

Introduction

*Section 0.1: What is rhetoric? / What is a primitive? /
What is the heroic mode? / What is Irony? /
What is a savior? / What is the rhetoric of the
primitive savior?*

This project proposes to situate Cooper's Chingachgook and Hetty, Melville's Queequeg, and Hawthorne's Pearl and Priscilla, as rhetorical characters of what shall be termed the primitive-as-savior tradition of American fiction. This rhetoric (persuasive technique) in The Deerslayer, Moby Dick, The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance, manipulates reader emotions through pairing a character of the heroic mode with one of the primitive. The character in the heroic mode (a hero, or heroine) is directly involved in the novel's main action, commands the most interest or sympathy from the reading audience, and embodies valuable human qualities such as honesty, bravery, and compassion. The heroic character seeks escape from the strictures of his or her ever-expanding Anglo American civilization, and travels (forced or willingly) on a voyage to the frontier (any space outside the bounds of westernized society).

The primitive character accompanies the heroic on this voyage. The character in the primitive mode embodies the qualities of cultural primitivism—being more natural, more instinctive, more superstitious, and more spontaneous than the heroic (Bell, Primitivism 80). The primitive is also a marginalized character—a social outsider to the western culture. The primitive is excluded from the full benefits of the heroic character's society because he or she may be described as one or all of the following—being non-white, non-Christian, lower class, or poor. As a social outsider, the primitive feels a

spiritual bond with the hero—or at least feels compassion for the freedom the heroic seeks. The primitive having spent most of his or her existence marginalized from society, better understands the psychological and physical challenges of the frontier, and guides the hero toward survival through word and deed (Bell, Primitivism 11).

As an outsider with the answers, the primitive is a powerful source of irony. While readers anticipate that their encounter with the primitive will comfortably reinforce their society's negative stereotypes of marginalized peoples (of the poor, of the lower class, of non-whites, or of non-Christians), the reverse happens. The early nineteenth century audience is bewildered as their Anglo-American social philosophy fails them and the primitive's way is depicted as the path to salvation. When the heroic character is tested, the primitive character has the answers. Through word and example, the primitive provides the answers for physical survival and spiritual growth. In this way, the primitive may be qualified as a savior figure.

Having defined the terms rhetoric, irony, and savior, along with those of the primitive and heroic modes of existence, a definition for the rhetoric of the primitive-as-savior tradition may now be attempted. The rhetoric of the primitive savior refers to a persuasive technique occurring within certain American novels, where authors depict a marginalized (primitive) character and a heroic character in a relationship where the marginalized character's mode of existence, for the purpose of irony, is shown to be the answer to the hero's salvation. The achievement of this irony, (as will be demonstrated in the selected literary works of Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville), is a

multidimensional process, combining at least seven rhetorical elements. While each element on its own is rhetorically significant, by viewing these elements on a holistic level, it may be demonstrated that the combination of these seven elements serve to create something that is far more rhetorically captivating and perhaps literary, than any one element analyzed independently, in Cooper's The Deerslayer, Melville's Moby Dick, and Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance.

Section 0.2: Seven Essential Elements of the Primitive-as-Savior Tradition

In analyzing the rhetorical relationship of heroic and primitive characters in the American novel, through the critical lens of Michael Bell, Wayne Booth, Joseph Campbell, and John Gardner, this project will attempt to demonstrate that seven lesser primitivist elements work together to form what may be termed the rhetoric of the primitive-as-savior tradition in the American novel.

Element 1: Primitivist Setting--Works of this tradition contrast the natural world with that of the civilized. There is a sense that the natural world of the "American frontier is somehow more vast and untamed" than any landscape of Europe (Bell, Primitivism 79). Often the natural landscape is contrasted with that of the settled (Bell, Primitivism 79).

Element 2: The Mythic Primitive--Primitivist works examine the interrelationship of white Anglo-Americans with older aboriginal races, particularly the relationship between white colonists and Native-American peoples. This relationship is commonly expressed through reference to myths on the nature of

the aboriginal consciousness. Often the aboriginal consciousness is elevated over the modern (Bell, Primitivism 79).

Element 3: The Shocking Primitive-Authors cast primitive characters as social outsiders whose shocking behaviors, often embodying qualities of sexuality, scandal, violence, and blasphemy serve to gain readers' attention (Booth 149).

Element 4: Narrator Empathy-Authors gain audience empathy by having their narrators express disgust and uncertainty at the primitive character's actions similar to the disgust and uncertainty that the reading audience may experience. This establishes a sense of similarity and goodwill between author and audience, therefore increasing the audience's receptiveness to the author's story (Booth 149).

Element 5: The Novel is One of Initiation-The primitive guides the character in the heroic mode (and the reader) through demanding circumstances, testing the heroic character physically and deepening the heroic character's psychological insight (Campbell, Hero 97, 100).

Element 6: The Primitive Teaches Life Lessons-The primitive teaches that life is more than the sum of one's intellectual responses, fostering in the heroic character an appreciation for the physical as opposed to the intellectual life. The primitive develops in the heroic character a healthy skepticism about the value of social conventions, and a more heightened understanding of one's own life in relation to others (Baird 244).

Element 7: The Tradition and Moral Fiction-The depiction of a character in the primitive mode teaching a character in the heroic mode is a process that is both socially redeeming and life affirming, qualifying such works to be labeled as what John

Gardner calls moral fiction (Gardner 5). All four novels examined in this project are of a democratic nature, depicting marginalized and outcast persons as having social value. Each work also emphasizes the interrelated nature of humanity. Each individual's actions are shown as significant to a community's ultimate success or failure.

Section 0.3: How is the rhetoric of the primitive-as-savior a tradition of the American Novel?

Numerous critics over the last century have discussed this reoccurring relationship of heroic characters being paired with primitive ones in the American novel. Such critics include R.W.B. Lewis, David Noble, and Leslie Fiedler. While each critic approaches the topic with his own set of objectives and biases—each agrees that the relationship emerges out of the myth of America as a new world Eden, and each agrees that the relationship is an important source of irony (Fiedler, Love 27; Lewis 111; Noble x, 5). A body of standard texts has emerged in the canon of American literature that critics frequently reference when they illustrate the relationship. Five of these works include, (1) James Fennimore Cooper's The Deerslayer discussing the relationship of hero Natty Bumppo with the Native American Chingachgook; (2) Herman Melville's Moby Dick discussing the relationship of hero Ishmael with the Pacific-Islander Queequeg; (3) Samuel Clemens' The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn discussing the relationship of hero Huck with the African-American Jim; (4) William Faulkner's "The Bear" on the relationship of hero Ike McCaslin with the half African-American, half Native-American Sam Fathers; and (5) Saul Bellow's Henderson, The Rain King on the hero Henderson's relationship

with three tribal Africans—Dahfu, Queen Willatale, and Romilayu (Noble 5).

***Section 0.4: Where do the critics disagree? /
How can Hawthorne's Pearl and Priscilla be
primitives?***

While there is strong sense of critical agreement over the rhetorical significance of primitive-as-savior characters as a source of irony, there is great critical disagreement over how the term primitive is defined. The biggest divide in how critics define characters that they label as primitive apparently relates to the publication date of their scholarship. Critics writing before 1970 generally define primitivism as a condition of racial identity focusing their discussion of primitives on the role of Native Americans and African Americans. White characters, especially women, are almost never described as primitives. Critics of this tradition include, R.W.B. Lewis, Leslie Fiedler, David Noble, John Ryder Cooley, James Baird, and Albert Keiser. Leslie Fiedler, for example, associates primitivism with masculinity, defining primitivism as a large generic name for the "Higher Masculine Sentimentality," a passionate commitment to inverting Christian-Humanist values out of a conviction that the Native American way of life is preferable (Fiedler, Return 169).

After 1970, however, critics generally seem to adapt a more inclusive definition of primitivism, one that is more germane to this project. These critics define primitivism as a state of mind, rather than a condition of racial identity. Critics of this tradition include Michael Bell and Kristin Herzog. Michael Bell defines primitivism as a "primary mode of response to the external world and human nature" (Bell, Primitivism 7). For Bell, primitivism is a way of feeling and thought, not limited to

specific members of a race or culture. Bell proposes that primitivism does not depend on locality as much as sensibility, "a suffusive quality of feeling within the civilized identity," taking the definition beyond the noble savage convention, suggesting that the primitive mind has a different mentality, including a belief in ritual, myth, and taboo, than the noble savage convention (Bell, Primitivism 10).

Feminist critic, Kristin Herzog, in her study entitled Women, Ethnics, and Exotics examines the portrayal in American literature of ethnic women and white women as primitives. Herzog asserts that women, perhaps even more than their male counterparts, have been portrayed as primitives or "noble savages" in the nineteenth century American novel (Herzog xii).

From the earliest times until today, women have been described, like non-white races, as more passive, less logical; more imaginative, less technologically inclined; more emotional, less incisive; more religious, less scientifically oriented. (Herzog xii)

Herzog uses the term primitive in the "romantic sense of being closer to nature, less intellectual, and more determined by instinct or passion than 'civilized' characters" (Herzog vi).

Section 0.5: Goals and Methods

In reflecting on the evolution of how critics have discussed the rhetorical pairing of heroic and primitive characters in the American novel, the criticism of Bell and Herzog invites new analysis into the relationship's nature and significance. By examining the seven reoccurring elements of the primitive-as-savior tradition in selected novels of Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne, this project will attempt to better clarify the rhetorical workings of the relationship, examining Melville's *Queequeg*, and Cooper's *Chingachgook* as racial primitives, and re-

examining the white female characters of Cooper's Hetty, and Hawthorne's Pearl and Priscilla as characters cast in the mode of the primitive savior. As the Native-American Chingachgook, and the Pacific Islander Queequeg are marginalized from Anglo-American society because of their racial identities, the white female characters of Hetty, Pearl, and Priscilla are similarly marginalized from mainstream society—Hetty because of her mental disability, Pearl because of her mother's adultery, and Priscilla because of her poverty.

Wayne Booth in his Rhetoric of Fiction writes that "an author can not choose to avoid rhetoric; he can choose only what type of rhetoric to employ" (149). While critical discussions of the relationship of primitive and heroic characters in the American novel discuss the relationship as a significant source of irony, few (if any) critics have attempted to analyze the rhetorical depth of the relationship, exploring how the relationship works as rhetorical device to manipulate audience emotions. Wayne Booth believes that every decision an author makes, every word that is written, effects how a novel's reading audience reacts to the work. I believe that the primitive-as-savior character type is vital to the persuasive strategy of Cooper, Melville and Hawthorne.

The following seven chapters will each examine a different rhetorical element of the primitive as savior tradition in Cooper's The Deerslayer, Melville's Moby Dick and Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance. Chapter one will examine how these authors create ironic tension through their settings by contrasting the natural world with the civilized. Chapter two examines how authors develop the myth of aboriginal

cultures, particularly relying on Native American images, exposing tensions between the white culture and more primitive cultures. Chapter three examines the primitive character functions as a rhetorical device to gain the readers' attention and to maintain their interest. Chapter four examines how authors gain audience empathy and goodwill, by creating narrators or characters who are depicted as shocked by the primitive's behavior in a way that mirrors the anticipated feelings of the audience. Chapter five discusses the rhetorical significance of the primitive character's initiation of the heroic character. Chapter six discusses the rhetorical significance of the life changing lessons the primitive teaches. Finally, chapter seven evaluates the relationship through the critical lens of John Gardner, asserting that the overall effect of the rhetoric of the primitive-as-savior tradition on readers is a socially redeeming and life affirming one-qualifying the novels as both literary and moral fiction.

Section 0.6: Literature Review

Before engaging in a discussion of seven elements of rhetoric of the primitive-as-savior in selected novels of Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne, it is valuable to review significant scholarship related to the mythic and rhetorical nature of primitive characters. Over the last century the subject of primitivism and the archetypal relationship of primitive and hero has received significant critical attention. The practice of using a primitive character for rhetorical purposes is not original to American literature. The primitive character-type of the savage was a standard trope of ancient Greek drama, "that is used to criticize what is conceived as superior by lavishing

praise on the inferior" thus showing the nobility of the savage or the savagery of the nobility (Pavolska xii). The primitive character may also be considered a symbol of Judeo-Christian spirituality, in what Joseph Campbell describes as the archetype of the "child as teacher" (Campbell Thou Art That 68).

Although characters are often thought of by mainstream western society as childlike, of an inferior intellect, in the Christian spiritual context the opposite is true. Primitive characters often have the intuitive knowledge necessary for the survival of the mainstream culture. In this respect primitive saviors, with their childlike nature, are similar to religious figures of Jesus or Buddha whom religious texts describe as being saviors from the moment of birth (Campbell, Thou 69). The use of the primitive-as-savior character type in American literature, when viewed in the context of its similar appearance in ancient Greek drama, or Christian doctrine is not a new rhetorical system, but rather an adaptation of an old rhetoric within the American mythos.

Albert Keiser with his The Indian in American Literature (1933) is one of the first scholars to examine the mythic, the positive and the negative portrayals of Native American's in American literature. Keiser emphasizes the significance of the Pocahontas myth as one of the first myths demonstrating a positive interaction between a white settler, and a Native-American woman. The myth, first recorded by Captain John Smith in his autobiographical New England Trials (1622), accounts the tale of Pocahontas, daughter of a Native American chief, who pleads to her father to spare the life of the captured Captain Smith. Pocahontas throws her body in front of the captain to

prevent his execution. Her intervention secures the Captain's life, and results in the Native-American peoples assisting the Captain in founding a successful colony (Keiser 3).

While the myth depicts the Native Americans as teaching the white settlers how to survive the wilderness, it holds to the Christian view depicting Native Americans as heathen people who must be taught morality. Pocahontas renounces her Native-American religion as idolatry. She converts to Christianity, marries Captain Smith and raises their child (Keiser 4). Keiser writes that the human elements in the rhetoric of the myth, lead to the myth's frequent reoccurrence in various forms throughout popular American literature¹.

... [T]he romantic story of Smith and Pocahontas, true to the Indian character and so appealing to human nature, has had a remarkable influence in American Literature as the favorite and recurring themes of writers dealing with the Indian. Toward the end of the late 18th century the figure of the chief's daughter began appearing in dramas ... with the rescue of the captain generally forming the climax. ... With the passing of Indian drama about 1850, Pocahontas also practically passes as a literary figure (Keiser 9).

Keiser's emphasis on the myth of Pocahontas is later developed by feminist critic Kristin Herzog whose 1983 study Women, Ethnics, and Exotics examines the portrayal of ethnic and white women in American literature in the primitive mode.

One issue Kristin Herzog addresses in the American novel is the romantic depiction of women in the mid-nineteenth century novel in a light similar to the noble savage tradition "... described as nonwhite races, as more passive, less logical; more imaginative, less technologically inclined; more emotional; less incisive; and more religious, less scientifically oriented"

¹ The marriage of Captain Smith and the Indian Princess Pocahontas is a mythical event. Pocahontas married the wealthy Englishman John Rolfe. Rolfe returned to London with Pocahontas where Pocahontas died. Pocahontas had one son who was the father of the famous Virginian John Randolph (Montgomery 27).

(Herzog xi). Herzog's study addresses Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter and Blithedale Romance focusing on the heroines of Hester and Zenobia as "American Eve" figures (Herzog xvi). Herzog argues that Hester and Zenobia as heroines embody the qualities of both heroic and primitive character types combined (Herzog xv, 7, 29). The heroine embodies a state of consciousness, that Melville's Ishmael possesses as he declares, "I myself am a savage." (Herzog xv, Melville 232).

The heroine in the romantic sense according to Herzog encounters a return to the subconscious thus becoming a more whole human, and an emotionally compelling character (Herzog xv). While Herzog minimizes the significance of the relationship between heroine and primitive, suggesting that the primitive character symbolizes a larger embodiment of the "untamed aspect" of the heroine's primitivism (Herzog 9), the scope of this project will lend greater significance to the heroine's relationship with the primitive, placing greater significance than Herzog on the relationship of Pearl to Hester, and Priscilla to Pearl, viewing the relationship as an extension of the primitive to hero, primitive-as-savior tradition of the American novel.

Kristin Herzog credits R.W.B. Lewis and Leslie Fiedler as two authors who had a profound influence on her research. R.W.B. Lewis with his The American Adam (1955) is, perhaps, one of the most cited scholars, next to Leslie Fiedler in the study of primitivism in the American Novel. Herzog describes herself as examining Hawthorne's female heroines as "American Eve" figures (Herzog v). This term American Eve refers to what Herzog views as the female version of what R.W.B. Lewis terms the "American

Adam" figure (Lewis 5). Lewis defines the American Adam figure as an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self reliant and self-propelling" (5). Lewis's study focuses on intellectual history of what he calls "the authentic American as a figure of heroic innocence, and vast potentialities, poised at a start of a new history" (Lewis 1). Where Lewis focus is solely on the heroic character, the project will build on Lewis' vision of the heroic character, examining the rhetorical interrelation of characters in the heroic mode with those in the primitive mode.

Leslie Fiedler is perhaps the most cited scholar in studies of primitivism in the nineteenth century American novel. Fiedler published two studies particularly relevant to the discussion of primitivism in the American novel. In Love and Death in the American Novel (1959) Fiedler describes "the failure of the American fictionist to deal with adult heterosexual love and his consequent obsession with death, incest, and homosexuality" (3). Fiedler asserts these obsessions result from two forces. First, American literary authors felt the need to separate themselves from the ever-popular domestic novels of the nineteenth century. Second, American literary novelists needed new symbols through which to explore the myths of American civilization. In The Return of the Vanishing American (1969), Fiedler examines what he calls the oldest myth in American Literature, "the encounter between the mythic white man-the invading Europeans and their descendants-and the mythic indistinguishable non-white others' who include the Native American, The African American, and non-Christian peoples (Fiedler, Return 4).

David Noble's The Eternal Adam and the New World Garden claims that his work is written in the tradition of Leslie Fiedler's Love and Death (Noble vii). Noble examines major novelists of the American cannon with the theory that most novelists of the American tradition are in a confrontation with the ideal of the American dream, the "myth that America has transcended time and escaped the tension of historical change" (Noble 1). Noble's study is particularly relevant to this study comparing the female characters of Hetty, Pearl, and Priscilla, to the racial primitives of Chingachgook and Queequeg, as he argues that Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne are writing out of the same tradition.

Noble asserts that "... it is the concept of the American Adam that each of these men makes central in his writing. ... They deny that America can become a New World Eden, and they reject the heavenly city on earth as a worthwhile or defensible ideal; they refuse to believe in the perfectibility of man (Noble 6)." Noble views Hawthorne's Hester to be of the same spirit as Melville's Ishmael, or Cooper's Natty Bumppo (24).

James Baird's study Ishmael (1956) presents a broad perspective of primitive images in Melville's novels. Baird asserts that primitivism is the result of cultural failure "both moral and symbolic" (Baird 15). According to Baird, Melville being of Protestant background was aware that traditional Christian symbols over nearly two millennia of use have lost their motivational significance, in a sense becoming cliché. According to Baird, Melville throughout his novels relies on his first hand experiences of Pacific-Island cultures, to generate new and compelling images, while reifying old ones (Baird 16).

John Ryder Cooley's dissertation Modes of Primitivism: Black Portraits by White Writer's in Twentieth Century American Literature is significant for its discussion of how certain types of African-American characters are used to generate irony. Cooley's study examines various representations of African Americans, and divides their depiction into one of three modes—the savage mode, the natural mode, and the pastoral mode. The savage mode depicts its subject with negative and stereotypical images. The natural mode depicts the primitive subject as a "noble savage" being naturally good, with negative qualities only being developing from the primitive's contact with western civilization. The pastoral mode—also termed by Cooley as literary primitivism, is the most elevated form of primitivism. In this mode the primitive demonstrates both positive and negative qualities and represents an enigma for the reader. This form of primitivism according to Cooley has the greatest rhetorical strength as a source of irony (Cooley 34).

It is a method of questioning through irony or direct confrontation the illusion of health and peacefulness in nature, whether the setting be meadow, forest, or jungle. Against the alleged harmony of nature or of the 'natural person,' there is posited another presence, a counterforce, which qualifies that harmony with the intention of producing a less simple view of the subject. Writers of this kind of pastoral usually show a more sensitive awareness of the complexity and the struggle inherent in life in nature than writers of the savage and natural modes (Cooley 7).

Cooley's study emphasizes the rhetorical and humanistic impact that a character cast in the primitive mode can contribute to a novel.

These studies represent a mere sampling of the scholarly discussion of primitivism in the American novel. While this project relies on Michael Bell's definition of primitivism as a characters "primary mode of response to the external world and

human nature" (Bell 7), and asserts the female characters of Hetty, Pearl, and Priscilla are part of a larger rhetorical primitive-as-savior tradition in the American novel—it does so keeping in mind the intellectual history before it with the workings of other scholars such as Baird, Cooley, Fiedler, and Herzog. While these scholars present different, sometimes conflicting arguments relating to what this project terms the primitive-as-savior character type, their studies will prove invaluable as this project attempts to analyze seven key elements of the rhetorical primitive-as savior tradition in the novels of Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne.