CHAPTER 1

FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA - TRACING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ROOTS.

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American civilization is extremely young compared to many other civilizations of the world and studies in it are a recent trend. Early American life was actually an off-shoot of European culture and traditions. When we examine the social fabric of American life, we find the trappings of all that have gone into its making—religion, myths, traditions, beliefs and socio-cultural roots, to name just a few. As it happens with every group of individuals, with common interests and goals, the customs and traditions become part not only of the group psyche but of the individual psyche as well. This has been the pattern in every cultural development. The majority imbibes the beliefs and moves to such an extent, that they form a deep sub-conscious base to their conscious thoughts. This is particularly reflected in art and literature.

In any age, certain socio-cultural beliefs and traditions become deep-rooted because of a mutual influence between group psyche and individual psyche. Most of these beliefs are mythological in origin and based in religion. They express the communal psyche and in course of time, become an unconscious stratum.
of the individual mind. In turn, the individual psyche, particularly that of the literary artist, can become a powerful force in shaping the mass psyche, in some cases, even pioneering new trends of thought, as an antithesis to those that were held earlier. It would be interesting to examine what kinds of attitudes the immigrants brought along with them from the Old World and how these attitudes gradually underwent a change.

American society, as it exists today, has been the result of waves of immigrants from Europe and Asia, the Negroes who were brought in from Africa, and the already existing 'Indians'. Thus it consists of many races and ethnic groups, which have sometimes been in conflict, and sometimes lived in harmony, with each other. Of the immigrants, the first settlers to come from Europe, were the Spanish, but later, much of North America was occupied by settlers from England and Holland to begin with, and by settlers from Ireland, Germany and Italy afterwards. The first major group of settlers from England and Holland, were the Puritan 'dissenters'.

When the 'Dissenters' left for the New World, they were well-equipped with a rich literary heritage, which could be traced to the Judeo-Christian tradition.
The journey through the Atlantic, to the New World, equipped with the Old and New Testaments, was not only historic in the sense that it paved the way for a new nation called America, but seemed to the settlers, as being symbolic of the Biblical 'Exodus'. These 'dissenters' felt that they were God's chosen few and had therefore providentially survived such an arduous journey. On reaching the shores of America, they were jolted to find that they were not the first settlers, that the American Indians had occupied the land long before them. They also discovered the Hispanic people, who had come from Europe, starting with Christopher Columbus. As far as the natives were concerned, the new settlers had to confront them both morally and physically. Morally, the Puritans felt it their sacred duty to establish a Christian colony and spread the message of Christianity, especially among the 'Indians' whom they considered as savages or 'heathens'. Physically, they felt it necessary to battle with Indian hostility, if they had to conquer and establish a settlement.

The 'Dissenters', with the Puritan heritage, formed their initial colonies in the Eastern coastal areas. As time went by, however, some of them began to feel that the theological beliefs, which had grown to be laws unto themselves, were too non-pragmatic and fanatical. This
gave rise to a fissure among the settlers and divided them as those who wanted the Biblical tenets to govern them and those who wanted truly democratic tenets to do so. This was the first internal change, and it led to a number of repercussions, such as the separation of Church and State. Of these changes, Gaer and Siegal in *The Puritan Heritage*, write:

> Historians have pointed out that the strivings of ... religious reformers ... and ... Baptists and Quakers - had been far from futile ... Thus seventeenth century Bible Puritanism ... prepared eighteenth century America for ... the separation of Church and State, ... and the spread of democratic liberalism.

As a direct result of this growing democratic liberalism, American society attained nationhood when, with the War of Independence, it severed all connections with England and her Church.

While these changes took place, giving form to the nation, society still retained certain basic attitudes towards various aspects of life. In any society, the social attitudes are partly carried from generation to generation, and partly undergo changes in some ways. Most of the social attitudes are influenced by any

institution that would bind a large group of individuals. One such major institution is Religion, and religious works have been the prime source of ideas in any society. The Puritans who were the first to found the American society, followed the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, and hence their social attitudes stemmed from this tradition. As mentioned earlier, the attitudes and notions of the Americans were greatly influenced by those they had brought from Europe with them, during their migration. Since this dissertation aims at analyzing the ambivalence towards women, in the selected novels of Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville, it would be pertinent to look into some of the causative factors that influenced social attitudes towards women in American society.

The very first ideas of the status of women began with matriarchal systems. Lyman Bryson observes that the earliest societies consisted of the matriarchal system, and the human family was formed around the 'Great Mother', not around the 'Great Father'. This probably stemmed from the association of the mother with creation and fertility. Fertility rites are of pagan origin and a Goddess of Fertility is known to have been worshipped in some of the most primitive religious cults. But, as the concept of a divine male being, in the image of a male God began to take

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shape in the mind of man, the myth of virginity and its associated purity, the non-admissibility of sex for anyone connected with religious office and the concept of sex itself as impure, along with other beliefs, began to take roots in man's mind, and these began to find their way into the pages of religious texts.

The transition from the Matriarchal to the Patriarchal system probably occurred in the second millennium B.C. Bryson observes that "the story of Eve's birth from Adam's rib" was also perhaps in order to show that man could "create life too, as woman does - at least symbolically". This patriarchal system was accepted by most later cultures, and the mythological theme in most, depicted the male as the central figure.

Man's mind is basically and unconsciously steeped in preconceived notions, many of which have a mythological origin. In any culture, certain myths persist, if not consciously, subtly and unconsciously, and they surface, whenever there is a need to preserve the cultural heritage in real circumstances or an imaginary, literary plane. Commenting on the mythological notions and beliefs, that affect the ethos of a culture, Caren Deming Boyle and

Billie Joyce Wahlstrom have written:

One way to get at the ethos of a culture ... is to examine the artefacts of a given culture. If the ethos of a culture is those largely, unconscious beliefs governing behaviour, the mythos of a culture is the working out of those beliefs in symbols capable of speaking to the culture as a whole ... the mythos dramatizes the ethos, and as a result, artefacts which embody the mythos give evidence via their symbols of the ethos.

So, in order to examine the attitudes towards women, in the ethos of the American Culture, we shall briefly have to analyze the mythos therein, for which again, we shall need to analyze briefly, the notions about women, as laid down in Judeo-Christian writings. The notions were laid down, by the interpreters of the Mosaic as well as Christian ideas, which included mythological beliefs too. This later religious literature of the Judeo-Christian tradition, was given as much importance, as the original theological works, so that the mythological beliefs of the Bible, together with interpretations later incorporated, constituted the ideas that were implemented and handed down as ethos, through the generations.

To consider the attitudes towards women, as derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition, one thing to be borne in mind is, that at the beginning of the Christian era,

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the Jewish religion was already a well-established religion. Other than the Jewish religion, a predominant religion called the Essenes, was practised in Palestine, and these two had a direct bearing on Christianity. The Essenes practised Asceticism, by withdrawing from the world, and though they were also followers of the Jewish tradition, they formed a separate community, because of their strict and disciplined lives, away from the family. Their ideas were derived from the stories of Greece, especially in their adherence to celibacy and avoidance of sex and family life. They believed that this orthodoxy was taboo for women, as they were instruments of man’s fall from spirituality and salvation. This is one of the first instances of religion influencing the attitudes of a society towards women as sex objects and temptresses. Referring to the Essene culture and its influence on Christianity which gave rise to the attitude towards women, Ernest R. Groves in The American Woman writes:

Although it seems probable that there were differences in the practices of Essene communities, celibacy was usually a part of their program. It was followed as a means of preserving ceremonial purity, but even so it provided a motive for conceiving woman as a tempter of the flesh, an attitude which later appeared in the teachings of some of the Church Fathers during the formative period of Christianity. 5

Of the various adaptations by Christianity and its first teachers, there were "certain liabilities that came out of the social circumstances of the time and the character and background of those who became followers of the new religion." One such "liability" that Christianity absorbed, was the concept of asceticism. Whether asceticism portrayed self discipline as a way of life chosen by one's free-will, or a fanatical abstinence from passions and desires, or even basic biological needs, it certainly carried the idea of male supremacy, of the necessity of women, only for the biological purpose of procreation and of women as unclean beings. These ideas were strengthened by the fact that the Jewish society held sex as a bar to spirituality, holiness and salvation. The Jewish society was not only patriarchal, but its traditions, jealously guarded the idea of male supremacy over the female population. Thus, though the attitudes towards women were rooted in religion, they became social mores for two reasons. One was that the religious injunctions increasingly became the guidelines for a society's traditions and the other, that religion tried to free itself from all ideas of sex. Thus the ideas that religion conveyed through mythology as well as theology, became the basis for society's traditions and attitudes on various subjects, including women.

If we consider the mythological ideas of the Judeo-Christian tradition concerning women, we have Eve as the
temptress, and Mary, mother of Christ, as the embodiment of purity. According to the Judeo-Christian mythology, Eve, the first woman to be created, was tempted by Satan, to eat the forbidden apple and to commit sin with Adam. Satan, as the story goes, was a 'fallen' angel, and his vengefulness towards God and his creation, Adam, led him to tempt Eve, who in her turn, tempted Adam to 'commit sin'. Eve is portrayed as not only a temptress but as one who brought about "death and disobedience" to the entire human race, by causing the downfall of herself and Adam. Thus mythologically, Eve and the Serpent, are considered as the cause of the fall or corruption of Adam's god-like image, and of Eve as the temptress.

On the other hand, as a contrast, we also have another idea of Woman, the Virgin or Eve before the fall, as the antithesis or Eve after the fall, and symbolic of purity and redemption. The association of good with white or 'fair' or 'light' and that of Evil with 'black' or 'dark' is symbolic. White is associated with purity, sinlessness and angelic qualities and so represents 'good', and black similarly stands for something sinister, secretive or mysterious, and so represents 'evil'. Since Eve after the fall is considered the personification of evil, she is associated with the dark aspect while before the fall, being a virgin she is considered as the personification of virtue and is associated with the fair aspect. If Eve could sin by becoming a temptress, she could also emancipate mankind by her chastity. This suggests hope for Eve in her resurrection or trans-
formation. Referring to these ideas on Eve as virgin and temptress, Rosemary Radford Ruether in *Religion and Sexism* writes:

There is a ... tradition in the Church Fathers ... according to which the doctrine of Eve's role in sin is interpreted as a possibility of her liberation from sexual oppression and male dominance ... the equivalence of male and female in creation and ... women's subordination as the effects of sin, whereby Eve was cursed to bear children in sorrow and to be under the power of her husband ... virginity, then, is interpreted as the resurrected life of the gospel whereby woman is freed from this two-fold curse on Eve ... of childbearing and male domination.  

It is pertinent to note that these were merely the interpretations of the original religious texts; the Church Fathers had given their own interpretations of the myth with Eve as the Temptress as well as the later punished one, and the Virgin as the pure, innocent and blameless one. These interpretations came into vogue during the formative years of Christianity. The Church Fathers gave their own explanation to the 'problem' that Eve faced, the punishment of childbearing and female subordination. But while offering virginity as the solution, they still did not say that Eve herself could be 'absolved', assuming that she had sinned. While they admitted that man as well as woman were counterparts and equally necessary for procreation, they

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still insisted that the "curse of childbearing and male dominance" fell on Eve alone. Thus, the Church Fathers, who were the original interpreters of the mythology of Adam and Eve, and the fall of man, propounded an Adamistic world-view. Man was capable of freeing himself from sensuality, whereas woman was cursed to use it to tempt man. But, if she chose not to tempt man, and to be a virgin, she could attain to spiritual equality with man, though she could not attain to virtues 'natural' to all men. As Rosemary Ruether observes, in her book Religion and Sexism, this must have given the Spirit-Body, Subject-Object idea of the relationship between man and woman.

With the broadening of notions on women, the followers of the Church were faced with the dilemma - whether to give equal status to women, as men, if they took the vows of celibacy, or to treat them as women, merely rid of sensuality. They resolved this, by considering men's role as a detached necessity-bound, functional one, in his relationship with women, for the purpose of procreation; on the other hand, they considered that the role of a woman could be three-fold - as a temptress, as a mother and as a virgin.

Commenting on the three-fold image of a woman, Rosemary Ruether in Religion and Sexism observes:
This depersonalized view of sexual relations gives three basic images of woman... as whore, ... as wife and ... as virgin. As whore, woman is wholly the image of that "revolting carnality" that entices the rational mind down from its heavenly seat to "wallow" in the flesh ... As wife, woman is ... the image of that totally submissive body ... allowing herself to be used solely as an instrument of procreation ... But ... as virgin ... woman rises to spirituality, personhood and equality with the male ... at the expense of crushing out ... her bodily and ... female "nature".

We now find this three-role image of woman propounded through centuries of religious tradition, becoming fundamental concepts about women in Western societies. This was the contribution of the Christian tradition, to the social attitude towards women.

Among the Jews, women were not considered as 'naturally' sensual, even though they were given a subordinate place, compared to men. Women could be sensual, or meek or submissive, or given to learning by choice. But they were not given the choice of spiritual calling. This last was reserved only for men. We do not hear of women, in monastic lives, though the Talmud does acknowledge the place of women as judges or guides, or friends to men, as intellectuals, peer or wife, sister or mother. The idea that women could be one of three kinds seems to be common to both the Jewish and the Christian traditions. In the Jewish tradition, despite their subordinate position, women could have intellectual

7 Ibid, pp.163-4.
potentialities, equal to men, though not a right to participate in the religious rites. In the Christian tradition, on the other hand, apart from assigning a subordinate position to women, they were also considered to have evil intentions as a natural part of their character and offered freedom from these "natural" evils through a spiritual way of life in Virginity or Celibacy.

As time progressed, the ideas about women began to change, albeit gradually, until the Protestant tradition took over almost the whole of Europe and strengthened the status of women. Women were now considered necessary for a stable family, and its smooth running. The Protestant tradition gave importance to the elect soul and the individual rather than the ecclesiastical institutions. Martin Luther preached that Christ's life was to be taken as the ideal and every human being had a hope of attaining His Kingdom, through faith and a Christian spirit. The Reformers, as also the Puritans in England, laid stress not on any rigid ways to salvation, but a simple faith and belief in Christ and his teachings. Puritanism or Calvinism, believed in the innate depravity or man, which could be erased only by the dependence of man on God, whose Grace alone could bring salvation to him.

The stress on the importance of the Bible and faith, by the Protestant tradition, seemed optimistic and shifted the stress, from the sin of Adam, to his hope
on earth. Christ had proved, that man, who was Adam's progeny, could still hope, by devotion and piety, to earn his glory that had been lost. The direct result of this view, was the Humanist movement, that laid stress on individual freedom and the flowering of the Arts in all of Europe in the 'Renaissance' period.

As a result of the Reformation and the Humanist movement, there was a change in the attitude towards women also. Women could now earn a pride of place in society, by domesticity and piety. They too could, by adhering to their homes, and hearths, earn respectability or could attain saintliness through austerity and strict obedience to Christian preachings in imitation of Christ's own life.

Even though the rigid concepts, as regards the basic sensuality of a woman as her natural trait were liberalized and was now considered necessary for procreation and domestic bliss, she was still considered secondary to man. After the long years of having lived as potential "sinners", in an ecclesiastically institutionalized, male-dominated society, there must have been a certain withdrawal and resignation on the part of women, even when society began to view them liberally. This new recognition of woman's respectability by society, would take time to become a part of the social tradition.

But while the Jewish tradition still permitted intellectualism in women, and a certain equality with men, in
certain matters, Christianity even now, while allowing a
certain elevation in women's status, denied intellectual
independence or equality of women with men. Adam's progeny
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It may be remembered, that the "Mayflower Compact"
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Atlantic, to take root in the new soil of America.

Referring to the attitude of the American society, towards
women in the early part of the history of the American
Civilization, Judith Fryer in her essay entitled "The
Myth of America as New World Garden of Eden" in The Faces
of Eve, writes:

... generalizations most often, made ...
are conceived from masculine perspectives
which do not take women into account at
all. The attempt of Americans to live
out in their lives as well as recreate in their imaginative and historical literature the myth of America as New World Garden is just such a masculine conception... If Eve was the cause of the original Adam’s downfall, the role of the New World Eve must be minimized... so that in the American version of the myth, there will be no Fall.8

Thus, though the early American settlers, had sought to found a new liberal society in the New World, they had unconsciously carried with them, the basic mythological beliefs of the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Puritans. Along with these beliefs, the settlers had carried the basic notions about women too. The myth about a single woman called Eve or a single woman called Mary, was applied to all womankind, and the third image of a meek and submissive woman, as envisaged by the European society of the Middle Ages, also came to be accepted. Thus, all through the history of Europe and then through the evolution of America, till the nineteenth century, the notion about three types of women persisted - as seductive temptresses, as docile wives, and as angelic and saintly beings. If Eve was associated with the seductive qualities in a woman, or vice versa, celibacy was associated with saintliness and virginity with purity, innocence and angelic qualities, as embodied in Virgin Mary.

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It may be remembered, that the "Mayflower Compact" was signed by "forty-one male adults". Though democracy was the fundamental promise in the minds of the signatories to the pact, and both English and Dutch Puritans stood on par with each other, there seemed to be no idea of women as persons too, or of their possible participation as individuals. The idea of women, worthy of consideration in a democracy, does not seem to have occurred. This was still an Adamistic culture being brought across the Atlantic, to take root in the new soil of America. Referring to the attitude of the American society, towards women in the early part of the history of the American Civilization, Judith Fryer in her essay entitled "The Myth of America as New World Garden of Eden" in *The Faces of Eve, writes*:

... generalizations most often, made ... are conceived from masculine perspectives which do not take women into account at all. The attempt of Americans to live
In the context of women in American society, though this was their condition in the eighteenth century, it was also the time when female intellectualism began to appear in the form of correspondence, poetry and other modes of expression. If in the seventeenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft was a phenomenon, in the centuries that followed, the notions about women’s status and independent expression was more openly voiced. Women began to be recognized for their indispensable role at home and outside, as wives, mothers and co-breadwinners. This was more so towards the end of the eighteenth century, when pioneering westward began and the role of women as helpmates both at home and outside, and also as additional bread-winners, could no longer be ignored. Regarding these changes Anne Frier Scott, in her book Women in American Life writes:

Nineteenth century growth and territorial expansion affected women’s lives in various ways. The lure of western lands and sudden riches drew many men across the continent. With them went hardy women who helped to perpetuate the pioneer tradition and contributed to the development of a distinctly western culture ... Still others found independence and opportunity in a growing number of new jobs ... Increased financial independence enabled some few of these women to develop talents beyond those required for hearth and home.10

This then was the reality about the role of women in American society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

10 Ibid., p. 27.
centuries - that they were not only indispensable at home but were bread winners as well albeit as secondary ones, and they were sturdy help-mates in the new pioneering endeavour to the west. In addition, women began to show their talent in the field of literature also as for instance Anne Bradstreet, Anne Hutchinson, Margaret Fuller, and others. Through their letters and journals women began to express what they felt about themselves and the roles that age-old norms had compelled them to play. It was during the American War of Independence that women first had the chance of indirect participation in activities outside their homes.

The evolution of the image of women in literature in America will now be examined as a framework for the central thesis of this dissertation, the ambivalence of Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville towards women in some of their selected novels. The analysis would bring out not only the causative forces for such ambivalence but what the ambivalence projected, of the authors' inner conflicts.

The American novel owes its form to European literary traditions, namely the Richardsonian and Gothic traditions. Richardson, unlike Tobias, Smollet and Fielding, evolved a trend wherein he "necessarily made his heroines independent entities" in "convincing detail, so that the reader had to understand and respect them." This must have set a precedent for the first time in American society, that women's consciousness was worth examining. While this
trend used a stereo-typed heroine as the ideal of womanhood and was adopted by women writers like Francis Sheridan or Jane Austen, the notions of another type of woman, who could evoke passions in a man, also began to emerge. The women novelists, while writing about themselves, still had to adhere to a "feminine" mode, wherein "the price they paid was strict attention to propriety, constant vigilance over the moral implications of their works" and because they were women, Richardson's female followers "had to be even more careful about morality than he was."

This was the myth that was created first by Richardson and then by his female followers. Here again, conservatism forced women themselves to project women as a single stereotype - the model for the ideal American woman. To quote Catherine Rogers in her paper entitled "Inhibitions on Eighteenth Century Novelists;"

... the chastity, propriety, sense of duty, delicacy, enjoined on women in real life were doubly enjoined on the fictitious woman who was not worthy to be a heroine if she could not serve as a model. 11

Leslie A. Fiedler in his book Love and Death in the American Novel describes this stereotype as "disconcertingly sinless", not a symbol of "insatiable passion or teaming fertility but a "persecuted maiden" who is"a projection of male guilt before the female character treated as a mere sexual object."

But the Richardsonian tradition was very short-lived. However much Richardson may have realized that women needed to be given the pride of place, at least mythically the European and English societies to which literature catered, was still a male-dominated one. This was the time of industrialization and the rise of the middle class. So the writers of England and Europe must have felt the need to create a new form wherein the middle class could be represented and the Protestant tradition of the male world-view upheld too. This led writers like Goethe and Rousseau to resort to the Romantic tradition centred round a male protagonist. The earlier Richardsonian literary tradition had used the Elizabethan social tradition to glorify women. The Romantic or Gothic tradition projected a male protagonist belonging to the masses, struggling with his passions. But the Richardsonian tradition, even though short-lived, had succeeded in creating a stereotype of ideal woman-hood, a stereotype that could not be shaken off, from the literary themes. She was the ultimate in idealism.

This was also the period when psycho-analysis was gaining ground. Since the mind was stressed as the seat of complexities, it was a natural outcome in literature, that the mental conflicts of the hero or the heroine be projected. The Gothic novel had chosen the male protagonist and therefore, also proceeded to analyze the protagonists'
conflicts. The Gothic tradition was the antithesis of the Richardsonian tradition but had absorbed the possibility of an ideal woman figure, albeit as a secondary one to the protagonist. But how to resolve the inner conflicts, arising from socio-cultural changes, was a dilemma that the Gothic writers faced.

At about this time, great changes were taking place in America. The nation had attained its independence and industrialization as well as pioneering had brought about changes in the outlook, as well as lifestyle of the Americans. They could look forward to democracy, including liberty, equality and a right to individual happiness with renewed hope. It seemed as if they could at last look forward to peace and harmony in a nation they could call their own. This was the Age of Enlightenment when the ensuing nineteenth century seemed full of promise of peace and prosperity.

At the same time, they could not help looking back at the past and introspecting about their real roots. When the Puritans had first landed in the New World, they found themselves facing large tracts of wilderness that were inhabited by strange people called the American Indians. The early American Puritan settlers had been too far from Europe and England, not only geographically, but socially also,
as they had come away as 'dissenters'. They could neither call this strange new land their original home nor claim it for their own now, as it was already inhabited. Also, the initial hope that the Puritan 'dissenters' had felt while setting out from England for the New World, was replaced by the reality they faced on landing actually on the American soil; this gave rise to a sense of skepticism as to their future and hopes. The constant strife between the work ethic of Puritanism and a sense of skepticism about achieving progress and prosperity, caused by long isolation from the Old World and civilization, left a deep mark on the American mind. Democracy had indeed been the creed, right from the start, and Society expected everyone to strive for individual happiness, but when democracy and equality seemed within reach, the skepticism that had dogged them since the first years of settlement, began to creep into the American psyche.

The Age of Enlightenment had ushered in, the awareness of the importance of literary expression as a means of promoting nationalism. There was a growing sense of responsibility to try and drive out the skepticism and a conflict of ideas between the notions and values of the Past and the Present were more acutely felt by the writers, who analyzed them and tried to articulate the nascent nationalism. Consequently, there began a search for an entirely
American trend in literature which could be effectively used to portray the ideals.

Since there was hardly any literary output in America, considering how short its history had been, a new trend emerged that combined the Richardsonian and Romantic trends. This was named the American Romantic or American Gothic. Through this form, a reconciliation was sought between various conflicting notions that faced the American mind, at the turn of the eighteenth century and for many decades well into the nineteenth. The American had been and still was, at this point of history unable to reconcile himself with the myth of the American Adam in the New World garden of Eden and the reality that this Adam had lost his innocence; he had killed, enslaved and dispossessed others. The Gothic form, which explores the dark recesses of the human mind, became an appropriate mode for expressing this dichotomy. Regarding the use of the Gothic form in American literature, Leslie A. Fiedler observes in *Love and Death in the American Novel*:

... in the United States ... special guilts awaited projection in the gothic form. A dream of innocence had sent Europeans ... to build a new society immune to ... the past ... But the slaughter of the Indians ... and the abominations of the slave trade ... provided ... evidence that evil... had ... stayed alive in the human heart.12

In a sense, the American gothic form was the unfolding of the problem that the American had faced ever since he came to the new land. The image of the "heathen" or 'savage' in the form of the American Indian and the coloured man, he himself had transported from the shores of America, began to play on the psyche as symbols of guilt, hatred, fear and other emotions.

The Richardsonian novel had used the seducer to be the corruptive force on the innocent and pure maiden whereas the Romantic novel used the temptress as the dark maiden and antithesis of the pure maiden, as the real culprit for corrupting the protagonist's intentions and leading him towards evil. Whereas the Richardsonian novel viewed the heroine the saviour of men, the Romantic novel viewed the protagonist as scuttling between the two stereotypes - the 'fair' maiden and the 'dark' lady.

As mentioned earlier, the 'dark' colour was associated with whatever was sinister or evil in human beings. Similarly, the fair colour was associated with whatever was pious, virtuous or innocent in human beings. This was transported to the literary canvas by the American novelists specially of the nineteenth century through the use of the American romance in the form of women as symbols representing contrasting factors. The women, as symbolic representations, took the form of 'fair' and 'dark' maidens or ladies whose
portrayal was woven round the main male character or the protagonist. These pairs of women were used to project different pairs of polarities such as good and evil, old and new, White and Red racially, Religion and Science, Religious bigotry and Liberalism, Agrarianism and Industrialization, Innocence and Experience, and so on. In other words, Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville, used the American Gothic or Romantic form with the 'fair' and 'dark' women contrast to project their own dilemmas. One common factor that the three have, is the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant or WASP notion of a fair maiden, the 'dark' being of any other racial origin or mixed blood. Also, the 'fair' woman is always a virgin, whereas the 'dark' one is some times represented as married or some times on the verge of marriage.

The present study aims at showing how the pair of 'fair' and 'dark' women was utilized by Cooper in his Leatherstocking Tales, by Hawthorne in his four major novels, The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun, and by Melville in Mardi and A Voyage Thither and Pierre or the Ambiguities.

This thesis aims at showing that all these three novelists have used the 'fair'-'dark' contrast and that they have done so to express their dilemmas, that because it was difficult for them to resolve their dilemmas, they
kept oscillating between the one and the other thus giving the impression of an ambivalence towards their women characters whom they are using as vehicles of their dilemmas.

Though an ambivalence towards women is a common factor in all the three novelists, they used the fair - dark pair of women to project various polarities. Cooper projected his dilemma between myth and reality - the myth that America was a virgin land and full of opportunities for prosperity - a garden of Eden; the reality that America was peopled already by the American Indians and that the immigrants had to encounter them on two planes - physical and moral. These polarities came out in the form of Anglo-Saxon and American Indian races or Pioneering Agrarianism and Urban Industrialization, Christianity and Paganism, the 'civilized' and 'heathen', the Old World Past and the New World Present.

For Hawthorne, the dilemma lay in trying to reconcile the Puritan Past with the Enlightened present, emphasizing reason, Religious conservatism with Secular liberalism, Aristocracy with Plebianism. European experience with American innocence, the past steeped in orthodoxy and the present which strove for equality and tried to break the barriers of superstition and rigidity.

Melville used this 'fair'-'dark' contrast to project
these American romantic novels sought to represent turned out to be not what could constitute a maternal ideal but merely a projection of the authors’ unconscious preoccupations.

To sum up, the ambivalence towards women is due to the following factors:

* Women cannot be stereotyped as completely evil or completely good in the allegorical sense or Eve the temptress and Mary the mother of Christ or even as Eve before and after the Fall. Even the notion of Old World Eve and New World Eve cannot be used as models because these are all merely mythical characters and cannot be compared to human representations, even fictional. Moreover, the fair heroine is always the WASP stereotype as also a 'sexless blonde'. The dark heroines are either married or on the verge of marriage.

* The contrasting polarities projected appear distinctly in two heroines or in the same heroine so that it is not clear which of the two qualities 'good' or 'evil', the novelist is trying to portray.

* The roles assigned to the heroines with respect to the protagonist do not coincide with the socially accepted norms, as in Melville’s *Pierre*. 
The 'good' and 'evil' or 'dark' and 'fair' contrasts often stand for the novelists' own inner conflicting views and so prove ambivalent.

The women portrayed as 'dark' and 'fair' by the novelists are merely two stereotypes that arise out of archetypes and can at best be representations of imaginary characters portrayed on the basis of notions. This portrayal shows the ambivalence towards women based on the novelists' inability to come face to face with the reality of the times.

Finally from the Semiotic point of view, the symbols that signify the 'fair' and 'dark' women cannot hold the same connotation for the reader as the novelist, depending on interpretative differences, cultural differences as well as the differences based on time.

This thesis aims to analyze the notions about approaches to women as portrayed in the selected novels of Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville, approaches that suggest an ambivalent attitude towards women. My purpose is not to take a feminist view but to investigate the factors underlying this ambivalence in the writings of the above-mentioned authors.