virtue, inculcating the guardians of civic virtue, revealing the importance of each to the other.

*The Heidenmauer* clearly serves as Cooper’s challenge to Morse and his nativist, anti-Catholic sensibilities. In “Cooper and European Catholicism,” Williams argues that Cooper wrote *The Heidenmauer* “as a means of dealing with his complex attitudes towards Catholicism” (156), noting that “there are scattered through the narrative a number of approbative comments on Catholicism” which “are meant as more than detached authorial observation or travel book-ornaments; they contain a lesson bluntly directed to [Cooper’s] fellow Americans” (156). *The Heidenmauer* does, of course, contain numerous explanatory passages, as in Arnolph’s story of Einsiedeln Abbey, the lengthy description of the Mass, and in the narrator’s comments regarding how miracles are to be understood by reasonable people. Williams argues, in short, that “Cooper is telling America—and Samuel Morse—to calm down. The ‘lesson’ of *The Heidenmauer* is that Roman Catholicism is not an ogre and that neither Catholics nor Protestants have exclusive holds on truth, virtue, or piety” (157). One can logically extend Williams’ reading of *The Heidenmauer* to also include the sociopolitical purposes of *The Bravo*, with its explorations of virtuous citizens resisting a corrupt, falsely republican government. Likewise, one can find Cooper continuing to reconcile civic virtue with Catholicism in *The Headsman*, the last of his European novels.

In *The Headsman*, Cooper focuses primarily on the powers of human virtue and how they can be manifested in people of different social and religious backgrounds. In terms of storyline, *The Headsman* incorporates elements of the other two European novels, echoing *The Bravo* with its own community celebration (the Abbaye des Vignerons festival) and the appearance of the Doge of Genoa, and echoing *The Heidenmauer* with a trek through arduous Swiss terrain to

reach a monastery. As in both other European novels, *The Headsman* centers on two love-struck youth whose union is, for a time, impeded by outside interests due to concerns about social status and inheritances. In this novel, however, Cooper is more interested in a larger reconciliation than that of two lovers; in addition, Cooper proposes a model in which Protestants and Catholics can live together harmoniously to forge a more virtuous society. One of the novel's best examples of the importance of civic virtue occurs when two noble characters, good friends as youths and fellow soldiers, are reunited while journeying to the festival after not seeing each other for many years. One, Grimaldi, is a Genoan Catholic, and the other, Melchior, is a Swiss Protestant. As they catch up on each other's lives, they agree that their religious differences are unbridgeable, but ultimately inconsequential. Grimaldi says to his Protestant friend:

Thou wouldst have made a worthy cardinal, had chance brought thee into the world fifty leagues further south, west, or east. But this is the way with the world, whether it be your Turk, your Hindoo, or your Lutheran, and I fear it is much the same with the children of St. Peter too. Each has his arguments for faith, or politics, or any interest that may be named which he uses like a hammer to knock down the bricks of his opponent's reasons, and when he finds himself in the other's intrenchments, why, he gathers together the scattered material in order to build a wall for his own protection. Then what was oppression yesterday is justifiable defence to-day; fanaticism becomes logic; and credulity and pliant submission get, in two centuries, to be deference to the venerable opinion of our fathers! [sic] (172; ch. 9)

In this passage, Grimaldi argues passionately that religious differences are more of an accident of birth, and that using one's beliefs to either attack the beliefs of others or to build defensive walls around one's own beliefs only leads to disunity, taking away opportunities for people to look beyond their own "arguments, for faith, or politics, or any interest that may be named" to create social networks of trust essential to a virtuous republic. Cooper here is proposing a model for any pluralistic society, such as Jacksonian America, where religious differences might be accepted and tolerated to forge a just, logical, and civil republic.

Not only does Cooper use the friendship between men of different national and religious backgrounds to demonstrate the possibilities for moving past such differences to create a virtuous society, but he also considers how a non-Catholic people can interact with a Catholic priest in a civil society. He does so with Father Xavier, an affable Augustinian monk who, accompanied by his faithful mastiff Uberto, is well known to the people who live and travel near Lake Geneva and the Alpine pass to Italy. Both monk and dog are appreciated by the community, Catholics and Protestants alike, for their good deeds, particularly their rescue of stranded travelers. The community's respect for Father Xavier is made clear at the festival, when he is greeted loudly by Benoit Emery, a "burly peasant" from Vaudois, who seems to speak for his village:

thou knowest we are St. Calvin's men in Vaud, if there must be any canonized. But what is it to us that thou hearest mass, while we love the simple worship! Are we not equally men? Does not the frost nip the members of Catholic and Protestant the same? or does the avalanche respect one more than the other? (226; ch. 13).

The narrator likewise notes that the villagers waved their hands at the end of this speech "in support of the truth and popularity of the honest peasant's sentiments" (227; ch. 13), demonstrating that Emery's regard for the Catholic priest and his fellow monks is shared by the entire Protestant community. Emery, despite his lowly status as a peasant, speaks with great wisdom, recognizing the essential humanity of Catholics and Protestants alike, voicing the views of the entire village in their choice to reject sectarian divisions for the creation of a more virtuous civil society. In Vaudois, Cooper posits a model society for his American readership to consider as a possibility for their own imitation, with Father Xavier as a model of a charitable, helpful Catholic priest, not the lecherous, duplicitous stereotype so commonly depicted in convent captivity narratives popular in the mid-nineteenth century.

Significantly, Cooper in his European novels creates models of civic virtue in a wide variety of vowed Catholics, not just in eremitic monastics or anchorites whose isolation might make them more attractive to wary American Protestant readers, but also in priests and monks attached to coenobitic settings, challenging directly the prevailing notion that same-sex communal living was aberrant and problematic for creating a virtuous society (Pagliarini 97-128; Franchot 112-161). Both Father Arnolph in *The Heidenmauer* and Father Xavier in *The Headsman* are attached to active monastic communities. Father Arnolph serves the Abbey at Limburg as its prior, second only to the abbot in the community hierarchy, yet is not corrupted by either his community or his power within it, demonstrating himself as able to rise above the corruption above and below him to assert his manly civic virtue. Likewise, Father Xavier, though he spends much time outside the monastery in his mission of offering aid to travelers in distress, serves his monastery in his work as an emissary, bringing those in need back to St. Bernard for refuge and warmth. Nowhere in any of his European novels does Cooper even hint at the overtones of sexual deviance that were often associated by others with monastic settings, overtones that Franchot and other scholars have documented. While the “chastity” of Cooper’s works later drew the scorn of critic Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), it served, intentionally or not, as a counter-weight to the fears of Catholic sexual perversion that pervaded American society in Cooper’s own day.

Though Cooper finds virtue in the Catholicism in his European novels, he does not become a Catholic apologist by only depicting Catholics as virtuous. Instead, he offers examples of both good and bad within the faith tradition, well aware that corruption could exist in Catholic individuals and institutions. Some of this corruption seems purely doctrinal, as with Abbé Latouche, a political player within the church hierarchy of *The Heidenmauer*, whose distaste for

the “indignity” of a pilgrimage is palpable, revealing his hypocrisy: his assertion that “[w]e have doctrines for all, but practices must be mitigated, like medicaments to the sick” (368; ch. 24), demonstrates that he does not practice what he professes and prescribes to those who entrust their souls to his spiritual guidance. Similarly, Conrad, the indulgence peddler-turned-murderer in *The Headsman*, was so obviously distasteful to Cooper, and so far removed from what he had observed in his travels, that he felt compelled to comment “[i]n presenting this man to the mind of the reader, we have no intention to impugn the doctrines of the particular church to which he belonged” (73; ch. 4). For other Catholic characters, however, Cooper’s depiction of corruption extends beyond the theological realm. Father Bonifacius, the Abbot of Limburg in *The Heidenmauer*, seems hardly a virtuous leader, even if his decision to settle a disputed land claim with a drinking game could perhaps be construed by some as a sign of healthy machismo. Even so, Bonifacius loses any pretense to virtue as he grows inebriated, leaving himself vulnerable to provocation when the conversation turns to Martin Luther, until “fairly frothing with the violence of ungovernable rage” (142; ch. 7), he collapses and loses the contest for the vineyards, having “yielded his faculties to the sinister influence of the liquor he had swallowed” (143; ch. 7). Cooper, though seeing great benefits in Catholicism for individuals, was leery of the theocratic implications of Catholic government. In his *Gleanings in Europe: Switzerland*, Cooper suggests Catholic governments could stand in the way of liberal progress, as he felt was happening in some of the Swiss cantons that had established Catholicism as their official religion:

Education is greatly neglected, moreover, and superstitions are made to take the place of higher motives. All this shows that true liberty has no abode here. Catholicism may have deferred to facts that are too potent for its direct efforts, but in so doing, it has taken care to keep opinion in leading-strings, and to render civil liberty a lure to its own views, rather than a frank associate. (146-147; Letter 14)

While offering possibilities for friendship, collaboration, and cooperation within a civil republic, Catholicism, for Cooper, was not suitable as a governmental institution. This distinction is one he hints at in *The Heidenmauer*, as Frederick points out in contrasting Cooper's portrayal of the cunning Abbot Bonifacius to that of the noble Prior Arnolph, who "is not ambitious, for thrice hath he refused the mitre [sic]" (Frederick 20; Cooper 389; ch. 26). Still, Cooper strove in his European novels to be balanced, reasonable, and even corrective in his treatment of Catholicism, believing that its possibilities for goodness and virtue outweighed the corruption from which no creed is wholly immune.

For Cooper, the defense of liberty was the greatest of all virtues, and the greatest civil evils were the dogmatism and fanaticism that could manifest themselves in political or religious persecution. Such a reading extends logically from works such as *The Spy*, wherein Cooper demonstrates value of citizens willing to sacrifice themselves in the name of liberty, and scholars have made note of similar threads running through Cooper's European novels as well. Becker, for example, argues that Cooper's purpose in his three European novels was to express his concerns about the direction of American democratic society, noting that these novels serve collectively as "a warning to Americans not to romanticize the feudal past" (327). Becker notes that this view is most clear in *The Bravo*, where Cooper uses his introduction to contrast true republicanism in America with its false counterparts in European governments, despotisms that use the trappings of republicanism to disguise the violence and oppression they exert against their own peoples (328). Williams notes that Cooper was disturbed by the Catholic Church's active opposition to some of the democratic revolutions that were sweeping Europe in the early 1830s (156), explaining perhaps that his decision to write *The Bravo* was made in sympathy with those revolutionary impulses. On the other hand, Cooper did not feel that Europeans had a



monopoly on the vices of persecution and oppression. House argues that in Cooper's European writings, "the catholic attitude of the gentry contrasts sharply with Yankee intolerance" (155). While living in Europe, Cooper grew increasingly aware of nativist persecution of Catholics in America, and thus his writings reflect his critiques of these events.

In particular, Cooper subtly contrasts the reactions of European Catholics to American Protestant tourists with the reactions of American Protestant tourists to European Catholics, a contrast that is best revealed in his *Gleanings in Europe: Italy*. He was pleasantly surprised to find that in Rome there was not as much "religious bigotry" as he expected: "[t]he people understand the prejudices of Protestants, and, unless offensively obtruded, seem disposed to let them enjoy them in peace" (233; Letter 24). Cooper was fortunate, however, to find that even when an American "offensively obtruded" upon European Catholic customs and beliefs, the people were remarkably forgiving. He relates in his journal how he was walking the streets of Rome with a friend who turned into a side street to relieve himself, and unknowingly urinated on a wall beneath a picture of the Virgin Mary. A crowd surrounded them in silence, and eventually a priest arrived to sprinkle the wall with holy water, but they were not accosted, though Cooper believed that at another time and place "such a blunder might have cost us both our lives" (233; Letter 24). In his *Gleanings in Europe: Italy*, Cooper finds that American Protestants in Rome are less tolerant, as when he describes a papal benediction ceremony where none of the Protestant tourists in attendance knelt, though "the blessing of no good man is to be despised" (255; Letter 26). Cooper then expresses his frustration at how Protestants act in general during Catholic ceremonies and rites:

There is too much of the 'D—n my eyes! Change my religion? never,' of the sailor, in us Protestants, who seem too often to think that there is a merit in intolerance and irreverence, provided the liberality and respect are to be paid to Catholics. He who comes voluntarily into a Catholic ceremony is bound to pay it suitable deference; and then, God

is present. I never saw anything wrong in kneeling to the Host; for, while we may not believe in the real presence as to the wafer itself, we are certain that homage to God himself can never be out of place or out of season. All men would be of the same way of thinking, had not politics become so much mixed up with religion” (255; Letter 26).

Though Cooper here seems hopeful for mutual tolerance and accommodation between differing beliefs, his real hope was for a civic order much like that which he constructed in *The Headsman*, both in the friendship between Grimaldi and Melchior and in the relationship between Father Xavier and the Calvinist villagers of Vaudois. Cooper was not, in other words, hoping for one universal faith under one overarching doctrinal canopy, as such would infringe upon individual liberties, thus hindering the development of the diversity essential to a truly virtuous republic. Cooper, it seems, would urge Americans to be more tolerant of Catholics: after all, if Italian Catholics do not lynch Americans who urinate on sacred sites, then why should American Protestants mob Catholic immigrants who are simply following their own religious consciences in a new nation? Cooper tried to diffuse America’s nativist tensions with humor, as when he mentions in his Italian *Gleanings* that people in Rome are confident Catholicism will grow in the United States: Cooper, who believes in “giving all sects fair play,” nonetheless chides his American readers “to take large doses of Calvinism, or you may awake, some fine morning, a believer in transubstantiation” (232; Letter 24).

However, Cooper returned home in 1836 to an America where he was unable to maintain his humor, as an explosion of partisan rancor during Jackson’s presidential administrations had only expanded after Jackson’s departure from office. Cooper, after spending so many years defending America against its European critics (Dekker 112; Becker 328), found himself confronted with what he saw as prejudices and provincialism of local majorities threatening the statutes and laws that had been designed originally for the republic (Becker 328). Cooper grew increasingly discouraged as well by the growth of new hyper-democratic and millennial sects

that, in his mind, lacked the dignity of what he associated with his own almost manorial Episcopalian parish in Cooperstown, and were even further removed from the reverent yet tolerant European Catholic parishes he had witnessed. Though inspired by the same legacy of the American Revolution that catapulted Cooper into his literary career, Cooper and the fervently nativist American evangelicals moved away from each other in the years after Cooper's return from Europe. Nathan O. Hatch, in *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989), documents the rise of Protestant rabble rousers who chafed against the authority of established American Protestant denominations, such as the Calvinist successors to the New England Puritans: "[t]o the rebellious leaders of populist religious movements, inspired by the rhetoric of the Revolution, nothing represented ecclesiastical tyranny more than the Calvinist clergy with their zeal for theological systems, doctrinal correctness, organizational control, and cultural influence" (170). Cooper, conversely, began to see himself as a "limited democrat" (Becker 328), increasingly frustrated by a sense of disrespect he felt from neighbors and critics whom he saw as his social and intellectual inferiors. According to Becker, "[t]he essence of government to Cooper lay in so organizing it that the people would have no opportunity to make mistakes but would entrust authority to their betters, who would be incapable of error" (329). However, Cooper's America moved in the 1830s and 1840s away from such a hierarchical, class-based structure in both religion and in politics. Despite sharing in the critique of American Calvinist orthodoxy, Cooper was far more uneasy with the rise of sectarianism and anti-intellectual religious populism in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, it is possible that in exploring Catholicism, Cooper discovered a way to reconcile democracy with religious pluralism while maintaining a shared sense of traditional order, hierarchy, and deference. After writing his European novels, Cooper did not directly engage Catholic virtue in his later American works, at

least not at the same level. Frederick notes, however, that in his later novels, references to concepts like the Trinity and of the mediation of Christ indicate the lasting resonance of Cooper's exploration of Catholicism, both in his personal experiences and in his fiction (24-25).

Cooper did not seem to make any further inquiries into Catholicism upon his return to America, but shortly before his death, Cooper garnered a favorable mention from the curmudgeonly Catholic convert and literary critic Orestes Brownson, who shared Cooper's misgivings about the excesses of Jacksonian democracy. In July 1851, Brownson published in his *Quarterly Review* a glowing review of Cooper's *Ways of the Hour* (1850), a novel through which Cooper, as he explains in his preface, hoped "to draw the attention of the reader to some of the social evils that beset us." Ostensibly a crime story focusing on corruption in the American judicial system, *Ways of the Hour* is more broadly aimed at larger concerns about the trajectory of American democracy: "[s]omething very like a revolution is going on in our midst, while there is much reason to apprehend that few real grievances are abated" (vii). Cooper used this novel as a clarion call to his readers, it seems, urging them to be mindful that "the demagogue must have his war cry as well as the Indian; and it is probable that he will continue to whoop as long as the country contains minds weak enough to furnish him with dupes" (Brownson, July 1851). While such a scathing comment may have indeed caused Cooper and his penultimate novel "[t]o fall under the condemnation of the American press," Brownson's review praises Cooper for his provocative work, particularly as it falls in line with Brownson's own thinking. Brownson uses most of this book review as a platform for expressing his own misgivings about the excessively demagogic tendencies in American politics and society. Brownson writes that "jacobinism" [sic] has eroded what the founders of the American republic intended to be a mixed system of government, backed by an impartial, virtuous judiciary. Instead of such a system,

Brownson argues in his review that America is beset by an excessively democratic press, by movements like women's rights, and by other threats to his sense of patriarchal order: "[i]f democracy would be contented to remain and operate only within the bounds prescribed, it would not have too large a sphere." Brownson, who sought "a mode of masculine Catholicism" (Ryan 38) for America, thus would likely have been pleased with the manly examples of virtuous priests and lay Catholics in Cooper's body of work. Recognizing that Cooper also shared his political anxieties, Brownson praised Cooper, who died just months after Brownson's laudatory review, for his "attempts to correct the foibles, errors, and dangerous tendencies of his countrymen." Brownson acclaimed *Ways of the Hour* as a novel to please "the Christian and the patriot" alike, pronouncing that Cooper's novel "is sound and healthy, and contains much matter that every American citizen ought to read and meditate daily." Curiously, James Emmett Ryan, whose *American Catholicism in Literary Culture* (2013) offers an extended exploration of Brownson's work, seems puzzled by Brownson's fondness for Cooper, noting that Brownson's effusive praise "overlook[s] the inconvenient detail that Cooper (like Longfellow) was not a Catholic and did not deal with Roman Catholic themes in many of his writings" (27). Brownson's awareness of Cooper's engagement with Roman Catholic themes and the possibilities they held for the creation of a virtuous American republic was probably far greater than Ryan and other scholars have acknowledged.

If Cooper was one of Orestes Brownson's favorite Protestant writers, the other was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, as Brownson made abundantly clear in his January 1850 review of *Evangeline* and *Kavanagh*, stating that Longfellow "has a perception, if not of the truth of the Catholic Church, at least of her beauty, and writes like an upright, earnest, pure, benevolent man." Over the previous twenty-five years, Cooper and Longfellow had certainly shown some

similarities in the tone and in the spirit of their works, thus their mutual appeal to Brownson is not surprising. Cooper was almost twenty years older than Longfellow, yet their careers overlapped considerably, particularly since Cooper starting his writing career relatively late, in his early thirties, while Longfellow began his own career in his late teens. Thus, both writers were, despite their age difference, contemporaries, especially significant when considering the political and cultural contexts of their work. Both Cooper and Longfellow launched their literary careers at the end of the so-called Era of Good Feelings, in which the United States celebrated the confirmation of its independence in the War of 1812, underwent tremendous and rapid territorial and commercial expansion, and enjoyed a fleeting period of relative political harmony coinciding with the presidency of James Monroe. Longfellow, who read and admired Cooper's works, shared his desire to promote a uniquely national literature of American cultural and literary independence. Like Cooper, Longfellow also drew upon a wellspring of historical myth and legend and upon the allure of the American natural landscape in order to help foster a distinctly American literature.

Longfellow announced his ambitions for himself and, by extension, for American literature, as an eighteen-year-old college student at Bowdoin, publishing his agenda in a series of essays in the *U. S. Literary Gazette*. In perhaps the most well-known of these essays, "The Literary Spirit of Our Country" (1825), Longfellow celebrated America's potential for expansion and its rapid commercial development, which he praised as "a spirit of activity, that will insure success in every honorable undertaking" (367). His essay, which encapsulates the sentiments of the Era of Good Feelings, calls for a distinctive American literature in which the nation can celebrate itself, one that will mark a deepening of the "same spirit that animated our fathers in their great struggle for freedom" (366).

While “The Literary Spirit of Our Country” may not seem to directly address religion, it does offer a glimpse into how young Longfellow conceived of himself as an individual interested in exploring both literature and religion. The five early Longfellow essays published in the *U.S. Literary Gazette* are collectively titled “The Lay Monastery” and signed “The Lay Monk,” which suggests that Longfellow was not hesitant to associate himself (albeit anonymously and indirectly) with something as potentially controversial as Catholic monasticism. Like Cooper, Longfellow was brought up outside of the traditions of reformed Calvinism that persisted as the dominant orthodoxy throughout much of the early American republic, especially in Longfellow’s native New England. Longfellow’s more distant ancestors had immigrated to America as Puritans, but his more recent ancestors had converted to Unitarianism, a religion that had emerged in the late-eighteenth-century Enlightenment, embracing reason as a reaction against fanaticism, and encouraging its adherents to increase their understanding of a benevolent Unitarian—as opposed to Trinitarian—God by drawing spiritual meaning not just from sacred scriptures but also from contemporary human society (Reynolds 139-140). Unlike his brother, Longfellow did not train for Unitarian ministry, but the first of his “Lay Monk” essays reveals an impulse to absorb truth and beauty from the wider world, “rambling around in the woods and quiet fields of the country,” for in the American landscape he found “a spirit there that communed with my own” (352). In his self-styled “vagrant existence” (352), Longfellow reveals a desire to find virtue in whatever universalistic amalgamation he can find. Other Unitarians, including Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott, followed similar impulses, drew upon German Romantic philosophy, and became Transcendentalists who essentially abandoned altogether a Christian conception of God. Longfellow, however, despite his friendships with many Transcendentalists, did not follow this path. He shared with the Transcendentalists a love for

nature, which “touched within [him] that chord of simple poetic feeling, which has not yet ceased to vibrate” (352), and also a belief in social perfectibility. However, Longfellow did not accept the outright rejection of Christ that he saw in the disciples of Voltaire and Goethe, a rejection that he believed was set forth with the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, as he stated in an 1838 lecture about German philosophy: “Oh, men of glorious intellect! What has Christ done to thee, that thou shouldst deny him!” (qtd. in Wagenknecht, *Longfellow* 199). Clearly, in the first ten years of his literary career, Longfellow set himself apart as a singular American writer, unwilling to follow others, almost modeling for the nation how to create a distinctive literary and intellectual tradition.

In the ten years between the publication of his first essay as “The Lay Monk” and his 1838 indictment of Transcendentalism, Longfellow had been profoundly affected by his travels in Europe, which he undertook in 1826-1829 and 1835-1836 in preparation for professorships at Bowdoin and Harvard, beginning what biographer Christoph Irmscher calls Longfellow’s “complicated love affair with Catholicism” (178). As has been demonstrated in an earlier chapter of this study, Longfellow was stirred by Catholicism’s capacity for beauty and expressive devotion, which were, in his mind, the most important of virtues. However, Longfellow was also unsettled, even more than Cooper seemed to be, by some of the Catholic Church’s practices and institutions. His discomfort seemed to stem from an inner tension between his typically American Protestant suspicions of “the practical atheism of a papal hierarchy” (“Literary Spirit” 366) and what he actually experienced while in European Catholic churches. Thus, like Cooper, Longfellow’s examinations of Catholicism address both the good and the bad that he found within it.



In *Outre-Mer; a Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea* (1835), his sketches and memoirs of his European travels, Longfellow reveals a conscious, even somewhat strenuous, effort to be as fair as possible in his assessment of Catholic institutions. Like Cooper, Longfellow saw the possibility for both good and bad within a community of Catholic faithful: communion in the Church did not preclude virtue, but neither did it guarantee virtue. In his sketch of the dying Jacqueline, Longfellow finds great virtue, which he demonstrates in his fully sympathetic portrayal of her reception of and participation in the sacraments in the days before her death, demonstrating how virtue extended into the community of the faithful who surrounded her and prayed along with her, her mother, and the priest who attended her deathbed. Longfellow similarly finds great virtue in Spanish devotional poetry, with seemingly no misgivings about its particular objects of devotion:

Not only are the poet's lips touched with a coal from the altar, but his spirit is folded in the cloud of incense that rises before the shrines of the Virgin Mother, and the glorious company of the saints and martyrs. His soul is not wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of the sublime attributes of the Eternal Mind; but, with its lamp trimmed and burning, it goeth out to meet the bridegroom, as if he were coming in a bodily presence [sic]. (246-247)

Longfellow here seems to swipe at his Transcendentalist and Unitarian friends when he comments on how some are “wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of the ...Eternal Mind,” referencing the Unitarian God, possibly, or the soul of the universe which Transcendentalists believed to reside within each person's soul. Instead, Longfellow suggests that the Catholic poet has done, paradoxically, what the Unitarians and Transcendentalists hoped to do: he has transcended himself, folding his spirit into the rising incense and becoming one with the saints, his soul literally leaving his body to meet the body of Christ. In such Catholic individuals, Longfellow found authenticity and virtue, perhaps because he developed, in his observations, a sense of the individual whom he assessed. In this regard, he seems more like Hawthorne than

like Cooper, reflecting a bit of Hawthorne's soul-searching, voyeuristic study of the faces in the confessionals in St. Peter's. Because he had witnessed the purity of the soul of Jacqueline, in his observations of her devout preparations for death, or that of the poet, in reading the outpouring of his spirit, Longfellow found a deep spiritual connection with these subjects. In contrast, Longfellow was less comfortable with assessing a large gathering of worshipping Catholics, troubled by his inability, perhaps, to know them. For example, in recalling his attendance at a midnight Mass to celebrate Christmas in Genoa, Longfellow asks

[a]nd yet, among that prostrate crowd, how many had been drawn thither by unworthy motives,—motives even more unworthy than idle curiosity! How many sinful purposes arose in souls unpurified, and mocked at the bended knee? How many a heart beat wild with earthly passion, while the unconscious lip repeated the accustomed prayer? (309)

Here, Longfellow offers a foil to his depictions of virtue-filled, authentically devoted Catholics, wondering what hypocrisy might be sheltered by the familiarity of the rites, rituals, and prayers of the Mass. Echoing the concerns that Cooper and Hawthorne both expressed about the idly curious tourists who attend Masses and visit religious sites, just as he was doing in his attendance at this Christmas Mass, Longfellow suggests that the disengaged tourist is less problematic than the impure or unworthy communicant.

In *Outre-Mer*, Longfellow also offers an interestingly lukewarm validation of consecrated Catholic clergy, both priests and coenobitic (communal) monastics, his assessments again heavily dependent upon how authentic he finds their devotion. Visiting the Spanish village of El Pardillo, already disappointed in the church's "gloomy little edifice" (236) that failed to meet his expectations of "a scene of ideal beauty" (236), Longfellow was nonetheless lured inside one evening by the "[v]oices of cherubs"—voices singing with "clear liquid tones that flow from pure lips and innocent hearts" (236). After their Marian hymn was finished, the priest

began to catechize the children, who responded with their rote and, to Longfellow, “curious” recitations about the nature of the Trinity. Longfellow comments:

I did not quarrel with the priest for having been born and educated in a different faith from mine; but as I left the church and sauntered slowly homeward, I could not help asking myself, in a whisper, Why perplex the spirit of a child with these metaphysical subtleties, these dark, mysterious speculations, which man in all his pride of intellect cannot fathom or explain? (236)

In chafing at the rigidity of Catholic catechesis, Longfellow here is not far removed from the Lay Monk who wrote in 1825 of his wish “to be guided by my own fancy” (“Literary Spirit” 358-359), a wish he put into practice when he “loitered about” the ugly little church on the evening that the angelic songs of children reeled him in to witness this scene (*Outre-Mer* 235). In his criticism, he reveals his wish for all children to have what he wrote of in his debut essays: the freedom to explore faith without rules or road maps. He states that he “did not quarrel” openly with the catechizing priest, yet as he “sauntered” home, in his own holy wanderings, he issued a challenge in his mind, on behalf of a less formal and less hierarchical indoctrination process.

Also in *Outre-Mer*, Longfellow issued a similar private challenge in response to a Carmelite monk, “wasted by midnight vigils and long penance” (195), whom he observed on a street in Spain:

The wide world gives thee nothing, save thy daily crust, thy crucifix, thy convent cell, thy pallet of straw! Pilgrim of heaven! thou hast no home on earth. ... Thou hast shut thy heart to the endearments of earthly love—thy shoulder beareth not the burden with thy fellow man—in all this vast crowd thou hast no friends, no hopes, no sympathies. Thou standest aloof from man—and art thou nearer God? I know not. Thy motives, thy intentions, thy desires are registered in heaven. I am thy fellow-man—and not thy judge. [sic] (195-196)

Though Longfellow professes to not judge the monk, implicit in this passage is a judgement nonetheless, that perhaps in his aloofness from other people, this monk is not as close to heaven as he set out to be, and in his distancing himself from earthly relationships, he has rendered

himself inscrutable to his fellow man. Here is another example of how Longfellow strains to give a balanced view of Catholic clergy; he makes no mention of the typical concerns of American nativists, as he never cites a moment of lecherous behavior or otherwise corruption within either of these less-than-favorable examples of Catholic clerics. Nonetheless, the very distancing that holds the Carmelite inviolate marks his undoing in Longfellow's eyes, just as the universality of the catechist's lesson in *El Pardillo* disappoints the Universalist Longfellow. For the Lay Monk, in other words, the very aspects of Catholicism that appealed to him—the timelessness of Catholicism, which he saw, according to Irmscher, as “a lingua franca in Europe, cutting across class lines as well as national boundaries” (180)—were magnificent and comforting when he observed them practiced in similar ways in different churches and cathedrals, yet troubling when inculcated in the hearts and minds of free-spirited youth. Though Catholicism offered Longfellow “a cipher for the coincidence of the present and the past” (Irmscher 179), it was far from perfect in his eyes. In its imperfections, however, Longfellow found further timelessness: “During the Middle Ages, there was corruption in the church,—foul, shameful corruption; and now also hypocrisy may scourge itself in feigned repentance, and ambition hide its face beneath a hood; yet all is not therefore rottenness that wears a cowl” (271-272). Longfellow, like Cooper, felt that Catholicism housed much actual and potential virtue, and much actual and potential vice. While *Outre-Mer* shows, as indicated by Irmscher, that “Longfellow's sympathy is with the faithful, not those who administer the faith” (181), Longfellow's later works would continue to engage Catholicism's apparent tensions between generous, empathetic devotion on the one hand and stifling, formal doctrine on the other.

Nearly thirty years after publishing his written reflections on his encounters with Catholicism in Europe, Longfellow's poem “The Theologian's Tale; Torquemada,” published in

*Tales of a Wayside Inn* (1863), demonstrates that Longfellow was still ruminating about the unhappy results of a faith too bound by legalistic answers to catechetical questions and about clergy isolated from meaningful human relationships. “Torquemada” depicts Longfellow’s nightmarish vision of a doctrinaire Catholic theocracy willing to sear the holy bonds of familial love, setting fire to all of the domestic virtues held dear by a sentimental American readership. The pious and devout Hidalgo, active participant in the sacramental rites of Catholicism, is seemingly possessed by “the demon whose delight is to destroy” (line 34) when watching the burning and banishing of heretics, standard punishments under the rule of Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor of Spain in the late fifteenth century. Increasingly “haunted” by concerns over the faith of his daughters, recently returned home from their convent school, Hidalgo eavesdrops and spies upon them and catches them at last in a whispered heresy. Upon this discovery, “the demon who within him lay in wait” (95) drives him to turn his children over to the Inquisitor, who retells the story of Abraham and Isaac, compelling Hidalgo to personally gather the wood and set the fire that would consume his daughters. After burning his beloved daughters, Hidalgo returns to his own castle and sets fire to his home, committing suicide and, according to the catechism at the time, setting aflame any hope he might have had of attaining heaven. Despite Torquemada’s diabolical assurance that members of the church “through all ages shall not cease / To magnify the deed” (173-174) and praise his name, Hidalgo is ultimately forgotten by history, his lineage ended by the fire. For Longfellow, the greatest tragedy in this sad story, greater than even the utter destruction of a family at the hands of a father forced by an internal demon and, possibly, an external demon in the guise of the inquisitor, is that

Torquemada’s name, with clouds o’ercast  
Looms in the distant landscape of the Past,  
Like a burnt tower upon a blackened heath,  
Lit by the fires of burning woods beneath! (219-222)

Torquemada's legacy forever looms over Catholic Spain, and with it the possibility that the horrors of the Inquisition, the antithesis of Unitarian impulses, could return. The legalistic indoctrination of children at El Pardo, perhaps, is the first step that might turn free and innocent minds away from their natural openness and into doctrinaire legalism. It seems almost as if, thirty years later, Longfellow wondered what kind of adults those sweet-voiced children of El Pardo had become.

Longfellow clearly condemned the religious rigidity and persecution he perceived in Catholicism, but he also condemned it in American Protestants. Just as he in "Torquemada" describes the Inquisition as an ash heap that "[l]ooms in the distant landscape of the Past / Like a burnt tower upon a blackened heath" (220-221), several of his works suggest that he saw Puritan intolerance and persecutions as stains on America's brief history. Unlike Cooper and Hawthorne, Longfellow did not directly engage these darker aspects of historical Puritanism in his works, choosing to avoid the area almost entirely. Indeed, his only direct mention of a historical Puritan is in his epic *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858), which tells of the love triangle that emerges when Miles Standish and John Alden both fall in love with the same Pilgrim maiden, Priscilla, a laudatory work designed more to help foster a sense of a noble American history than to comment on religion. Peter J. Gomes, in his article "Pilgrims and Puritans" (1983), contextualizes Longfellow's avoidance of Puritans and preference for "Pilgrims" like Standish in what he calls the emerging "Pilgrim/Puritan antithesis" of the nineteenth century, in which the Pilgrims of Plymouth were venerated in art, literature, popular culture, and history as true American heroes who laid a foundation of freedom and national conscience, while the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay were increasingly associated with intolerance and oppression (12). Gomes, who cites Longfellow's *Courtship* as a key contribution to the veneration of the Pilgrims in

American literature, argues that Puritan history was particularly challenging for nineteenth-century Unitarians like Longfellow, who wished to claim direct succession from seventeenth-century New England churches while shedding “the increasing and embarrassing burden of Puritanism” (12). While Gomes’s thesis is logical, it is also possible that just as Longfellow sought to present an even and balanced view of Catholicism, he also sought to help create in the national literature a balanced view of the nation’s Puritan founders, offering his *Courtship* to counterbalance the works of other writers, including Cooper and Hawthorne, who only created oppressive and dark Puritan characters, never engaging the virtuous Pilgrim trope that Gomes identifies.

Even though Longfellow never directly created sinister Puritan characters like those found in the works of his contemporaries, some of his works do nonetheless jab at a Puritan-inspired nativism. Perhaps the best example of such a work is “The Wondrous Tale of a Little Man in Gosling Green” (1834), a story that Longfellow entered in a New York newspaper’s “best tale” contest under the pseudonym George F. Brown, tying for the \$50 first prize, published by John Taft Hatfield in 1931 in *American Literature* as “An Unknown Prose Tale by Longfellow.” This story, written while Longfellow taught at Bowdoin, is clearly a satirical examination of his college town of Brunswick, Maine (named Bungonuck in the story), where a strange little worldly and cultivated outsider who wears a gosling green coat settles into an insulated, Puritanical community, which is unprepared for the arrival of an outsider, yet so keenly interested in gossip that “if a Bungonucker wishes to find out what is going on in his own family, the surest and most expeditious way is to ask the person who lives next door” (qtd. in Hatfield 141). The villagers collectively conclude that the odd “Green Man,” despite being “a very quiet, unoffending, and urbane man” (qtd. in Hatfield 144), is some sort of impious idolater

who does not believe in the existence of the devil. Victimized by the community's decision to shun him, the "Green Man" feels isolated and becomes almost a recluse, until an itinerant Irish priest passing through town pays him a visit:

This gave feather to the wings of gossip. He was not an atheist but a Roman Catholic, which was about the same thing. Then the old woman [his housekeeper] was asked whether he ate meat on Friday, to which she answered that he did not—but in order to hide the poor man's shame, she refrained from saying, that the same thing happened six other days in the week. This settled the point: he must have had something to do with the Spanish Inquisition;—he was a Jesuit in disguise;—a secret messenger of the Pope! (qtd. in Hatfield 145)

The townspeople, fanning their fears into flames, are compelled to thus even further distance themselves from the man in the gosling green coat. Eventually, he falls gravely ill, and the town deacon visits him, to learn that he is not, in fact, a Catholic, that he spends his time reading the Bible, and that he does not attend church services because he is ashamed to appear in his now-tattered green coat. The townspeople, in a combination of guilt and shame, become more helpful to the dying man, yet their aid comes too late to develop a meaningful relationship with him, and their failure prevents them (and the reader) from learning the presumably interesting mystery of his true history (qtd. in Hatfield 147-148). The most logical reading of this story is that Longfellow projected himself onto the Green Man, chafing against what he perceived as a dearth of urbanity and honest Christian charity in Brunswick after returning there from an extended sojourn in a more exotic, and presumably more charitable, Europe. He seems here to associate Catholicism with a catholic (universal) sense of charity, with cultivation, and with high-mindedness, all in short supply in a community beset with anti-Catholic nativism, insularity, willful ignorance, and pettiness, great evils in the eyes of a well-educated, humanistic Unitarian like Longfellow. Just as he struggled to read the faces and hearts of Catholic worshipers in



Genoa, he seems to have likewise struggled to read the faces and hearts of his neighbors in Brunswick.

While Longfellow continued to ruminate upon the ramifications of overly doctrinaire Catholic teaching for much of his literary career, he continued to consider the implications of nativism well after he first addressed them in “The Wondrous Tale.” In “The Poet’s Tale; The Birds of Killingworth” in his *Tales from a Wayside Inn* (1863), Longfellow takes a swipe at what Imscher calls the “narrow minded nativism” (193) of Puritans who attack the birds as foreign interlopers. The townspeople of Killingworth show nativist suspicions about foreign languages, as the birds shift quickly from “[s]peaking some unknown language strange and sweet” (line 18) when they simply fly overhead to a more sinister, foreign sounding song “with outlandish noise / Of oaths and gibberish frightening girls and boys” (23-24) once they actually land, until they are perceived only as nuisances “[j]argoning like a foreigner at his food” (100). The birds clearly symbolize unwanted immigrants to the United States who, despite poverty and prejudice, made meaningful contributions to American society and often performed tasks that Americans found distasteful. In addition to drawing upon Cooper’s passenger pigeon massacre in *The Pioneers*, as noted earlier in this study, Longfellow’s poem also evokes his own earlier story of the man in the gosling green coat; in both works the Puritan villagers exhibit a stifling and destructive xenophobia, though it is presented more whimsically in “The Wondrous Tale” than it is in “The Birds of Killingworth.” In this darker reconsideration of the consequences of narrow-minded exclusivity, the community successfully exterminates the birds, the town likened to King Herod for how it “ruthlessly / Slaughtered the innocents” (193-194). The “Preceptor” in the poem is, much like the man in the gosling green coat, likely a stand-in for Longfellow himself and the way he felt in Brunswick so many years earlier. He is the only person in the poem enlightened

enough to sympathize with the birds, and he attempts to demonstrate their usefulness to the community, as when the crow wreaks “havoc on the slug and snail” (153), but his efforts to shake the community members loose of their xenophobic beliefs are unsuccessful, and his failure has deadly consequences for the birds. In this poem, then, the good that the birds contributed could symbolize the virtues that immigrant Catholics might bring to American civic order, if only Americans could look beyond their nativist beliefs to see the advantages of a more diverse and cosmopolitan society, like that which Longfellow had experienced in Europe.

Longfellow’s fullest exploration of anti-nativism and the compatibility between devotional Catholicism and American civic virtue takes place in *Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie* (1847). Scholars have noticed how *Evangeline* functions primarily as a political statement. For example, Andrew C. Higgins argues in “Evangeline’s Mission” (2009) that Longfellow offers in *Evangeline* both a pastoral counterpart to Victorian industrial America, which echoes Franchot’s reading of the epic poem, as well as a more politicized challenge to “anti-Catholic nativism,” extending his argument well beyond Franchot’s discussion of Catholic otherness (Higgins 548-549; Franchot xxii). Higgins argues that though Longfellow often shied away from direct involvement in political controversies, he allowed his creative works to address matters of importance to him, as he did with his compilation of anti-slavery poems (553). For Higgins, *Evangeline* is “ultimately... a poem about assimilation” (549), describing how well the uprooted Acadians successfully integrate themselves into American life, with Evangeline herself ending her trans-continental search for her beloved Gabriel in Philadelphia, the birthplace of American independence and, not coincidentally, the site of deadly nativist riots in 1844 (555). This creative license with American and with Acadian history allows Longfellow to craft a politicized statement about civic assimilation in his own time. Longfellow was aware that the historical

expulsion of the Acadians in 1755 had been organized and carried out by colonial New Englanders, but in *Evangeline*, it is undertaken by British imperial troops, allowing Longfellow to connect these Catholic Acadians to the traditions of the American Revolution, fighting against tyranny (Higgins 555-556). Higgins notes that Longfellow transforms the outspoken blacksmith of Grand-Pré “into an Acadian Son of Liberty” (556). Similarly, Michael P. Carroll observes that while Longfellow’s emphasis on the Catholic devotion of *Evangeline*’s Acadian village helps his depiction of Acadia as “a peaceful and idyllic society,” the historical Acadians were less devout than Longfellow portrays them to be (99). Of course, it is worth noting that these critics diverge on how “Catholic” are the Acadians of Longfellow’s imagination. While Carroll finds that “Acadian attachment to Catholicism and to their local priest is made central to the story that Longfellow tells” (99), Higgins, in contrast, argues that the Acadian Catholics of *Evangeline* are not very devout at all, claiming that “Longfellow is at pains to make sure they are not too Catholic” (558). For Higgins, Father Felician’s “role in America is carefully restricted to spiritual advisor” (560), with the whole poem minimizing Catholic devotion in order to “tame it to republican politics” (566).

Such an argument, however, seems reductive, for Longfellow actually uses *Evangeline* to associate active, sacramental Catholicism with independence and liberation from oppression. In its depiction of a Catholic community of “simple Acadian farmers,— / Dwelt in the love of God and of man” (1.1.52-53), the Acadian people are both fully steeped in Catholic devotional practices yet clearly intended to be an admirable settlement of hard-working, virtuous citizens, worthy of someday calling themselves Americans. Longfellow makes this connection clear when the idyllic vision of industrious and pure *Evangeline* filling her dowry with self-made practical items is interrupted by the oppression of the tyrannical British, whose deputy announces

that all private property “[f]orfeited be to the crown” (1.1.438) and the virtuous citizens of Grand-Pré “[p]risoners I now declare you; for such is his Majesty’s pleasure!” (1.1.441). The merciless tyrants destroy families as the Acadians are loaded onto ships, and in the face of this extreme violation, the Acadians are depicted as all the more worthy of admiration for taking refuge in prayer. Longfellow is clear that the exiled people of Grand-Pré are a “Nation...Bound by the bonds of a common belief and a common misfortune” (2.2.746-747), and leaves no room for his readers to doubt their ability to make themselves a new home in the American wilderness where their civic and religious virtue will sustain them.

While most readers focus on the tragic tale of Evangeline’s search for her beloved Gabriel, it is important to note that she shares her quest with Father Felician, since both characters embody different aspects of Catholicism’s compatibility with republican virtue. Father Felician believes that once they arrive in Louisiana, “[t]here the long-wandering bride shall be given again to her bridegroom, / There the long-absent pastor regain his flock and his sheepfold” (2.2.857-858). The restoration of the family and the restoration of the faith community become inextricably linked, and faith in both is essential to Longfellow. Though Higgins argues that Longfellow diminishes religion in the poem by leaving Father Felician without a church, these lines demonstrate that the “flock” of faithful communicants remains intact despite the absence of their pastor and the absence of church walls. Evangeline and Father Felician pass through much of the American landscape, encountering hard-working Americans, indigenous peoples, and Jesuit missions in the West, until finally she finds herself alone in Pennsylvania, a place that “spake to her heart” (2.2.1263), filled with republican virtue, because “all men were equal and all were brothers and sisters” (2.2.1266). Only after taking vows as a Sister of Mercy, the order avowed to service to others in her adopted democratic community, does Evangeline find her

beloved Gabriel, Longfellow evoking the Pietà in his description of Evangeline, as “[g]leams of celestial light encircle her forehead” (2.2.1315), cradling her long-lost betrothed, who is on the verge of death from the city’s yellow fever epidemic. In this poem, then, Evangeline works in concert with a republican community to promote service, stoicism, charity, and civic healing. Similarly, Father Felician, much like the priest who tended to the dying Jacqueline, illustrates Longfellow’s conceptualization of a “good priest” who brings sacramentality out into the world, who needs no walls of a church to worship, and who is a celibate and chaste partner/advisor to Evangeline, respecting and protecting her, just as Evangeline can take vows as a Sister of Mercy without raising the specter of convent captivity tales, for she is grown old and desexualized, with her virtue nonetheless intact, both examples of individuals who set themselves “beyond desire” for the sake of service to their communities. Marie Anne Pagliarini has documented how priestly celibacy was regarded as contrary to nature in much of nineteenth-century nativist literature (101), noting that “[a]nti-Catholic literature singled out priestly celibacy as the root of all Catholic sexual depravity” (116). Father Felician thus serves as a foil to the popular American suspicions of Catholic priests as lecherous tyrants. In both *Evangeline* and *Father Felician*, Longfellow challenges popular conceptions of Catholic religious, setting them forth as models of American republican virtue, devoid of corrosive sexual energy. Even Evangeline’s fleeting moment of joy at finding her beloved Gabriel amongst the dying in the Philadelphia infirmary is chaste: she “[k]isse[s] his dying lips” (2.5.1373), and cradling his head in her arms, bows her own head in a stoic prayer of thanksgiving that she, at long last, has found her Gabriel, and that her betrothal is unblemished by her vows. Longfellow evokes Catholic and republican virtue in consecrated heroes, avoiding the sexually charged Catholic tropes that dominated much pulp fiction of the day.

Possibly in recognition of these sexually charged revulsions in his readers, Longfellow stops short in *Kavanagh* (1849) of having a Catholic priest bring life to a spiritually stagnant American town. Arthur Kavanagh, a new minister settled into a rural nineteenth-century New England community, was born into a Catholic family and studied in college “the dogmas of that august faith, whose turrets gleam with such crystalline light, and whose dungeons are so deep, and dark, and terrible” (94; ch. 18). Nonetheless, Longfellow makes clear that Kavanagh managed to avoid those dungeons by rejecting the empty allure of an intellectual’s life, realizing “that the life of man consists not in seeing visions, and in dreaming dreams, but in active charity and willing service” (96; ch. 18). In making Kavanagh a former Catholic, Longfellow is not so much rejecting Catholic spirituality as he is rejecting both the Romanist and the Puritanical hierarchies familiar to his readers. He clarifies that Kavanagh retains from Catholicism “not its bigotry, and fanaticism, and intolerance; but its zeal, its self-devotion, its heavenly aspirations, its human sympathies, its endless deeds of charity” (97; ch. 18). In sum, Kavanagh salvages all from Catholicism that can further republican virtue, and shares these virtues from his pulpit. His Protestant congregation is unaccustomed to his use of New Testament texts, to his musical selections, and to his blessings of bells, but Kavanagh persists despite the objections of the old Puritanical community, into which he marries, starts a family, and demonstrates conformation with nineteenth-century gender norms regarding heterosexuality. Here Romanism and elite Protestantism both give way to a more natural, more authentic, more Catholic, and more republican form of worship.

Longfellow eventually reveals that Kavanagh’s spirituality and virtue are rooted in his Catholic heritage, particularly the auspices of his devoutly Catholic mother. Longfellow describes that in Kavanagh’s formative years, his mother

walked with him by the seaside, and spake to him of God [sic], and the mysterious majesty of the ocean, with its tides and tempests. She sat with him on the carpet of golden threads beneath the aromatic pines, and, as the perpetual melancholy sound ran along the rattling boughs, his soul seemed to rise and fall, with a motion and a whisper like those in the branches over him. (90; ch. 18)

This passage eloquently connects the spiritual beauty of Catholic sacramentality emerging from the natural world to the sacrosanct American civic ideal of “republican motherhood.” Historian Mary Beth Norton has demonstrated that during and following the American Revolution, middle-class American women embraced the philosophy that they would best serve the cause of republican virtue by inculcating and nurturing it within their children (242-255). While this ideal reinforced prevailing gender roles by restricting women to an essentially domestic sphere of action, it also spoke to the widespread belief that women were more morally and temperamentally suited than men to teaching the virtues that Longfellow associates with the “holiness of life” (*Kavanagh*, 90; ch. 18). In *Kavanagh*’s mother, Longfellow once again creates a Catholic woman fulfilling her civic duties by demonstrating the virtues of republican motherhood, this time as a literal mother, in contrast to *Evangeline*’s role in metaphorically mothering the poor and lonely in the almshouse where she eventually finds her Gabriel.

Orestes Brownson, in his review of *Kavanagh* and *Evangeline*, pays particular attention to Longfellow’s depictions of the consecrated figures in both works, frustrated primarily that Longfellow does not carry fully his positive portrayals of virtuous Catholics from *Evangeline* into *Kavanagh*. Brownson’s most effusive praise is for Longfellow’s heroine, *Evangeline*, whom he argues “as a Sister of Charity, is as pure a conception as Protestantism permits.” Finding that Longfellow has so admirably presented a consecrated woman, Brownson is disappointed, therefore, that Longfellow does not depict *Kavanagh* as a practicing Catholic. Arguing that Catholicism had demonstrated its ability to allow its priests to carry out sacred missions of works

like that which drove Arthur Kavanagh, Brownson wonders, in his marvelously bombastic style, why Longfellow did not just keep Kavanagh in character as a Catholic:

The author wished to represent a fusion of Catholicity with Protestantism—let him mix clouds with the sun. The Church of God is not compound; it can have no union with error; it is pure, unchangeable, complete; the gentleness of John is here as well as the zeal of Peter.

Brownson here seems to attack what he perceives as a Unitarian effort to water down Catholicism, or what Higgins perceives as “a Unitarian attempt to evangelize Catholicism itself, to convert it to Unitarian principles and thus tame it to republican politics” (566). Brownson is frustrated with an essentially incomplete portrayal of a virtuous Catholic, arguing that in Kavanagh, Longfellow ultimately created a minister who “wishes for all the truth, and grandeur, and unity he has abandoned, without the resolution to retrace his steps and become the Catholic that he was.” In Longfellow’s works, then, Brownson found value in the feminized virtues depicted in *Evangeline*, in contrast with the masculinity he admired in the works of Cooper. Since, as Ryan points out, Brownson shared in the hope that America’s greatness could be fully realized through a strong American literary tradition that could then inspire a strong American society (22-24), perhaps Brownson wished that if he could only get a Catholic American writer to combine the best aspects of the work of Cooper and of Longfellow, then America would have a literature composed of whole truths, rather than what he perceived as disconnected partial truths.

If Longfellow had responded to Brownson, he would have disputed Brownson’s charge that he failed to see the “truths” of Catholicism. In his creative endeavors, Longfellow selectively chose to develop those truths that served his own utopian vision of an American civic order, a vision of a spiritually grounded benevolence and understanding that would one day wear down despotisms of all kinds. As William Ellery Channing famously stated, Longfellow “did not



belong to any one sect but rather to the community of those free minds that loved the truth” (qtd. in Wagenknecht, *Longfellow* 200). It is interesting, ultimately, that Channing, a Unitarian like Longfellow, saw in Longfellow’s work an earnest and successful quest for the truth in his probing of Catholicism (or any other religion), but for a militant Catholic like Brownson, any action short of conversion is short of the truth, and thus Brownson concludes his reviews of *Evangeline* and *Kavanagh* with the hope that Longfellow would “study more closely a Church to whose truth and splendor he is not insensible.” For Brownson, truth outside of the Catholic Church was impossible, thus, no matter how much good Brownson found in the works of Longfellow, he ultimately could not be satisfied with them.

Of course, Orestes Brownson hardly had the last word in the interplay between moral, civic, and religious virtue in mid-nineteenth-century American literature. Nowhere is this more clear than in a sampling of the reviews written in response to one of the era’s most complex and controversial works, and the one perhaps most often attached to Catholic themes in high school and college classrooms today, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*. While admiring some aspects of Hawthorne’s craftsmanship, arguing that “to the great body of our countrymen who have no well-defined religious belief, and no fixed principles of virtue, it will be deeply interesting and highly pleasing,” Brownson did not consider himself or his readership part of the masses who would find pleasure in the novel. On the contrary, Brownson, not one to mince his words, excoriates Hawthorne as “wholly ignorant of Christian asceticism,” dismissing the novel as both theologically unsound and bereft of Christian virtue and purpose. Brownson even felt that Hawthorne’s ancestral Puritans, “those stern old Popery-haters,” were preferable to the milquetoast transcendental detachment that he associated with Hawthorne, believing that “[t]heir treatment of the adulteress was far more Christian than his ridicule of it.” Brownson, in this

review, was not as far removed from popular opinion of the day as he was in other areas. Anne Abbott, a member of Hawthorne's "damned mob of scribbling women" (*Centenary* 17:304; *Letters*, Letter to W. D. Ticknor, 19 Jan. 1855), shared Brownson's view that overweening pride (Hester's, Dimmesdale's, and possibly Hawthorne's) keeps the novel from achieving a truly Christian concept of humility or repentance (32). Brownson and Abbott, however, were rather restrained in comparison to Episcopalian bishop, poet, and literary critic Arthur Cleveland Coxe, who found "that *The Scarlet Letter* has already done not a little to degrade our literature, and to encourage social licentiousness" (43). Coxe included in his review an anecdote of traveling on a stagecoach with a group of apparently wholesome young girls, watching them blush and titter as they discussed the novel, which made Coxe wonder at Hawthorne's role in corrupting a generation of schoolgirls when he could have been doing so much more to advance civic virtue in his country (43). Of course, not all of the reviews of *The Scarlet Letter* were so harsh, as when Evert A. Duycknick, in praising the novel as "severe" yet "wholesome," stated that "[t]he spirit of his old Puritan ancestors, to whom he refers in the preface, lives in Nathaniel Hawthorne" (25). Given that so many Hawthorne scholars, such as Philip Young and Frederick C. Crews, have developed their works around the idea of Hawthorne as tormented by his personal and familial past, it seems plausible that this praise may have stung the haunted Hawthorne all the same.

These different reviews, particularly when held in contrast to the canonical status of the novel today, point to key tensions that emerge when looking at the slippery conceptions of "good" literature and of civic virtue in mid-nineteenth-century America. They likewise demonstrate that Hawthorne himself was difficult to pin down, especially in his religious principles, and especially when contemporaries, looking to associate him with a particular

religious or philosophical camp or doctrine, were the ones holding the pins. This elusive complexity has been one of the reasons scholars continue to be attracted to Hawthorne in the more than 150 years since his death in 1864, with early twenty-first-century scholarly interest in Hawthorne greater than that in Longfellow or Cooper. Over the years, Hawthorne has been labeled as many things: “neither a Puritan nor a Calvinist” (Reynolds, *Waking Giant* 268), almost a Unitarian (Wagenknecht, *Hawthorne* 177), an ironic Calvinist (Donohue 1, 66), and a proto-existentialist (Moore 88). In truth, however, Hawthorne had no fixed denominational identity beyond that of voyeur, preferring to attend church services from behind the curtains in his home. Despite his Puritan ancestry and his Congregationalist upbringing, as an adult he never considered himself to be a member or communicant in any particular church. As mentioned above and in an earlier chapter, Hawthorne was comfortable wrestling with and speculating on spiritual issues on the other side of the church (or confessional) doors. Clearly, he was intrigued by—or obsessed with—questions of good and evil, of sin, and of humanity’s vulnerability before an omniscient God. Unlike Cooper or Longfellow, however, Hawthorne’s works make few references to possibilities of redemption or of mediation, revealing, as Frederick explains, that “he was never able to embrace wholeheartedly, as a concomitant doctrine, the redemptive sacrifice of Christ” (30). For Hawthorne, the possibilities of religion seemed, at the very least, less hopeful, less incarnate, and less consoling.

Still, Hawthorne’s writing often reveals that his restless, ceaseless search for spiritual consolation overlapped with his staunch sense of civic virtue, an area in which he showed more confidence and consistency. As revealed from his earliest short stories, Hawthorne believed in the sanctity of human liberty and the righteousness of society’s struggle against tyranny. For example, “The Gray Champion” (1835) shows Hawthorne’s early assumptions about the tensions

between Catholicism and democracy, because the evil tyrant who puts the villainous Governor Andros in charge of the New England colonies is the Catholic King James II. Thus, Hawthorne references the Pope and the popish king when he voices the sentiments of the Puritan community members. One could argue, of course, that the invocation of popery is an indication of Hawthorne's anti-Catholicism, but here there is no mention of authentic worship, spirituality, or any other aspect of the Catholic faith; Catholicism here is only associated with the evidently corrupt King James. "The Gray Champion," therefore, situates tyranny historically, equating Catholicism with tyranny in the eyes of the colonial Puritans, here portrayed sympathetically because they and their mythical "gray champion" are forerunners to the American Revolutionary tradition. In this story, then, Hawthorne illustrates "the deformity of any government that does now grow out of the nature of things and the character of the people" (*Centenary* 9:13; *Twice-Told Tales*), posing an interesting contrast to some of his other early stories that reflect on the tyranny of Puritanism. Thus, just as Longfellow made an association between Catholic hierarchy and government tyranny in his collegiate essay on "The Literary Spirit of Our Country," yet still remained open to the beauties of Catholicism, neither did Hawthorne's critique of Catholic hierarchy as a source of tyranny close the door on his explorations of Catholicism and its possibilities for himself and his America.

Because Hawthorne was so consistent in his distaste for tyranny, oppression, and dogmatic excess, he was deeply ambivalent over the Puritan foundations of the United States of America, of his own community in Massachusetts, and of his own family tree. While Hawthorne clearly admired the seriousness of purpose and high-mindedness that motivated his Puritan ancestors, he was repulsed by the excesses of their dogmatism, as he indicated in his tale "Endicott and The Red Cross" (1837). Governor Endicott's public reading of a letter denouncing

the supposed tyranny of King Charles I and his support for “Romish priests” (*Centenary* 9:440; *Twice-Told Tales*) and their sacramentals, discussed in an earlier chapter of this study, does little to hide that the true tyrant in the tale is Endicott himself, who recklessly exhorts the noonday crowds gathered in front of the meetinghouse to witness the “various modes of ignominy” (*Centenary* 9:435; *Twice-Told Tales*) to which transgressors had been sentenced for offenses ranging from adultery, marked with an embroidered letter “A” on a “scarlet cloth” (*Centenary* 9:435; *Twice-Told Tales*), to gossiping “against the elders of the church,” for which the offender “wore a cleft stick on her tongue” (*Centenary* 9:435; *Twice-Told Tales*), to offering “interpretations of Holy Writ, unsanctioned by the infallible judgment of the civil and religious leaders” (*Centenary* 9:435; *Twice-Told Tales*), for which a man was labeled “A WANTON GOSPELLER” (*Centenary* 9:434; *Twice-Told Tales*), an accusation that evokes the notorious Catholic campaigns against heresy. This tale’s ironic use of “Romish” imagery began with the observation that “by a singular good fortune for our sketch, the head of an Episcopalian and suspected Catholic was grotesquely encased in the” pillory (*Centenary* 9:434; *Twice-Told Tales*), a tone that destabilizes the superficial appearance of Endicott as hero. A close reading of the story reveals that its true hero is the more moderate Roger Williams, the deliverer of the inflammatory letter who urged Endicott not to read it aloud, who went on in history to found the more religiously tolerant colony of Rhode Island.

Similarly, “The Gentle Boy” (1839) reveals multiple layers of tyranny, demonstrating that Hawthorne’s distaste for religious and civic intolerance was not narrowed to exclude any particular religious denomination. The story indicts most (but not all) of the Massachusetts Bay Puritans for their relentless persecution of even the most innocent of Quakers, six-year-old Ibrahim, found weeping beneath the scaffold on which his father was executed for his faith.

Dorothy and Tobias Pearson, a devout and childless Puritan couple, take great personal risks to shelter the abandoned and starving child, for Tobias “possessed a compassionate heart, which not even religious prejudice could turn to stone” (*Centenary* 9:73; *Twice-Told Tales*). The cost of compassionate hearts and an open home, however, is that the Pearsons “very shortly began to experience a most bitter species of persecution” (*Centenary* 9:77; *Twice-Told Tales*) at the hands of their less charitable neighbors. Simultaneously, though, the story indicts the excessive religious “enthusiasm” of the Quakers through the depiction of Ilbrahim’s mother Catharine, “the apostle of her own unquiet heart” (*Centenary* 9:87; *Twice-Told Tales*), whose religious zeal led her to abandon her son, with the result that her “fanaticism had become wilder by the sundering of all human ties” (*Centenary* 9:104; *Twice-Told Tales*). In this story, Tobias and Dorothy Pearson are the only members of the community who demonstrate the interconnectedness of authentic civic and religious virtue, motivated by Tobias’ conviction that “’God forbid that I should leave this child to perish, though he comes of the accursed sect’” (*Centenary* 9:73; *Twice-Told Tales*). For Hawthorne, such authentic, interconnected virtue reveals and resists tyranny, and in the struggle against such tyranny is true liberty formed. But this story also reveals, through Ilbrahim’s death at the hands of a youthful mob, Hawthorne’s suspicion that tyranny and bigotry are more readily passed down than are charity and tolerance.

In “Endicott and the Red Cross” and “The Gentle Boy,” Hawthorne probed both the religious fervor of his Puritan ancestors and the fanatical utopian religious impulses of nineteenth-century America, perhaps revealing his fears of the resurrection of religious tyranny in the fervor of his contemporaries. As F. O. Matthiessen documents in *American Renaissance: Art and Exploration in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941), Hawthorne had a much less hopeful perception of humanity and of its potential for development of virtue than did his

contemporary and friend Longfellow. Each author was aware of the other's worldview, recognizing what Matthiessen calls "the fundamental cleavage between them" (227), with Longfellow finding Hawthorne's works too unremittingly painful, and Hawthorne finding that Longfellow was "no more conscious of any earthly or spiritual trouble than a sunflower is" (qtd. in Matthiessen 227). Hawthorne's less-than-sunny worldview certainly is evident to readers, just as it was to Matthiessen, who rightly singles out Hawthorne's "The Haunted Mind" (1834) as the vehicle through which Hawthorne reveals his own inner workings in that "intermediate space" between days (*Centenary* 9:305; *Twice-Told Tales*) and his own preoccupations with ghosts named Sorrow, Disappointment, Fatality, Shame, and Remorse, all of whom occupy his "nightmare of the soul" (*Centenary* 9:306-307; *Twice-Told Tales*; references also to Matthiessen 232). Clearly, and as reinforced by numerous modern-day literary analyses, biographies, and even classroom discussions, Hawthorne had a haunted mind indeed.

Despite his disturbing visions, Hawthorne nonetheless engaged himself in political affairs, perhaps trying to work by day to undermine the specters in his dreams, yet here the paradoxes of his beliefs led to conflicts within his circle of friends and with the larger world. Matthiessen argues that the stories Hawthorne wrote after his 1842-43 experience at Brook Farm demonstrate his broader concerns with society, particularly his frustrations with what he felt were impossible movements for civic and religious utopianism that proliferated at an astonishing rate during the 1830s and 1840s (239). For example, in "The Hall of Fantasy" (1843), Hawthorne lampoons the rigid and irrational dogmas of these various religious and political crusades by putting them on display in an imaginary, P.T. Barnumesque museum, where "the representatives of an unquiet period....had got possession of some crystal fragment of truth, the brightness of which so dazzled them that they could see nothing else in the wide universe" (*Centenary* 10:180;

*Mosses*). His discomfort with religious and social reformers alike, in other words, is that he felt the great failing of mid-nineteenth-century America was, essentially, a new form of factionalism, in which individuals cling to “one idea like an iron flail” (*Centenary* 10:180; *Mosses*) and thus render themselves and their nation incapable of forging ahead into a truly new opportunity for a better society.

One manifestation of Hawthorne’s struggle with the political and religious culture of nineteenth-century America unfolded in Concord, as revealed in his complex relationships with Emerson, Thoreau, and thus with Transcendentalism. As Brenda Wineapple documents in her biography of Hawthorne, many of his contemporaries in Boston, from Emerson to George Ripley to the pre-Catholic Orestes Brownson, from Elizabeth Peabody to Margaret Fuller, joined in the “Transcendental Club” to share in its “un-Calvinist creed of God’s munificence” (141). After resigning his position at the Custom House in 1841, Hawthorne signed on with George Ripley’s utopian experiment at Brook Farm, not because he shared in their “belief...that squarely placed divinity in the soul of the individual” (Wineapple 141) but because it offered him a way to avoid losing “his hard-earned autonomy” by moving into his family home (Wineapple 145), though it ultimately offered him no opportunity to continue to write or support his affianced Sophia (Wineapple 154-155). After leaving Brook Farm and marrying Sophia, Hawthorne continued his social relationship with Thoreau, but not with Emerson, finding Thoreau’s “Natural History of Massachusetts” to be more palatable than Emerson’s *Nature*, with its “credo of a divine nature” (Wineapple 154-155). For Hawthorne, Emerson’s beliefs simply went too far, replacing the zeal of his Puritan ancestors with a pantheistic, narrowly individualistic zeal that was no more satisfying to Hawthorne’s haunted soul.



As Hawthorne struggled with the weight of his own history, complicated by the paradoxes of his politics, his frustration with various strains of liberal Protestantism and spiritual philosophy increased his dissatisfaction with what he saw as the distortion of these “crystal fragment[s] of truth,” which to Hawthorne were facile distractions from the true struggle for human salvation. The depth and religious resonance of this struggle are best revealed in “The Celestial Rail-road” (1843), Hawthorne’s satirical reworking of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which demonstrates how Bunyan’s ideas of salvation were out of place in a more modern, technological, and “liberal” age. At the end of the story, Hawthorne replaces Bunyan’s twin giants Pope and Pagan, waiting at the end of the Valley of the Shadow of Death to devour pilgrims (*Centenary* 10:196; *Mosses*), with a single “Giant Transcendentalist” who supplements his prey with meals of “smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and sawdust” (*Centenary* 10:197; *Mosses*). This Giant Transcendentalist, living on the ethereal when not consuming souls, merely replaces the failed religion of the past with an overly individualistic failed religion of the present. In fact, as much as Hawthorne disliked the religious fervor of the Puritans, his writings reveal that he preferred these older beliefs to those of his own time, demonstrating that despite his deep misgivings, he could more readily accept Puritanism and, by extension, Catholicism, than he could Transcendentalism. Thus, many of Hawthorne’s writings reflect his beliefs that modern Americans lacked something that their Puritan ancestors, for all their many faults, had once come closer to realizing. In his sketch “The Old Manse” (1846), Hawthorne wrote of the pictures of the old Puritans that once hung on his study wall that “[t]hese worthies looked strangely like bad angels, or at least like men who had wrestled so continually and sternly with the devil that somewhat of his sooty fierceness had been imparted to their own visages” (*Centenary* 10:5;

*Mosses*). It is interesting that Hawthorne admired these men for the grit they showed in their willingness to wrestle with the devil and to forge a civilization out of the harsh wilderness.

It was in such a mindset that Hawthorne continued to ruminate, in spite of his general pessimism, on the possibilities of Roman Catholicism to offer some kind of consolation to himself and his society. While several of his works suggest a yearning for a more sacramental faith and abiding appreciation for the sacramentality of the natural world, his replacement of Bunyan's twin giants "Pope" and "Pagan" with his own "Giant Transcendentalist" might suggest that Hawthorne by the early 1840s no longer regarded Catholicism as all that important for America's spiritual future, even as a foil. But even as Hawthorne appeared to set Catholicism aside, he had not entirely forgotten it, as he would soon make clear in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Though Catholic elements in *The Scarlet Letter* have been recognized by scholars, and despite Hawthorne's creation of what can be read as an ageric Catholic saint in Hester Prynne, it is nonetheless clear that this Hawthorne novel is not terribly sympathetic to the other civic implications of Catholicism. From the unfolding of the story, with Hester standing on the scaffold holding Pearl in her arms so that "a Papist among the crowd of Puritans" would have been reminded of Marian imagery (*Centenary* 1:56; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 2), to Dimmesdale's habits of self-flagellation "more in accordance with the old, corrupted faith of Rome, than with the better light of the church in which he had been born and bred" (*Centenary* 1:144; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 15), Hawthorne makes clear and often derogatory references to Catholicism throughout the novel. Likewise, Hawthorne's treatment of other Catholic themes, such as confession, is artful enough for Jenny Franchot to judge *The Scarlet Letter* as "[p]erhaps the finest antebellum romance of Catholicism" (260). However, this estimation of the novel does not hold up under careful scrutiny. While the novel does deal with the theme of secret sin, an earlier

chapter of this study demonstrates that it does not genuinely engage the concept of sacramental confession. Perhaps, if Hawthorne had followed through on his original intention in the novel to include a scene in which Dimmesdale confessed to an itinerant Jesuit priest, a plan that James Russell Lowell described to his sister in a letter recalling a conversation the two writers had shared (*Centenary* 8:235, 611; *American Notebooks*, 21 Jun. 1842 and explanatory footnote), then the analysis of *The Scarlet Letter* could more appropriately include a discussion of Hawthorne's engagement with sacramental confession. Certain scenes of public confession in the novel, such as Hester's noble silence on the scaffold or Dimmesdale's defiant baring of his chest, do serve to illustrate individual acts of resistance to tyranny, whether of the Puritan theocracy or of the machinations of Chillingworth. Hester and Dimmesdale thus demonstrate a measure of civic virtue in fulfilling the novel's self-proclaimed moral of "Be true!" that Hawthorne provides his readers (*Centenary* 1:260; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 34), but with no clear connection of their civic virtue to sacramental Catholic influences.

In actuality, any connection between civic virtue and Catholicism in *The Scarlet Letter* would require a dramatically different recasting of the novel, because many of the Catholic references in the text are part of Hawthorne's effort to make some lurid insinuations about Catholic priesthood, fitting well with the Romanist themes popular in mid-nineteenth-century American literature. In emphasizing Dimmesdale's celibacy and asceticism, Hawthorne positions him as a proxy for the trope of the lecherous and perverse Catholic priest who posed threats to the purity and virtue of his female parishioners, particularly in the role of confessor. Pagliarini claims that anti-Catholicism in Jacksonian America was highly specialized, and was fueled primarily by Catholicism's supposed threats to American ideas of domesticity (98). Pagliarini further argues that the greatest perceived threat of Catholicism was priestly celibacy,

widely regarded “as the root of all Catholic sexual depravity” (116). This reading, grounded in her study of anti-Catholic novels in circulation at the time that *The Scarlet Letter* was published, sets Dimmesdale’s priestly qualities against American ideals of civic virtue. Thus, when members of the community encourage Dimmesdale to choose “one of the many blooming damsels, spiritually devoted to him, to become his devoted wife” (*Centenary* 1:125; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 9), they perhaps are making an effort to protect the community against the threat of an unattached, supposedly celibate minister. When Dimmesdale refuses, “as if priestly celibacy were one of his articles of church-discipline” (*Centenary* 1:125; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 9), then, a reader with the knowledge that he had already had a relationship with Hester Prynne, one of his spiritual devotees, could well read Dimmesdale as a sexual predator, what Pagliarini calls “a male corrupted by the vow of priestly celibacy” (104). Dimmesdale’s secret acts of self-flagellation with his “bloody scourge,” during which Dimmesdale is said to be “laughing bitterly at himself the while, and smiting so much the more pitilessly, because of that bitter laugh” (*Centenary* 1:144; *Scarlet Letter*, ch. 11) thus take on perverse, masochistic overtones. Carol M. Bensick, in “Dimmesdale and His Bachelorhood” (1993), makes such a claim, arguing that Hawthorne intentionally made Dimmesdale an eligible but willfully celibate bachelor to make him more like a Catholic priest, complete with all of the sexually predatory connotations of Catholic priesthood (106). As David Reynolds has documented, Hawthorne was an avid consumer of the “penny press,” especially true-crime stories and other sensationalist narratives in newspapers and magazines, which he often drew upon for inspiration in his own work (268), so it would follow that Hawthorne was well aware of the lurid, Romanist stereotypes of the Catholic priesthood. Reynolds also points out that some contemporary reviewers rejected *The Scarlet Letter* as too “made for the market,” its themes too titillating for a writer of Hawthorne’s talents

(269). On the whole, Catholicism in *The Scarlet Letter*, particularly priestly Catholicism, insinuates itself against American civic virtue, families, and society as a whole.

Though Hawthorne's use of Catholic allusions and images in *The Scarlet Letter* does not demonstrate how Catholicism might offer any practical benefits to his America, the novel was written early in his explorations of Catholicism. Hawthorne's interest in and attraction to sacramental Catholicism increased appreciably in the next ten years, primarily due to his first intensive contact with it during his extended residency in Europe. Not only did Hawthorne find that Catholicism met some of his longings for a more sacramental, incarnate faith experience, marveling at how the Church seemed to anticipate and respond to human needs (*Centenary* 14:91; *French Italian Notebooks*, 20 Feb. 1858), but he also seemed to be gradually modifying some of his earlier suspicions about its compatibility with American civic virtues. For one, as he explained in his *French and Italian Notebooks*, Catholicism seemed to provide a serious sense of practical application to the spiritual needs of all kinds of people, whether "peasant, citizen, or soldier," something that had also impressed Cooper; this was an application that Hawthorne "found lacking in liberal theology" (*Centenary* 14:60; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb. 1858). Additionally, Catholicism offered a sense of beauty and decorum that he found lacking in the hyper-democratic revivalist and millennial sects that proliferated in mid-nineteenth-century America. Hawthorne slowly moved from making jibes about frozen holy water to marveling at the artwork found in Old World Catholic churches, as when he remarked on Guido's painting of the Archangel Michael defeating Lucifer: "These old painters were wonderful men, and have done great things for the Church of Rome—great things, we may say, for the church of Christ and the cause of good, for the moral of this picture (the immortal youth and loveliness of virtue, and its irresistible might against evil) is as much directed to a Puritan as to a Catholic"

(*Centenary* 14:100; *French Italian Notebooks*, 21 Feb. 1858). In addition to suggesting in his notebooks that the time was ripe for American Protestants, “stirred by a Revival,” to explore Catholicism in order to “suggest and institute” some of its practices in American life (*Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858), Hawthorne more fully engaged the possibilities for the compatibility of Catholicism with American civic virtue in his last complete novel, *The Marble Faun* (1860).

In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne uses Kenyon and Hilda to demonstrate how an idealized young American Protestant man and woman might benefit from deeper spiritual encounters with Catholicism, positing that perhaps they could be the “new Apostles” who could bring “something positive” from Rome back to their home in Protestant New England (*Centenary* 14:195; *French Italian Notebooks*, 1 May 1858). Kenyon, as noted by Gilbert P. Voight in “Hawthorne and the Roman Catholic Church” (1946), begins the novel with a “bitter intolerance” towards Catholicism (397) indicative of his origins in a Puritan tradition steeped in anti-Catholic prejudice, much like Hawthorne himself. Hilda bears some striking resemblance to Hawthorne’s wife Sophia, who was also a skillful copyist of classic paintings, but Hawthorne in many ways uses Hilda to stand in for himself, most clearly in her exploration of the confessional at St. Peter’s that Hawthorne could not bring himself to enter. Hilda toys with, but rejects, the possibilities of conversion, stating that despite the powerful draw she feels to the Church, “I dare not come a step farther than Providence shall guide me” (*Centenary* 4:362; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39). Her hesitation, couched in her experience with an imperfectly human priest, reflects Hawthorne’s own recoiling from the priesthood, as when he commented that “I heartily wish the priests were better men, and that human nature, divinely influenced, could be depended upon for a constant supply and succession of good and pure men; their religion has so many admirable

points” (*Centenary* 14:459-460; *French Italian Notebooks*, 10 Oct 1858). This statement in his *French and Italian Notebooks* is the crux of Hawthorne’s ambivalence towards Catholicism, the sentiment which ultimately left him less open than Cooper or Longfellow to its possibilities: Hawthorne could not move beyond the problem of the imperfection of priests, who were just as mortal and sinful as the flocks to which they ministered. In his observations of the confessionals, he long fixated on the faces of the priests there, seeming to seek out just one who seemed truly perfect and Christ-like, but he never found one who met his longings. As he watched one priest at St. Peter’s set out a pole to indicate his availability to hear confessions, he noted that “I was not attracted by the face of this particular priest; it did not indicate the wise, deep, and tender soul, into which I could pour my own” (*Centenary* 14:99-100; *French Italian Notebooks*, 21 Feb. 1858). Similarly, another priest disappointed him because he “was scarcely inclining his ear to the perforated tin through which the penitent communicated her outpourings” (*Centenary* 14:458; *French Italian Notebooks*, 9 Oct. 1858). Hawthorne could not embrace Catholicism, ultimately, because of the fallibility of the men who administered the sacraments that he found so appealing: “[i]f its ministers were themselves a little more than human, they might fulfill their office, and supply all that men need” (*Centenary* 14:91; *French Italian Notebooks*, 20. Feb. 1858). In *The Marble Faun*, Hilda also backs away from too deep a personal engagement with Catholicism, having “experienced some little taste of the relief and comfort, which the Church keeps abundantly in store for all its faithful children” (*Centenary* 4:362; *Marble Faun*, ch. 39), but no more than some little taste.

Hawthorne reveals in *The Marble Faun* that he carried away from his little taste of Catholic sacramentality a sense of the faith’s potential to soften the masculine rigidity of Puritanism on display in the portraits of the “old divines” that he admired in his study at the

Manse. He suggests that the saintly Hilda benefits from her brush with Catholicism, not so much from her rituals of devotion in the tower, but in the way her confessional experience helped to deal with and expiate a sin that had served to humanize her. In Hilda's softened soul, made suitable for a "household saint," Hawthorne, like Longfellow in his depiction of Kavanagh's mother, suggests that Catholicism is beneficial to, rather than antithetical to, republican motherhood and middle-class American domesticity. Further, it seems that Hawthorne, like Longfellow and unlike Cooper, was drawn to the feminine aspects of the faith as he was repulsed by the overt patriarchy of the Catholic clerical hierarchy. In his case, Hawthorne might have appreciated Catholicism as something that could possibly serve as a necessary complement to the more severely masculine, almost martial, virtues of Puritanism that he could not bring himself to completely discard. Hawthorne was, it seems, too attached to the portraits of his Puritan ancestors. Thus Hilda (and Hawthorne) could confidently remain "a daughter [or son] of the Puritans" with something of a sunnier disposition imparted by Catholic sacramental beauty. At the end of *The Marble Faun*, Kenyon, who has kept Catholicism at a distance, still struggles with questions of sin and sorrow, crying out to Hilda that his "mind wanders wild and wide; and, so lonely as I live and work, I have neither pole-star above, nor light of cottage windows here below, to bring me home" (*Centenary* 4:460; ch. 50). In Hilda, transformed by her brush with sacrament and sacramentals, he detects a "white wisdom which clothes you as a celestial garment" (*Centenary* 4:460-461; *Marble Faun*, ch. 50). In their betrothal, then, is a possibility for Protestantism and Catholicism to offer possibilities for civic virtue in republican motherhood, with masculine Puritanism dominant in the marriage. Positively impacted by Catholicism, yet still Protestant, Kenyon and Hilda, "now that life had so much promise in it" (*Centenary* 4:461; *Marble Faun*, ch. 50), return home, with Hilda's "hopeful soul" (*Centenary* 4:462; *Marble Faun*,



ch. 50) carrying a flame of civic virtue to glow as “the light of her husband’s fireside” (*Centenary* 4:462; *Marble Faun*, ch. 50). Hawthorne thus revealed his own hopeful soul in this conclusion, caught in his deep-set ambivalence towards Roman Catholicism, that he could somehow find greater spiritual peace and promise after an extended encounter with Catholicism, even if he was unwilling or unable to release himself from the religious heritage that he found so problematic. For Hawthorne, the old ways, even if deeply flawed, were better than anything new.

Because Hawthorne found Catholicism so appealing, he was unable to write a potentially best-selling lurid anti-Catholic novel in *The Marble Faun*, despite hinting at Hilda’s convent captivity and sending a lecherous Carmelite into the catacombs to commit murder, just as he was unable to write such a piece of pulp fiction in *The Scarlet Letter* a decade earlier. He included just enough plot elements reflective of these salacious stories, however, to make critics think that he intended to do so, whether in setting Dimmesdale up to be a predatory, lecherous priestly figure or sending virtuous Hilda, unchaperoned, into a confessional booth. The fact that Hilda rejects the invitation of the confessor priest to experience the fullness of Catholicism as a convert, and eventually winds up captive in a convent, further seems to suggest that Hawthorne, in his own heart and in his creative endeavor, was clinging to some of his earlier suspicions of Catholic corruption. Such elements dominate readings of critics, as when Franchot calls *The Marble Faun* “the most ambitious failure” of Hawthorne’s career, her frustration emerging from her sense that Hawthorne’s narrative is plagued with “a voice that cannot seem to get out of the way” (350). Fenton reads this confessional scene in *The Marble Faun* as Hawthorne’s exploration of the “treacherous hospitality” of the Church (77). In this scene, Fenton argues that the many signs indicating the multiplicity of languages in which to say confession are how “Hawthorne presents the Catholic as a master of languages,” the very openness of the church “a

welcoming posture [that] makes it particularly threatening,” seducing even Hilda (77). Though the Church lures Hilda in with its ability to speak her language, this but one aspect of the priest’s actions and words as nothing more than efforts at manipulation in “the drive to gain converts” (78), Hilda does not become a Catholic. Fenton argues that Hilda is, essentially, an escapee from Catholicism much like the ‘heroines’ Rebecca Reed and Maria Monk, saved only by her enlightened “ability to make reasonable arguments and resist priestly efforts to convince her of Catholicism’s pleasures,” but here Hawthorne creates a virtuous woman who needs no rescue, and is able to escape using her wits (78).

Franchot and Fenton thus offer readings of *The Marble Faun* through the lens of Romanism, arguing that while the Church has a tremendous seductive power, it offers to them no spiritual interest, a reading that ultimately discounts or overlooks what was of keen interest to Hawthorne himself. An alternative reading, however, examines the story in light of the spiritual yearnings Hawthorne revealed in works like “Sunday at Home,” in which Hawthorne observes a church and, without fully experiencing it, decides it has nothing to offer him spiritually, much as he longs for its spiritual offerings. What Franchot perceives, then, as Hawthorne’s intrusive voice is, in actuality, critical to recognizing Hawthorne’s use of his novel to explore Catholicism and what it could possibly offer to a guilt-wracked Protestant, just as he worked out what might be happening behind the closed doors of the church near the Manse or worked out what might be happening as he sat for hours upon hours watching those confessionals in action. While Fenton and Franchot read Hawthorne under the assumption that he is wary of Catholicism as “the Other” (like most nineteenth-century Protestant intellectuals and twentieth-century academics), an alternative reading reveals that Hawthorne was more approving of the Church’s openness than he was wary of it. In “Sunday at Home,” he yearns for a church open every day; in Italy, he finds

churches open every day, providing “cool, dusky refreshment of these holy places, affording such a refuge from the hot noon of the streets and piazzas, probably suggest[ing] devotional ideas to the people” (*Centenary* 14:357; *French Italian Notebooks*, 4 July 1858), an answer to the shuttered doors of the churches at home. When Hawthorne observed, therefore, that “St. Peter’s offers itself as a place of worship and religious comfort for the whole human race” (*Centenary* 14:59; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb. 1858), and then titles the chapter in which Hilda confesses as “The World’s Cathedral,” removing the lens of Romanism allows the possibility of seeing this openness as desirable, even if Hawthorne, like his Hilda, is only interested in a little taste of Catholicism, just enough, perhaps, to make him, like Hilda, a more complete and less tortured soul.

Despite Hawthorne’s vision of Hilda’s “hopeful soul” returning home to New England, Hawthorne’s homecoming from Europe in 1860, however, was less joyful, as he found that he did not truly integrate himself back into American culture as much as he hoped he would. Returning to a Union that was in the process of splintering, Hawthorne experienced what he anticipated in *The Marble Faun* might happen if he were away too long:

we find that the native air has lost its invigorating quality, and that life has shifted its reality to the spot where we have deemed ourselves only temporary residents. Thus, between two countries, we have none at all, or only that little space of either, in which we finally lay down our discontented bones. (*Centenary* 4:461; *Marble Faun*, ch. 50)

Hawthorne was never truly at home in Rome or in the Roman Catholic Church, but neither was he truly home in his old house at Wayside in Concord. As Matthiessen argues, during his travels, Hawthorne had grown increasingly out of touch with what American society was becoming, and with the more uncertain and anxious directions in which American spiritual life was headed. Matthiessen believes that in *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne “clearly intended Kenyon and Hilda to be attractive...but the unintended impression of self-righteousness and priggishness that

exudes from these characters brings to the fore some extreme limitations of the standards that Hawthorne took for granted” (356-357). Matthiessen’s harsh critique stems from the reality that when Hawthorne returned to America in 1860, “[t]he world that ensued was not one in which he could have imagined the future careers of brittle natures like Kenyon and Hilda” (360). In the last few years of his life, especially in his written commentaries on the increasingly monstrous Civil War, Hawthorne demonstrates that he grew even more politically cynical and spiritually detached in his writing (Wineapple 348-351, 370-371), not so much because the sacred republic had pulled itself apart, but because Hawthorne seemed to conclude that it could never anchor and balance itself as he had once hoped it might do. Hawthorne died in 1864, too soon to realize any possibilities for a more perfect union. Unlike Hilda, he did not long keep a hopeful soul for his America.

By the outbreak of the Civil War, Catholicism—growing steadily in America despite the ongoing efforts of nativists to curtail immigration from Ireland and other heavily Catholic areas of Europe—still faced unresolved questions about how well it might fit within a Protestant American civic order. As Catholic Americans, whether converted men of letters like Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker or common Jacksonian men of action like the immigrant soldiers in the 69<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment, faced questions of how they might best model virtues of devout Catholicism and virtuous republicanism, they were largely ignored by the Protestant majority. Despite their inquiries into Catholicism, spurred on by their travels in Europe, even Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne essentially avoided the goals and struggles of the Catholics who shared their country with them, and their literary efforts to assess the civic implications of Catholicism focused largely on distant times and/or distant shores. While this spatial and temporal distancing in some ways served to reinforce the “otherness” of Catholicism identified

by Franchot, and while none of these three nineteenth-century authors could completely shed his misgivings about the dogmatic or theocratic tendencies that he perceived within Catholicism, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne did nevertheless make meaningful efforts to synthesize the communal, moral, and spiritual values of a foreign Catholicism with the virtues they perceived within the past and present of their own America. That these three authors essentially had their own ways of understanding those Catholic virtues—or of where and how they might do the most good for America—just further confirmed that a republic ostensibly founded on the ideals of religious liberty had no easy answers to questions posed by religious pluralism in an increasingly fractious and restless civic order.

“I Sometimes Wish I Had Been Educated as a Catholic”: Reconciliation of Catholicism and  
American Republicanism

Conclusion

What was usually lost on nativists and other anti-Catholic Protestants was that nineteenth-century American Catholicism, like America itself, was neither static nor monolithic. As James Emmett Ryan observes in *Faithful Passages: American Catholicism in Literary Culture* (2013), “[n]ever a monolithic enterprise (in spite of anti-Catholic accusations about systemic papal plots against the American people), the rhetoric of American Catholicism during the nineteenth century was intellectually fragmented, regionally variant, often produced without traditional church sanction, and subject to a wide range of interpretations” (8). A diverse group of Catholic writers played an enormous role in efforts to define or redefine American Catholicism, particularly with the rapid rise of the printing industry in the 1840s and 1850s. As Ryan explains, a diverse antebellum Catholic literature, consisting of tracts, polemics, novels, and other writings, written by both lay and clerical American Catholics, emerged as part of a much larger movement disseminating religious and evangelical texts into the hands of literate Americans (9-10). The overarching purpose of these texts—fitting with the activist, evangelical, and democratic mores of the time—seemed to be that Catholics did not have to sacrifice the moral and doctrinal superiority of their faith even as they distanced themselves from the steadfastly and avowedly hierarchical, conservative, and anti-democratic Catholicism of Rome.

To be fair, these efforts had emerged even as the American republic itself was born; Mark A. Noll, in *America’s God* (2002), cites a 1784 pamphlet written by John Carroll, the first bishop of the United States, in which “he argued that Catholic submission to church authority was

always intended to be ‘reasonable’; and he praised ‘the harmony now subsisting in all Christians in this country, so blessed with civil and religious liberty’” (122). Noll notes that in the early nineteenth century, American Catholics made efforts to reconcile their religious faith with emerging Jacksonian democratic principles, “sometimes by taking deliberate steps to avoid contamination from that environment, other times by adjusting Catholic teaching in deference to powerful principles of American thought” (123). The great challenge for Catholics was that the republic’s dominant religious traditions were themselves in a state of flux throughout the early nineteenth century, as the emergence of emotionally-driven and aggressively democratic sects during the Second Great Awakening helped, in Nathan Hatch’s words, make American Protestantism less “intellectually respectable and institutionally cohesive” (5). As America’s religious milieu grew more complicated and unsettling, Christians of all faiths increasingly turned to religiously inspired writers for answers. As E. Brooks Holifield explains in *Theology in America* (2003), nineteenth-century American poets and novelists “struggled with, and often against, the pronouncements of the theologians to such an extent that one can hardly hope to understand the nineteenth-century literary renaissance without knowing something about the theological ideas current in the culture” (2).

Significantly, much of America’s mid-nineteenth-century Catholic literature came from writers who converted to Catholicism well into their own literary careers, and were therefore already familiar with the implications and possibilities of the nation’s rapidly expanding print culture. Orestes Brownson is the best, and best-known, example of a Catholic convert with a prolific career as an essayist, well known for his sharp tongue. Brownson both published in journals such as *Christian World* and the *Democratic Review* and in his own *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* (Carey 117-153), and his resulting fame helped him develop a lucrative career

as a traveling lecturer (Carey 132). Brownson, in shifting from his stated focus upon reviewing Longfellow's *Kavanagh* and *Evangeline* in January, 1850, turned his attention to what the texts revealed about Longfellow himself:

Does Mr. Longfellow mean to teach that there are only worldly reasons for being a Protestant rather than a Catholic, and thus, by implication, avow that he himself would be a Catholic, if he consulted only the salvation of his soul! This is no strained inference from his doctrine, and we have not the shadow of a doubt that it is true with regard to Protestants generally. They would all be Catholics, if they consulted only their own spiritual welfare, and are Protestants only because they wish to enjoy the world, and live without having to practise the rigid self-denial Catholicity enjoins.

Here, Brownson clearly recognizes the interest that Longfellow has in Catholicism, but he reads interest as a desire to convert, held back only by worldly (and thus sinful) desires. This excerpt, which served as one source of inspiration for this dissertation, reveals both that Catholics and Protestants were aware of each other's interests, but also that influential writers on both sides served to put up barriers more frequently than to break them down. Here, Brownson's bombastic chiding of all Protestants as worldly was, at best, unlikely to win the converts that he desired for the American Catholic church. At worst, it offered fuel for a counter-attack, further separating Protestants and Catholics who could have possibly realized that they had shared interests in democracy, civic virtue, and republicanism. *Brownson's Quarterly Review* reveals Brownson, in other words, to be more of a fire-and-brimstone preacher than of a benevolent, inviting force; if Hawthorne were to imagine the priest he would meet behind the grill of the confessional booth, it is not hard to believe that he might have imagined someone like Brownson, ready to deliver a personal screed.

Orestes Brownson's friend and fellow convert Isaac Hecker, formerly of the Brook Farm experiment that jaded Hawthorne so, was another writer who was acutely aware of the possibilities that publishing held for the promotion of "a Catholic agenda suitable for American



circumstances” (Ryan 47), writing pamphlets and founding periodical publications like *Catholic World: A Monthly Eclectic Magazine of General Literature and Science* (Ryan 51). Like Brownson, Hecker shared a skepticism towards much contemporary literature (Ryan 55), yet he nonetheless believed in a “correspondence between American political values and the religious principles of Catholicism” (Ryan 72), beliefs that Ryan argues were unsuccessfully communicated to a large readership due to Hecker’s “own (unacknowledged) inability to relate to a popular reading audience” (Ryan 74). Other writers were somewhat more successful, including Catholic converts Jedediah Huntington and Anna Dorsey, novelists who dealt with and promoted specifically Catholic subject matter and who were “writers sensitive to trends in the literary marketplace [who thus] adapted their writing for purposes of print evangelism” (Ryan 84). To appeal to a wider audience, both Huntington and Dorsey presented narratives that echoed themes present in the American literary culture they hoped to engage. For example, Ryan points out that Anna Dorsey’s *Coaina, The Rose of the Algonquins* (1867) obviously patterns itself after *The Scarlet Letter*, with the unjustly persecuted Coaina’s experiences mirroring those of Hester Prynne, in what Ryan describes as “revamping the Puritan historical themes of Hawthorne’s fiction in order to promote Catholic piety” (111). In creating novels that picked up on moral and emotional concerns common to mid-nineteenth-century American fiction, these writers thus attempted to live out Hecker’s assertion that “[n]othing will help more to the conversion of our people than the proof that we can be thorough Americans and thorough Catholics at the same time” (qtd. in Birdsall 276). Hecker’s zeal, fueled by his own conversion experience, was to attract more converts to Catholicism, but his statement applies to broader acceptance as well, for the key hesitation of many Americans, including Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, was that Catholicism was inherently anti-American.

Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were undertaking their literary explorations of Catholicism when anti-Catholic sentiment in America was at an all-time high. As David S. Reynolds points out in *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (2008), “[o]ne of the few convictions that ever-diversifying Protestants had in common was their shared mistrust of Rome” (171). Not all anti-Catholic Americans went to the extremes of mob violence, as in the 1834 arson of a Charlestown, Massachusetts, convent or the 1844 riots that claimed several lives in New York and Philadelphia, but by the mid-nineteenth century, hostility toward “Romanism” had certainly soaked deeper into American mass culture and politics than ever before. In addition to the anti-Catholic literary impulses discussed by Franchot and other scholars, American Catholics and their would-be allies found themselves contending with organizations such as the American (or “Know Nothing”) Party, which combined nativist Whigs and Democrats from the urbanizing northern United States into a short-lived but powerful force in national politics during the late 1840s and early 1850s.

Whether supporters or opponents of the nativist movement, Americans who embraced republicanism used it as their own belief system and created in it a synthesis of religious impulse and democratic zeal. Hence, Hecker’s exhortation that Catholics demonstrate themselves able to be “thorough Americans” without abandoning their own Catholic devotion reveals the fusion of religious and republican fervor. American republicanism was a kind of religion unto itself, intertwined with Protestant evangelism to the extent that Catholics were trying to prove their republican worthiness in the eyes of suspicious Protestants. The Catholic struggle that Hecker pinpointed developed from the fact that the American “faith” they desired—republicanism—had effectively been hijacked by the “faith” they rejected—Protestantism—a faith which seemed on the surface to be so different from their own religious beliefs. Noll argues persuasively that

“Christian republicanism” emerged from the fusion of republican ideals into Protestant theology during the colonial era (73), noting that this fusion was successful primarily because of the malleability of “virtue,” which had developed into “a single term that masked varied understandings” (90), and which grew through the early nineteenth century as a canopy for different forms of Protestantism and increasingly fractious understandings of slavery, women’s rights, and other divisive issues that lay beneath the idealized veneer of a pluralistic yet unified nation. Despite the fact that that the Second Great Awakening channeled the forces of emotionalism and democracy to produce a “dazzling variety of American faiths” by the 1840s (Reynolds 126), republicanism was a unifying creed embraced by all evangelical Protestants. This national creed held its own system of sacred figures in its revered founding fathers, particularly George Washington, and its own sacred texts in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Catholics were able to accommodate reverence for these holy American heroes as secular saints, for they did not perceive republicanism as a force capable of diluting their Catholic faith the way that they believed Protestantism would do. American Catholics believed they could maintain their own pure, virtuous Catholicism as they were pure, virtuous republicans, so they sought to gain equal footing and respect from Protestants with whom they shared ideals of virtuous republicanism. The malleability of “virtue” makes such religious pluralism possible, but Catholics who sought to increase the visibility of their faith were wary of corrupting influences, stemming in part from the very malleability of the idea of virtue that gave them a civic foothold in the first place.

American Catholics, in other words, believed that the Catholic faith could and should grow in America, but it should not dilute itself with inferior Protestant influences in order to do so. Brownson announced as much in his review of Longfellow’s *Evangeline* and *Kavanagh*,

asserting that Catholicism was already “pure, unchangeable, complete” regardless of any attention that sympathetic Protestants like Longfellow might give to it. Catholicism, for Catholics, was able to accommodate American political culture as well as it had historically accommodated other cultures, because of its universality and completeness: Catholic doctrine was not malleable, but cultural ideals were. For non-Catholics, however, this universally subsuming quality of Catholicism left it, in Noll’s words, “too thoroughly “the Other” in an America where public religion was all but monopolized by evangelical, republican, and Catholic-fearing commitments” (409) to be as widely embraced as Hecker, Brownson, and other like-minded Catholics desired.

Despite calls for integration into a virtuous republican citizenry, the prevailing attitudes of Catholics and non-Catholics alike in mid-nineteenth-century America seem to reinforce the trope of Catholic “Otherness.” Even writers less didactic than Orestes Brownson seemed to agree that someone who was not fully immersed in the Catholic Church was somehow positioning him or herself against the Church. Such a view is certainly promulgated by Franchot, Noll, and other scholars of the period who treat Jacksonian American Catholicism primarily as “Other,” a unique cultural entity that was defended by Catholics as Protestants attacked it (or fetishized it) across the ramparts. This perspective, admittedly, has a great deal of historical merit—American Catholics set themselves apart in parochial schools, in religious observances and food ways, with the Latin liturgy, just to name a few differences. Further, American Protestants set American Catholics apart through their open political hostility and occasional acts of mob violence. Despite these well documented historical occurrences, however, this view, if pushed too far, allows for little understanding of those non-Catholic Americans who were not as fully detached from the “Other” as they might have appeared or been expected to be.

Postmodern cultural scholars are drawn to the ambiguity of human culture largely to examine the conflicts and differences within a society's "constructs": race, class, gender, and also, it would follow, creed. These scholars examine constructs by focusing upon how groups of people tend to define themselves in opposition to each other rather than building upon the possible harmonies and commonalities between them. For example, Franchot argues that the appeal of Catholicism to a Protestant is better understood as a way for Protestants to critique the "constructs" of Protestant American society than as a way for Protestants to actively complement or build on their Protestant faiths. As William L. Portier suggests in his review of Franchot's study, this focus is symptomatic of a postmodern tendency of scholars to see "culture" as something different from "spirituality." Portier sees room for a study of Catholicism that views it less as "Other" and more on its own terms, asking "is there any point left to speaking of it as what it understands itself to be, i.e., an incarnational sacramental way of living with God?" (146). This dissertation has offered a response to Portier's question, agreeing with him that there is no need to divorce "spirit" from "culture," for doing so "is to fail to take seriously Catholicism's deepest incarnational sense of itself as a kind of religion of the flesh" (153).

As explained in this dissertation, an incarnational faith such as Catholicism, a faith that finds the abiding and immanent presence of a trinitarian God in the consecrated material objects of mankind and in the natural world, while believing in the possibility for humans to move closer to God through both their faith and the holiness of their own actions, is inseparable from both the physical and behavioral manifestations of human culture. Catholicism is better understood as a sacramental faith as well as an incarnational faith; sacramentality is the thread connecting the material to the spiritual. In other words, the apparently "secular" can be made "sacred," but the strength of that transformation depends upon the exercise of free will to envision it and pursue it.

Discounting the spiritual makes these understandings impossible, and focusing too strongly on the construct of Catholicism as “Other” thus diminishes the spirituality of both its faithful adherents and those who sampled it from the outside, seeking to put at least a fingertip in the water.

The search for Catholic sacramentality in American literature is something that has been undertaken by other scholars, but their efforts have focused largely on the twentieth century rather than earlier in American history, and have focused primarily upon practicing Catholics. Paul Giles argues in *American Catholic Arts and Fictions* (1992) that Catholic sacramentality is a byproduct of early twentieth-century Catholic realism, when secularization of American life and the deeper integration of Catholicism into American society—with Catholicism by the early twentieth century emerging as the nation’s largest single denomination (though still outnumbered by the multiplicity of Protestant denominations)—inspired Catholic writers and artists to focus less on dogmatic, self-conscious defenses of the faith and more on the effort “to invest the mundane world itself with spiritual significance” (126). Ross Labrie’s *The Catholic Imagination in American Fiction* (1997) also discusses sacramentality by focusing on incarnational aspects of works by twentieth-century Catholic writers like Flannery O’Connor, Walker Percy, and Allen Tate. James Ryan’s *Faithful Passages* (2013) explores how these tendencies in Catholic realism also crossed over into the works of sympathetic Protestant writers of the period, examining Willa Cather as an especially strong example of an American Protestant writer who explored Catholic sacramentality, in her case by applying it to historical frontier settings in the American West as a way to engage feminism and other social philosophies that she found important. Cather’s work could be easily connected to several observations made in this dissertation, particularly in her use of the frontier as a place suitable for explorations of sacramentality and spirituality. Other non-

Catholic Americans explored Catholic sacramentality in this more secular era, including Mark Twain, whose *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1896) could certainly be used to extend this dissertation's exploration of ageris sainthood and of women placed "beyond desire" by their consecrated status. Similarly, William Faulkner's Drusilla Hawk in *The Unvanquished* (1938) seems, at times, to mirror Evangeline in that upon the death of her fiancé, "there had been reserved for Drusilla the highest destiny of a Southern woman—to be the bride-widow of a lost cause" (191), but Drusilla refuses to climb upon the pedestal reserving her place "beyond desire" as a virgin widow. Instead, she sets off into space occupied by men, joining the Confederate army, but unlike Evangeline and unlike Twain's Joan of Arc, she is not afforded the respect and privilege afforded these other women in such spaces. Even so, through the twentieth century, consecrated women dedicated to lives of national service to their nations continued to hold the American literary imagination in ways that consecrated men—with the notable exception of the protagonist of Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927)—did not.

This dissertation, while not disputing Giles', Labrie's, or Ryan's conclusions for the twentieth century, points to an even earlier integration of Catholic incarnational and sacramental influences into American literature. Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne had, in many ways, already blazed the trails of Protestant literary exploration of Catholicism a hundred years before the likes of Cather and Faulkner. While Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne did not pursue the sacramentality of Catholicism as far as they might have (and certainly not as far as Hawthorne's daughter Rose did when she took the veil as a Dominican nun, becoming Mother Mary Alphonsa), neither did they stand aloof from it. It is more accurate to describe these three writers as visitors, rather than as outsiders, and as students, rather than as tourists. In their journals and other reflective writings, all three authors showed an awareness that they were not like the other

American tourists who refused to kneel and otherwise refused to respect the reverence or divinity present in Old World Catholic places. All three set themselves apart, not quite as “the Other,” but certainly as more than casual observers. These three authors, to a certain degree, were seekers, looking to see if their spiritual longings could possibly be fulfilled in Catholic sacramentality.

To be sure, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were not the only Jacksonian-era Americans who were drawing closer, wittingly or unwittingly, to Catholic traditions. Transcendentalists and Romantics, for example, were engaging some ideas of a spiritually endowed nature. Gatta argues that all writers who dealt with nature in early and mid-nineteenth-century America, including Thoreau, Emerson, Bryant, Cooper, and Hawthorne, were part of a movement “to undo that dis-enchantment of the world precipitated by the European Enlightenment” (*Making* 11), and he further states that the whole metaphor of forest as temple or cathedral was a fairly stock phrase of nineteenth-century Romanticism (*Making* 74). However, Transcendentalism, even if it drew upon mystical Christianity in its origins (Gatta, *Making* 89), ultimately developed into what many Catholics and Protestants alike condemned as an outright worship of nature rather than the worship of a sovereign god (Berryman 114). Also, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were hardly alone in adopting Catholic motifs in order to critique the Puritan and Calvinist traditions in America that long had defined themselves in such stark opposition to Roman Catholicism. As explored by Franchot and similarly interested scholars, critiques of Calvinist Protestantism and its cultural values emerged from other canonical writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Herman Melville. Stowe’s *Agnes of Sorrento* (1862) makes a clear critique of Calvinism, particularly its obsession with hell as an ever-present threat, as it dissolves into a narrative of a lecherous, predatory priest evocative of the pulp fiction of the day (Franchot 254-255). Melville’s *Benito Cereno* (1855), a story of a mysterious and misconstrued



mutiny on a Spanish slave ship that evokes some of the convent captivity narratives, similarly offers a critique of nativism and racism in New England culture (Franchot 163).

Notwithstanding these commonalities, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne were attracted more strongly than most of their Protestant contemporaries by the spiritual implications of Catholic sacramentality. Their career-long interests in sacramental concepts, intensified by their travels in Europe, set them apart from a writer like Stowe, who in *Agnes of Sorrento* uses a picturesque, materially Catholic setting (comparable in some ways to that used by Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun*) to tell the story of a devout Catholic girl who (like Longfellow's Kavanagh) finds herself pulled away from the Catholic Church by her education. But while Stowe's Agnes emerges as a character of moral purity, her novel essentially reinforces the Romanist trope that sets the material corruptibility of Catholicism against the spiritual purity of Protestantism, a reading Giles also offers when he argues that "[t]he pattern in *Agnes of Sorrento* is that of binary opposition: Protestant spirit versus Catholic matter, purity versus corruption" (79). Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, in contrast, did more than just situate works in Catholic settings or drop in Catholic references; these three writers were authentically drawn to Catholic sacramentality, which opened ways to draw spiritual sustenance from Catholicism and endow their works with reverence for an immanent and incarnate God. Their desires for a deeper level of communion with Catholic spirituality, revealed in their travel logs and developed in their creative works, distinguished them from other canonical writers who investigated religious themes in the Jacksonian era.

For James Fenimore Cooper, the strength of Catholicism's appeal seemed to take him by surprise during his time in Europe. However, this examination of his work reveals that he was communing with Catholic ideals of sacramentality and saintly intercession in novels such as *The*

*Spy*, *The Prairie*, and *The Last of the Mohicans* before he went to Europe, likely before he was even fully aware of his interest in them. Because of his early interests, Cooper was probably predisposed to appreciate Catholicism's connections between beauty and spirituality, even before he got his first heavy doses of sacramental Catholicism in Europe. As a result of his travels in Europe, Cooper was able to respect and even (somewhat bravely) to actively defend the faith, despite its associations with an Old World from which he was trying to distance America's emerging national identity. The relationship that Cooper built with Catholicism is best articulated in his *Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine*, in which he reveals, "I sometimes wish I had been educated as a Catholic, in order to unite the poetry of religion with its higher principles" (105; Letter 10). Despite his desire to help to forge a distinctly American culture and literature, Cooper felt that America suffered "the want of edifices reared in honour of God...I do not mean churches...but temples to mark a sense of superiority of the Deity, and which have been reared in his honour" (*Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine* 106; Letter 10). For Cooper, whose family was instrumental in the construction of the Episcopalian mission church at Cooperstown in the remoteness of upstate New York, such a desire for American shrines, which he admittedly found improbable "in a country so peopled and still so young" (*Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine* 106; Letter 10), took a turn into monuments to secular saints, from the grave of Natty Bumppo in the wilderness the monuments to the founding fathers in Washington which, based on novels such as *The Spy*, he likely would have welcomed as fitting and appropriate for the new nation. Cooper made clear that he had no desire to become a Catholic convert, but he nonetheless saw benefit in Catholic sacramentals as aids to worship, wondering "why have we denounced the holy symbol of the cross, the ornaments of the temple, the graceful attire, and the aid of music?" (*Gleanings in Europe: The Rhine* 106; Letter 10). For Cooper, Catholicism had much to offer to godly

Americans, and much to offer his ideal of America itself: one in which citizens would guard their liberties while showing deference to the order and beauty that God had instilled in his creation.

While Cooper found worthiness in Catholic sacramentality that he was unafraid to put into writing, Hawthorne found no ready avenue for an open discussion of Catholicism and its personal appeal. Hawthorne, though a man of strong principle who was capable of great loyalty to his family members, his close friends, and his country, ultimately lived a life in which he was truly uncomfortable in his family name and, it seems, in his own skin, to the point that he was unable to find much consolation anywhere. In Hawthorne's explorations of St. Peter's Basilica, particularly the confessionals, he clearly found a strong, almost visceral pull of Catholic sacramentality, so much so that he dared to write that "[i]f I had a murder on my conscience or any other great sin, I think I should have been inclined to kneel down there, and pour it into the safe secrecy of the confessional. What an institution that is! Man needs it so, that it seems as if God must have ordained it" (*Centenary* 14:59; *French Italian Notebooks*, 7 Feb. 1858). Despite this pull, and despite hours of observations of the confessionals, scrutinizing the faces of priests and penitents alike, Hawthorne proved unable to cross the threshold. Hawthorne's inability to enter a confessional in spite of his desire to do so sums up his entire relationship with Catholicism. In Catholicism, as with other religions, Hawthorne seemed to seek some original truth that he had convinced himself did not exist, giving him a handy excuse to keep his distance from a variety of religious sects of his day, preferring to observe them from the safety of his own home. His expectations of priests at the confessionals best reveal the unreasonable nature of his wishes: though he sought the human experience of confession, he was unable to find, in the faces of the priests he observed, any man whose face revealed "the wise, deep, and tender soul, into which I could choose to pour my own" (*Centenary* 14:100; *French Italian Notebooks*, 21 Feb.

1858). What Hawthorne truly seemed to desire in a Catholic priest was one who was not merely human, but possessed of a supernatural grace. Similarly, Hawthorne struggled to understand why Catholic people seemed to him to be just as human as Protestant people, as when he wrote that “I really wonder that the Catholics are not better men and women” (*Centenary* 14:357; *French Italian Notebooks*, 4 July 1858). He seemed to long for signs of “visible sainthood,” drawing upon the old Puritan belief that one’s salvation would be visible to others while still on earth, a view fitting well with the idea of pre-destination but not well at all with the idea of salvation as a lifelong, ageretic process.

Just as Hawthorne struggled with the reconciliation of a salvific faith with the uncertainty of one’s salvation, and with the human fallibility of man, he struggled greatly with the implications of an incarnate Christ. At the same time, however, Hawthorne clearly revealed this struggle when he looked at Rafael’s *Transfiguration* and commented on what he disliked in this representation of Jesus: “it looks too much like human flesh and blood to be in keeping with the celestial aspect of the figure, or with the probabilities of that scene, when the divinity and immortality of the Savior beamed from within him through the earthly features that ordinarily shaded him” (*Centenary* 14:187; *French Italian Notebooks*, 25 Apr. 1858). For Hawthorne, it seems, both priests and Christ should not appear to be too human, demonstrating his reluctance to embrace the incarnational aspects of religion that he nonetheless desired. As for his faith, Hawthorne seemed to desire a God that he could feel in his own way, and on his own terms, hopeful, but not confident, that no matter what “[d]oubts may flit about me, or seem to close their evil wings, and settle down...never can my soul have lost the instinct of its faith” (“Sunday at Home,” *Centenary* 9:21; *Twice-Told Tales*). Hawthorne thus clung to the idea of the priesthood of all believers from his Puritan tradition, but less from a doctrinal position than from

an overwhelming sense of trepidation that kept him from engaging fully in any religious tradition that relied on a sacramentally ordained priesthood or ministerial leadership made of men as imperfect as himself, with hearts and souls similarly shielded from public scrutiny. The Catholic understanding of an incarnate, immanent divine presence thus seemed to console him in some ways, yet it also seemed to make him somewhat skittish. The prospect of an immanent God that could be made manifest in unexpected and perplexing ways seemed to unsettle Hawthorne, as though he were afraid that such a Deity could peer into the hearts of men as Hawthorne himself pretended to do in “Sights from a Steeple,” finding, as in “The Minister’s Black Veil,” his own “hoarded iniquity of deed or thought” (“Minister’s Black Veil,” *Centenary* 9:40; *Twice-Told Tales*). While Hawthorne caught glimpses of a consoling, incarnate, and immanent God, first in nature and then in Old World Catholicism, he was unable to bring himself to fully embrace it.

Longfellow went into his exploration of Catholicism with a heart more open to embracing aspects of the Old World faith, approaching Catholic sacramentality from a Unitarian tradition that encouraged the amalgamation of different religious influences. Like Cooper and Hawthorne, Longfellow found much within Catholicism to like, especially in the connection between material richness and purity of feeling, as both are forms of beauty that a poet feels called to pursue in his own work. Longfellow may well have had a greater flexibility than Cooper and Hawthorne in his approach to Catholicism in his own work as a poet; though he published prose works including *Outre-Mer* and *Kavanagh*, his prolific and diverse poetry may have given him greater room to be more expansive about the settings and contexts he could use for exploring the sacramental power of Catholicism. Of the three authors studied in this dissertation, Longfellow worked more actively than did either Cooper or Hawthorne to bring overtly Catholic influences into his fictional versions of America. Longfellow not only lifted up

Evangeline, Father Felician, and the Acadians as exemplary models of virtuous republicanism, but he, like Cooper, seemed to anticipate and defend against the nativist prejudices of his American readers, both in his descriptions of Old World Catholics in *Outre-Mer* and in his depiction of Kavanagh as a minister fusing together the best of Catholicism and Calvinism. In many ways, Longfellow's *Kavanagh* seems to answer Cooper's questions as to why signs, sounds, and formalities were purified out of America's churches, by demonstrating that they could be returned to them without compromising virtue. Longfellow, in reference to Catholic devotional poetry, wrote that "[c]onsidered apart from the dogmas of a creed, and as the expression of those pure and elevated feelings of religion which are not the prerogative of any one sect or denomination, but the common privilege of all, it possesses strong claims to our admiration and praise" (*Outre-Mer* 267), sentiments that seem to apply equally to his overall assessment of Catholicism. For Longfellow, receptiveness to Catholicism was essential to the development of an American republic characterized by virtue, openness, and syncretism. Though Longfellow has seemed stiff and anachronistic to many modern and postmodern students of American literature, his tireless championing of a more spiritually and materially inclusive republic was in many ways ahead of its time.

Taken in totality, the works of Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne certainly do engage Catholicism in ways that highlight some of their authors' frustrations with certain aspects of historical and/or contemporary Protestantism, but they also reveal that their authors saw Catholicism as far more than just a foil for America's dominant religious practices and traditions. Understanding Catholicism primarily as another American "Other" serves to diminish the spiritual explorations of these three authors and to undermine an opportunity for further investigations of spirituality in American literature. Even when these three authors did not appear

to be engaging Catholicism in a direct manner—which was particularly true of some of the early works of both Cooper and Hawthorne—they often expressed ways of seeing and understanding that put them in sympathy with Catholic sacramentality. Henry P. Roberson argues that Cooper’s relationship with Catholicism “may perhaps be best described as *cor ad cor*, heart calling to heart, spirit to spirit,” and such an assessment is applicable just as readily to Longfellow and to Hawthorne, a calling to which Longfellow and Cooper readily replied. Hawthorne, unlike the other two writers studied here, desperately wanted to wriggle away from the longings of his heart as he sat in St. Peter’s Basilica, unable to articulate an answer. Because of this shared sympathy, these three writers, in many of their literary works, were able, sometimes in quite explicit ways, to reconcile Catholic sacramentality with their own staunch ideals of American nationalism and civic virtue. In the reconciliation of Catholic sacramentality with American republicanism, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne provided a model—an especially and potentially powerful one in light of their prominence in early American literature—for a sympathetic, even empathetic, appreciation of outwardly strange or “foreign” traditions of belief. In the creation of this model, these three writers discovered that the new country they devoted so much of their immense literary talents to sowing, tending, and pruning was rooted in the soil of a Christian faith no longer universal, but still far deeper and more fertile than they might have ever imagined. For Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne, much of what they loved about America was rooted in the “best soil” of Catholic sacramentality, and religious pluralism could not shake this rich soil from America’s roots.

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