



‘What, then, is the American, this new man?’

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When we last met, I described the American War of Independence, which took place from 1775 to 1783. One of its consequences was the tearing apart of the concept as well as the reality of a transatlantic British identity. Its loss required that something be put in its place. This was particularly necessary for the young American Republic. But what was this new identity? Americans had their own ideas, but they had other things to do than to worry about whom or what they really were. It was the British who were curious, and who, once the final war between the United States and Great Britain, the War of 1812, was over, began to tour America, and to write about what they had found. Some Americans made the reverse journey, although not nearly as many, and they, too, described their experiences. By the end of the nineteenth century, there had been hundreds of these travel books published. I have now read a rather large number of them, and from them I have tried to tease out what each thought about the other. Nowadays, we talk about national identity; then, they spoke of national character. More often than not, these British did not like what they found; more often than not, these Americans did.

My title comes from *Letters From an American Farmer*, first published in England in 1782. The author was J. Hector St John Crèvecoeur, a French emigrant who farmed for a few years in New York state, before fleeing back to France at the outbreak of the American Revolution, unable to take sides. Once the war was over, this was a question all thinking Europeans asked: what was an American? This was the first new nation - it had not evolved, it had been created. It was no longer part of the British Empire, so its citizens were not Britons. But: what was an American? According to Crèvecoeur, 'he is an American, who, leaving behind him all his antient [sic] prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds.' In the new United States, 'individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.' In sum, 'the American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions.'

And so, Europeans wanted to know, what were these principles, ideas and opinions? How did Americans think, look, act? In one sense, America was tacked onto the usual itinerary of the Grand Tour. During the eighteenth century, Britons young and old toured around Europe, in particular Rome, Florence and Naples, and Paris, with the more intellectual or more adventurous also visiting Berlin or travelling over the Swiss Alps. Some went for the landscape or the antiquities; others - and especially the young men - wished to gain sophistication and polish; most were keen to ascertain the character of the Italians, the French, or the Germans. In the same manner, in the nineteenth century, travellers came to the United States to marvel at the landscape, to study the political and social systems, to see how people lived and what they were like. This evening, I will consider five books which resulted from these travels. I will also look at four written by Americans in Britain, just to see how and why the picture differs.

The classic treatment of the subject of the United States, the one by which all others are measured, was not even written by an Englishman. This was *Democracy in America*, written by the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, and published in two volumes in 1835 and 1840. Tocqueville, an aristocratic young administrator who was disillusioned with the outcome of the Revolution in France, went to America in 1831

for ten months to study, as it were, 'the future in the present'. To do so, he made a wide sweep from Newport, Rhode Island to Boston, down to New Orleans, over to Macon, Georgia and up to Michigan, which was then on the very edge of civilisation. Indeed, he spent a good proportion of his time in the frontier area, where individualism was certainly at its rawest. He wanted to see for himself the effects of this individualism, of freedom and equality, the better to understand their future in Europe.

The context for him was that 'the social state of the Americans is eminently democratic. It has had this character since the birth of the colonies; it has it even more in our day.' His viewpoint was that of the aristocrat viewing an egalitarian society, and he made observations which in one way or another would repeatedly pop up in other accounts. Because there was little concern for social distinctions, no one dressed very well - the women dressed at 8am and remained in the same dress all day! The sequence of foods at dinner was barbaric. There was no feeling for language and their orators were pompous. Wealth, not birth, was everything, and thus what social distinctions there were could be overturned; indeed, 'the whole of society seems to have melted into a middle class', and if there were continuing themes over the century, one was the boring, conformist, religious nature of the American middle class. Furthermore, everything changed extremely rapidly: where one lived - new land? new life? just up stakes and move further west or to the city. Tired of being a farmer? Try being a merchant. Begin as a ploughboy, end as a land speculator. There was little stability and few roots. There were family ties, but in the end, individualism was more important.

And yet - the young Republic was saved from the worst threat, which was to be driven by greed and selfish individualism, by its genuine concern for the liberty of others and for the well-being of the community. As he wrote, he had 'often seen Americans make real sacrifices for the common good....I have noticed a hundred cases which, when help was needed, they hardly ever failed to give each other trusty support.' In short, if individualism is not absolute, if it has room for the rights of others, for others' individualism, if you will, liberty may triumph. In the United States, it had done so. This is helped by the fact that Americans are not ideological: 'In America, personalities are everything, principles are insignificant', and thus the citizenry are not riven by ideological quarrels. He was to die before the Civil War began in 1861. Another lubricant of social relations was religion: within a month of his arrival in the US, Tocquville was musing that he had 'never...been so conscious of the influence of religion on the morals and the social and political state of a nation.' In France during the Revolution, freedom and religion had been on opposite sides of the barricades; here in the US, they were 'intimately united'.

Finally, and crucially, private and public interests are easily reconciled, because of the genius of Americans for forming associations. As he wrote, 'Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations...Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to distribute books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; in this manner they found hospitals, prisons, and schools.' Living, as most did, in small and local communities, Americans constantly came into contact with one another in circumstances which forced them to help one another - you help me build my barn and I'll help you build yours; we need a school, so we'll all build one together; and - let's form a posse to get those outlaws.

Tocqueville was a perspicacious commentator. Some of his comments about American society have resonance today. Fundamentally, he decided that the Republic was an experiment which was working, and in the direction in which European society would in due course develop. And more: here is a final quotation from *Democracy in America* which highlights Tocqueville's predictive powers. This was popular a decade or so ago amongst writers on the Cold War: 'There are two great peoples on the earth today who, starting from different points, seem to advance toward the same goal: these are the Russians and the Anglo-Americans. Both have grown larger in obscurity; and while men's regards were occupied elsewhere, they have suddenly taken their place in the first rank of nations, and the world has learned of their birth and their greatness almost at the same time. All other peoples appear to have nearly reached the limits that nature has drawn and to have nothing more to do than to preserve themselves; but these are growing;...Their point of departure is different, their ways are diverse; nonetheless, each of them seems called by a secret design of Providence to hold the destinies of half the world in its hands one day.'

Tocqueville's first months in America coincided with the final months of a visit by a very different sort of traveller, Mrs Frances Trollope, mother of the more famous Anthony. She was the redoubtable wife of a somewhat ineffectual husband, who was a querulous and failing lawyer. With the family teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, in late 1827 she took three of her children and a young French artist and sailed to America, partly to recoup their fortunes. They landed in New Orleans and sailed up the Mississippi River, a boring and uncomfortable journey. She set up house and shop in the booming frontier town of Cincinnati, Ohio. Illness, scandal and business failure combined to drive them out of Cincinnati, and they travelled back to the east, visiting Virginia, Baltimore, Washington, the Hudson Valley and Niagara Falls, before returning to England in the summer of 1831. Upon reaching home, she turned the saga into a book, *The Domestic Manners of the Americans*, which was published in two volumes in 1832.

In one respect, Mrs Trollope gave her game away in her Introduction: 'She leaves', she wrote, 'to abler pens the more ambitious task of commenting on the democratic form of the American government; while, by describing, faithfully, the daily aspect of ordinary life, she has endeavoured to show how greatly the advantage is on the side of those who are governed by the few, instead of the many. The chief object she has had in view is to encourage her countrymen to hold fast by a constitution that ensures all the blessings which flow from established habits and solid principles. If they forego these, they will incur the fearful risk of breaking up their repose by introducing the jarring tumult and universal degradation which invariably follow the wild scheme of placing all the power of the State in the hands of the populace.' She was a Tory, and as such she was arguing against the passage of the 1832 Reform Bill, which began the widening of the franchise in Britain. What she described was the result of such folly.

What she most hated was the lack of deference, the assumption of equality. She was mortified at having to share a coach; she disliked shopkeepers dressing and acting as though they were aristocrats at a ball; she found the rude indifference of American children repellent; while as for the demeanour of a self-defined 'lady' in Virginia, 'To say she addressed us in a tone of equality, will give no adequate idea of her manner; I am persuaded that no misgiving on the subject ever entered her head.' Not surprisingly, she thoroughly detested the incessant, remorseless and nearly universal habit of chewing tobacco and then spitting. On the frontier, it was apparently the custom for people to wander into their neighbour's house, without being invited, and to stay for what seemed to be hours; Mrs Trollope did not like this. Early on in her travels, she decided that the greatest difference between England and the US was the lack of refinement in the latter; by now, she begins to sound like one of Jane Austen's less attractive characters. 'Strong, indeed', she wrote, 'must be the love of equality in an English breast, if it can survive a tour through the Union.'

Like Tocqueville, she comments on how religious the Americans were - she attended some alarming evangelical religious meetings. But whilst he saw religion as helping to knit the population together, she emphasised its unbridled and ignorant nature, lamenting that 'I believe I am sufficiently tolerant; but this does not prevent my seeing that the object of all religious observances is better obtained, when the government of the church is confided to the wisdom and experience of the most venerated among the people, than when it is placed in the hands of every tinker and tailor who chooses to claim a share in it.'

And like religion, like politics. Where Tocqueville saw the force of democratic politics moderated by community spirit, she saw only corruption, ignorance, and lack of ability and stability. As she wrote, with mounting hostility, 'The small patrician band is a race apart; they live with each other, and for each other; mix wondrously little with the high matters of state, which they seem to leave rather supinely to their tailors and tinkers,...I speak not of these, but of the population generally, as seen in town and country, among the rich and the poor, in the slave states and the free states. I do not like them. I do not like their principles, I do not like their manners, I do not like their opinions.' She then adds, 'Both as a woman, and as a stranger, it might be unseemly for me to say that I do not like their government, and therefore I will not say so.'

The book sold thousands on both sides of the Atlantic. For the British, it confirmed their suspicions that by winning independence from the Mother Country, the Americans had gone astray. The Americans hated this

implication, and, just possibly, they hated the fact that in many cases she was telling the truth. After all, she had not just visited America: she had actually lived there for three years. The Englishman E.T. Coke wrote from New York that 'the commotion it created amongst the good citizens is truly remarkable....At every table d'hôte, on board of every steam-boat, in every stage-coach, and in all societies, the first question was, "Have you read Mrs Trollope?"' As an interesting footnote, her son Anthony published his own two volumes, *North America*, in 1862. In his Introduction, he wrote that 'Thirty years ago my mother wrote a book about the Americans, to which I believe I may allude as a well known and successful work without being guilty of any undue family conceit. This was essentially a woman's book. She saw with a woman's keen eye, and described with a woman's light but graphic pen, the social defects and absurdities which our near relatives had adopted into their domestic life....But she did not regard it as part of her work to dilate on the nature and operation of those political arrangements which had produced the social absurdities which she saw, or to explain that though such absurdities were the natural result of those arrangements in their newness, the defects would certainly pass away, while the political arrangements, if good, would remain. Such a work is fitter for a man than for a woman.' Who now reads it?

Five years later another intrepid British woman, Harriet Martineau, published her two volumes on the United States, entitled *Society in America*. Totally deaf and virtually devoid of the senses of smell and taste, but a widely famous writer of tales of political economy, in 1834 at the age of thirty-two she set off across the Atlantic. She made a familiar journey - beginning with New York, the Hudson Valley and Niagara, she went thence to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Virginia, across to New Orleans, up the Mississippi to Cincinnati - five years after Mrs Trollope had left it - back to Virginia by boat, up to New England, back to Ohio, then to New York and home two years after setting out. Whilst Mrs Trollope had been keen on the landscape, Miss Martineau was much more interested in the social and political systems. She wanted to compare this society with the ideals set out by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence.

She was a good traveller. She didn't grumble about delays or lack of comforts, she enjoyed the children - she did not find them rude and indifferent, as had Mrs Trollope - and she found many interesting people with whom to talk - or at whom to talk, since she was rather given to garrulity. What she increasingly hated was slavery, believing that it was degrading to master and slave alike; in fact, the dislike of slavery was a common trope amongst British visitors, including Mrs Trollope. At first Miss Martineau held back from denouncing it, since she felt that, as a visitor, she ought not to comment. But this reticence soon gave way, and she came out as an abolitionist, to the extent that she was even threatened with lynching. In certain parts of the country, such as New England, she spoke with many of the converted, and these remained friends even after her return to Britain.

But how did she answer her question? She investigated thoroughly and she wrote at length. She wanted to find the US the hope of the future, that the evils she discovered, pre-eminently that of slavery, were temporary. She wrote that 'The striking effect upon a stranger of witnessing, for the first time, the absence of poverty, of gross ignorance, of all servility, of all insolence of manner, cannot be exaggerated in description. I had seen every man in the towns an independent citizen; every man in the country a land-owner. I had seen that the villages had their newspapers, the factory girls their libraries. I had witnessed the controversies between candidates for office on some difficult subjects, of which the people were to be the judges.' One can only wonder whether Mrs Trollope and Miss Martineau had visited the same country. Of course, such a rational woman as Miss Martineau had to mention a few small criticisms: she found the general health of Americans poor, possibly because their rooms were too hot and their baths too few. They did have their faults, particularly their great terror of opinion along with a continual demand for flattery. She found the conditions of both Indians and slaves a source of pity and the condition of women, powerless as they were, atrocious.

Need I say that the Americans hated and resented her book, even as the English admired it? She said that she didn't mind, and she remained optimistic about American developments. But the Civil War dimmed her enthusiasm, and the aftermath, with its political and economic corruption, and its crushing of the hopes of the newly-freed slaves, nearly destroyed it. Her last recorded words on America were, 'I am, like many

others, almost in despair for the great Republic.'

Another visitor a decade later also left England expecting to like America. This was Charles Dickens, and, as he said afterwards, his 'young enthusiasm' was 'anything but prepared' for what he found and for his subsequent disillusion. As he later wrote, 'no stranger could have set foot upon those shores with a feeling of livelier interest in the country, and stronger faith in it.' He was only twenty-nine when he went to America. He had written five novels in five years, and he wanted new experiences; he also planned to write an account of his trip, but he was clever enough not to reveal this to his American friends. Although he hardly expected the New Jerusalem, as an ardent radical at home, concerned for the plight of the poor and other social evils - think of *Oliver Twist* - he certainly expected to find that they did these things better in the US. And, not unexpectedly, he wanted to be lionised, as his American friends promised that he would be. He certainly was at first, and Dickens returned the compliment. But first his perceptions, and then his ideas, changed.

The primary causes seem to have been firstly, the lack of international copyright protection, and secondly, the scurrility of the newspapers. The US had refused to make a reciprocal agreement with Britain, by which each other's authors could claim royalties in the other country. Thus, Americans read and loved Dickens, but refused to pay him for it. He complained publicly, and many of the newspapers, who had been amongst those who had effectively stolen his work, retaliated with vigour. He was attacked in print, and lies printed about him. Furthermore, the adulation began to pall, in particular when his and his wife's privacy was invaded, with, for example, crowds peering through the windows whilst they were dressing.

By the time they returned home, there was much about America that he intensely disliked. This became very obvious when he published his *American Notes* in 1842, and then the novel based on those notes, *Martin Chuzzlewit* - Americans hardly knew which version they disliked the more. Tobacco-chewing and spitting - mentioned by all British travellers - appeared, as did picking one's teeth in public, bolting one's food, the men's neglecting to change their linen, and wearing their hats indoors, also mentioned by Mrs Trollope. He particularly disliked those aspects of America which he attributed to money-grasping. Americans, Dickens wrote, admired a man who was 'smart', who got ahead whether or not he did it honestly. An American was an economic animal. (It is worth noting that a later writer, W.E. Adams, wrote in *Our American Cousins*, published in 1883, that things changed so quickly in America that 'many of the descriptions which Dickens gave to the public in his *American Notes*... are now totally inaccurate.') Dickens himself later modified his earlier views to the extent that in his lecture tour during the winter of 1867-68, he could pay tribute to the 'amazing changes' he had observed. But glad confident morning never came again.

By the 1860s it was commonplace for British journalists to travel to America and write it up. Indeed, there were hundreds of books about America written by the generality of British travellers and residents, but I want to mention only one more and this because of its quality. This is James Bryce's *The American Commonwealth*, which was published in 1888, and is the only book of this type which can bear comparison with Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* of fifty years before. Bryce was a brilliant academic and sometime Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford; he was a Liberal politician with a seat in Gladstone's Cabinet; and he was British Ambassador to the United States from 1907 to 1913. As a young man in 1870, he made the first of three trips to the US, with the object of studying American constitutional government. He travelled to Chicago by railroad, where, after studying the co-educational system, he became a convinced supporter of education for girls. He also retained affection for the city. He travelled up the Mississippi, and then returned to New York, where he watched city government and politics in action; this convinced him that 'Hardly anyone seems to think any principle is at stake in this context; it is simply [a struggle] for place and power.' Yet, his impressions of America, while mixed, were on the whole favourable.

It was on his second journey to America in 1881, when he already held the chair in law at Oxford, that the idea of a major work on American democracy began to take shape. He made a further trip in 1883 to collect more material and to talk with other scholars, state and federal officials, newspaper editors, lawyers and others, and then wrote his book, which ranged over every aspect of American society, and which

quickly became a classic. One notable characteristic of the book is that Bryce did not allow his distaste for certain aspects, such as the monotony of American cities, to interfere with his objective purpose. This is not to say that he refrained from comment on many American customs and mores: he was astounded at the American love, almost worship, of bigness for its own sake, at a tendency 'to seek truth only in the voice of the majority, to mistake prosperity for greatness.' He joined other writers in emphasising American mobility, commenting that 'they are almost nomadic', and that their loyalty was not to a locality, but to institutions. (Other writers referred to 'the cult of the Constitution'.) Bryce's major criticism was directed at the political bosses and machine politicians who controlled city administrations, writing that 'There is no denying that the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States....The faults of the State governments are insignificant compared with the extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement which mark the administrations of most of the great cities.' But the implication of this comment was that the remainder of the political system worked, in its own peculiar manner.

This is a very small sample of the hundreds of books written during the nineteenth century by the British on America and the Americans. There is a rough trajectory here. In the earlier years, the English were ignorant of the US, and a bit proud of the fact. The Americans had wandered off from their care, and therefore no further attention need be paid to them. So the visitor came unprepared for what he or she was to see. The reaction was primarily one of shock, at the fact that it was all so un-English. The British resonated with condescension, reinforced by an automatic assumption of superiority to the social values and cultural life of America. They recoiled from the assertive egalitarianism: William Austin, an American who resided in London from 1802 to 1803 whilst eating his dinners at Lincoln's Inn, remarked in a letter that 'The English people are more civil than ours... [Americans] seem to carry the Declaration of Independence in their pockets, and regard the least degree of urbanity which may possibly be construed into obsequiousness, a breach of the constitution.' The British were on the whole repulsed by the lack of refinement and of social distinctions which met them in America, from the oft-stated assumptions of Americans that they could do as they liked because they were free, from the invasive nature of American curiosity, from the uniformity of American culture. These Americans were essentially foreigners to the visiting British.

Over the century, however, views became more favourable. First of all, Americans did become more 'civilised' within the meaning of the British act - most men ceased to spit in public, for one thing. Secondly, a wealthy social elite had emerged, who tended to visit Europe and absorb some of their customs and mores. There was also increased British traffic to the US and more specifically to the West, a particularly favourite place to visit for the younger sons of the gentry and aristocracy. On another plane, it was also the case that increased international tension, and the concomitant perceived threats to the British Empire, caused many British to see the Americans in a new light. The Americans were increasingly powerful, and the two countries were, after all, related - our near relatives, according to Anthony Trollope, American cousins according to W.E. Adams - and war between them was becoming unthinkable: it would be in the nature of a civil war. The concept of the 'special relationship' was gradually developing.

What about traffic in the other direction? There was much less of it, for one thing, and it was of a different sort. The British went to the United States as to a foreign land, in a spirit of adventure. Many, if not most, Americans came to Britain in a spirit of pilgrimage, particularly an historical and literary pilgrimage, in a conscious return home. Many of those who wrote about their travels were writers themselves, professional men, scholars, or diplomats - in other words, members of the professional and intellectual classes. There were, of course, others - The Letters of an American Lady or an American businessman, or the journals of a landscape gardener who walked over England looking at noblemen's parks. But for this evening, I want briefly to look at four American authors who wrote about Britain.

Washington Irving was physically delicate, and although he trained as a lawyer, his family allowed him a life as a man of letters and diplomat. He had written a number of essays and a book before his voyage to Europe in 1815, which had been occasioned by the death of his fiancée; he remained in Europe for seventeen years, accepting a post in the US embassy in Madrid for financial reasons. Before travelling to Spain, however, he travelled around England. In 1820 he published in England his best-known book, The

Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent., known not by this title, but containing his two most famous sketches, those of Rip Van Winkle, and of 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow'. In the nineteenth century, however, his most influential essay, which also appeared in *The Sketch Book*, was 'Stratford-on-Avon', written in the whimsical but slightly ponderous style of his narrator. The result was both comic and ironic. Crayon followed the well-established routines of visitors to Stratford: he looked for the names of the great amongst the mass of those scribbled on the whitewashed walls of Shakespeare's house; and he sat on Shakespeare's chair, but commented that 'whether this be done with the hope of imbibing any of the inspiration of the bard I am at loss to say.'

Americans tended to call Shakespeare the Bard. Indeed, the American tourist went to Stratford, as Irving wrote, 'on a poetical pilgrimage'; more than that, it has been claimed, 'the tourist went on a national mission to establish for himself and for the world that Shakespeare belonged to America, that Shakespeare was America's national bard, as much as he was England's.' As a footnote, the British only began to pay real attention to Shakespeare combined with Stratford when the Germans began to refer to him as *unser Shakespeare*. Crayon's essay was particularly important because it was probably read by every American traveller to Stratford; this was because upon publication, *The Sketch Book* was widely praised in England, and this made it widely read in the US.

It was not only Shakespeare who attracted the educated tourist: it was all of English literature. What is important here is that these Americans claimed English literature for their own. (As a short autobiographical digression, when I was a secondary school pupil in California, we had a year of English literature along with a year of American literature, and I can remember no comment which emphasised that the English literature was foreign.) One who tried to argue against this was Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Transcendentalist philosopher and essayist, who made two long visits to England, in 1832 and 1847. In his first visit, he sought out Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, writing of Wordsworth that 'He has written longer than he was inspired.' He admitted that 'Every book we read, every biography, play, romance, in whatever form, is still English history and manners', but he asserted that America had to develop her own modes of thought, her own literary culture. Tocqueville had earlier written that the reason there were no writers in America was because freedom of opinion did not exist, a circumstance which he attributed to the tyranny of the majority in a democracy.

In his *English Traits*, published in 1856, Emerson ventured far beyond Britain's literary dominance in the English-speaking world. Instead, he attempted to analyse Great Britain and the British by approaching them from various vantage points. 'The problem of the traveller landing at Liverpool', he wrote, 'is, Why England is England? What are the elements of power which the English hold over other nations? If there be one test of national genius universally accepted, it is success; and if there be one successful country in the universe for the last millennium, that country is England.'

He went on: 'A wise traveller will naturally choose to visit the best of actual nations; and an American has more reasons than another to draw him to Britain. In all that is done or begun by the Americans towards right thinking or practice, we are met by a civilization already settled and overpowering. The culture of the day, the thoughts and aims of men, are English thoughts and aims...The practical common-sense of modern society, the utilitarian direction which labour, laws, opinion, religion take, is the natural genius of the British mind...The American is only the continuation of the English genius into new conditions, more or less propitious.'

He then sets out to look more closely at the elements which make up this English genius. There are certain things he emphasises. One was the importance of private life as opposed to public life. The French noble lived at court, when there was one; the English aristocrat preferred to live on his estate. This dedication to the home extended down the social scale: the Englishman dearly loved his house, and spared no expense on it, gardening outside and decorating within - 'Tis a passion which survives all others, to deck and improve it.' The private man 'keeps his promises, never so trivial'. 'To be king of their word', he states, is their pride.'...Furthermore, 'An Englishman understates, avoids the superlative, and checks himself in

compliments'. He emphasised the role of English stolidity, combined with their brute force and power, in their security and stability; he also claimed that 'The stability of England is the security of the modern world.' The 'English stand for liberty', and the genius of English society writ large is that private life has the place of honour. And so does work: even then, according to Emerson, the Englishman worked three times as many hours in a year as any other European. The result was the wealth of England, which, he argued, was a main fact of modern history. It was the foundation of British power.

Emerson was not blind to the many faults of the English, citing the extensive poverty, for example, but, nevertheless, he remained an Anglophile. But he was an American first, as he made clear: 'I saw everywhere [in England] proofs of sense and spirit, and success of every sort: I like the people: they are as good as they are handsome; they have everything, and can do everything: but meantime, I surely know, that, as soon as I return to Massachusetts, I shall lapse at once into the feeling, which the geography of America inevitably inspires, that we play the game with immense advantage; that there and not here is the seat and centre of the British race; and that no skill or activity can long compete with the prodigious natural advantages of that country, in the hands of the same race; and that England, an old and exhausted island, must one day be contented, like other parents, to be strong only in her children.' 'But', he adds, 'this is a proposition which no Englishman of whatever condition can easily entertain.'

A more famous American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, also spent some time in England. Author of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, from 1853 to 1857 he was the American Consul in Liverpool. This was an interesting vantage point, because ships from America docked in Liverpool, and he had a constant stream of American visitors, more often than not American seamen, and thus every opportunity to compare the two peoples. If I tell you that the name of his book of travels is *Our Old Home*, you will immediately grasp his theme. It is worth noting, however, that this book is based on his English Notebooks, a much more acerbic approach to his stay there, and passages from which were only published after his death. As an author himself, Hawthorne was drawn to other authors, but in his case the pilgrimage was not made to Stratford, although of course he visited it, but to Westminster Abbey and Poets' Corner. Even so, it was not Poets' Corner which repeatedly drew him: rather, it was the Abbey itself, the beauty of which continued to overwhelm and inspire him. His writing up of his experience in *Our Old Home* was the occasion for a disquisition on time, history, kingship, poetry and beauty. In particular, he tried to convey in his writings the beauty and grandeur, the special quality, of Gothic architecture, which did not exist at home.

I want finally to turn to Henry James, one of the most famous of all Americans in England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. James came from a distinguished family - his grandfather had been one of the first millionaires in America - and he grew up equally in the United States and Europe. He always wrote, and at twenty-one, he published his first short story. In his twenties he made his first independent trip to Europe, and this apparently was the seed of his fascination with the theme of the American in Europe. In 1875 he moved to Europe, first to Paris and then, in 1875, to England, where he lived for the rest of his life. His explanation for this was not that he was anti-American; rather, he felt that American culture was not yet developed enough to support, intellectually rather than financially, a writer. He remained an American until the year before his death in 1916, when, as a sign of his support of Britain during the First World War, he took British citizenship.

James is different from the other authors mentioned, in that his approach to, and feelings about, the American abroad are primarily expressed in fictional form. His theme gradually developed into one focusing on the international confrontation of American and European civilisation; it also evolved from the idea of the American innocent abroad meeting evil to one of recognition that innocence can, all unawares, cause evil in others. Nevertheless, he did put together the travel essays of thirty years, the first of which was written in 1872, into a volume called *English Hours*. In this he conveyed the feeling that the essence of England could be found in her landscape, in a coincidence of time and place which produced an emotion which could only be termed transcendental. As he wrote in a letter to his father, 'The other afternoon I trudged over to Worcester - thro' a region so thick-sown with good old English "effects" - with elm-scattered meadows and sheep-cropped commons and ivy-smothered dwellings of small gentility, and high-gabled,

heavy-timbered, broken-plastered farm-houses and stiles leading to delicious meadow footpaths and lodge-gates leading to far-off manors - with all things suggestive of the opening chapters of half-remembered novels, devoured in my infancy - that I felt as if I were pressing all England to my soul.'

James shared with other American visitors the feeling of the strong link in England between landscape and literature, one source of the lure of Stratford, and of Warwickshire in general. This landscape often brought a shock of recognition to these visitors: through family ties, or inclination during the Revolution, or the tales and poetry of England which they had learned, many felt that they had come home. Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, wrote in Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands that 'Say what you will, an American, particularly a New Englander, can never approach the old country without a kind of thrill and pulsation of kindred... Our very life-blood is English life-blood. It is Anglo-Saxon vigour that is spreading our country from Atlantic to Pacific.' Can there be a better example of an hereditary identification with England?

In all of these, and in many other, books of travels during the nineteenth century, the authors have in common the conviction that they have ascertained, and then revealed to others, the key to the essence of the American and America, of the Briton and Great Britain. But what is also clear is that many of them also began to define themselves against the other: if an American is not a Briton, what is an American? Emerson returns to this theme time and again in English Traits, but he was, and indeed is, not alone - think of the numerous books which have been published over the past year explaining why America is different from Britain. Yet, they all continue to visit. And in my next lecture, on the 2nd of March, I will look at visitors with an even more specific end in view: at American heiresses in search of a title, and at the war brides, who adopted a new life.

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