

Americans All

"Of Plymouth Rock and Jamestown and Ellis Island"; or,
Ethnic Literature and Some Redefinitions of "America"

by [Werner Sollors](#)

[1]

It is well known that modern geographers named the New World "America" in honor of the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Martin Waldseemüller's map of 1507 is considered the first instance of the word; the mapmaker argued that since Asia and Europe had received their names from women no one could object to the naming of the new continent after a man (Bitterli 43). The term "American" referred to the original inhabitants, or Indians; in Puritan New England, however, it was increasingly adopted to refer to the British colonists, as when Nathaniel Ward, in 1647, spoke of an "American Creed"--and meant the religious beliefs of the English settlers. In the American Revolution the term was used to emphasize less the British origin than the new make-up of the settler population of the United States.

In Crèvecoeur's famous answer to the question "What is an American?" in the third of his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) he singled out "that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country" (Crèvecoeur 1957, 39). For Crèvecoeur {right}, the term "American" referred to the ethnic diversity of at least the white colonists in the New World. Initially applied to the Indians, then taken on by the British settlers, by 1900 the term "American" had undoubtedly become problematic. In 1907 Henry James asked:



Who and what is an alien . . . in a country peopled from the first under the jealous eye of history? --peopled, that is, by migrations at once extremely recent, perfectly traceable and urgently required. . . . Which is the American . . . --which is not the alien, over a large part of the country at least, and where does one put a finger on the dividing line . . . ?

(James 1968, 124)

"American" could mean all sorts of things: the ethnic dividing line could be drawn on linguistic or religious grounds, making the English language and a certain form of protestantism touchstones of America. Even the Americanness of the first group of people called "Americans" could now become questionable. Thus the sociologist Robert Park told the story of an old lady who visited the Indian village at the World's Fair and, "moved to speak a friendly word to one of

these aborigines," actually asked: "How do you like our country?" (Park 1934 in Johnson 1974, xxi.) More recently, the hero of Maxine Hong Kingston's novel *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, the Chinese-American beatnik tellingly named Wittman Ah Sing, mentions the same question as one that white Americans should never ask him (Kingston 1989, 317). Gish Jen, the author of the novel *Typical American* (1992) reports in a work-in-progress the question "Where are you from?"--backed up by "Where are you from from?" when she answers "America" to the first one.

At the center of the debates about the nature and future of America was the problem of ethnic heterogeneity: how inclusive and how exclusive could "America" be? An extreme position was taken by the political journalist **David Goodman Croly**, who had coined the word "miscegenation" in 1863, was a Democratic campaign biographer, and also the father of the New Republic's founder Herbert Croly. In 1888, David Croly published *Glimpses of the Future, Suggestions as to the Drift of Things*. Contemplating the future American, Croly's mouthpiece "Sir Oracle" makes the following prophecy:

We can absorb the Dominion . . . for the Canadians are of our own race . . . but Mexico, Central America, the Sandwich Islands, and the West India Islands will involve governments which cannot be democratic. We will never confer the right of suffrage upon the blacks, the mongrels of Mexico or Central America, or the Hawaiians. . . . I presume the race of mulattoes is dying out. . . . The white race is dominant and will keep their position, no matter how numerous the negroes may become.
(Croly 1888, 22-24; see Kaplan 1949)

For Croly "American" meant "white"--hence non-white and mixed races were not considered "absorbable" or eligible for full citizenship rights. Croly himself was an Irish immigrant but did not wish to extend Americanness to non-whites; and his use of the term "mongrel" makes clear his aversion to racial mixing. Of all the fault lines, "race" (or, more precisely, the decision whether a person was "white" and thereby a potential American or "non-white", hence "non-absorbable") has perhaps remained the deepest ethnic boundary.

Liberal reformers could have a different sense of "America." The old-stock newspaper editor **Hamilton Holt**, for example, ran a series of first-person singular accounts by people of many racial and ethnic backgrounds in *The Independent*. When he published sixteen of those "lifelets" in book form in 1906, he chose the programmatic title **The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans: As Told by Themselves**, using the elastic term "American" to refer to a very broad spectrum of the populace: Rocco Corresca, an Italian bootblack; Sadie Frowne, a Jewish sweatshop worker from Poland; Amelia des Moulins, a French dressmaker; Ann, an Irish maid; Agnes M., a German nurse girl; Axel Jarlson, a Swedish farmer; a Syrian journalist, L. J. A.; Antanas Kaztauskis, a Lithuanian butcher; an anonymous Negro peon, a Japanese manservant, a Greek peddler, a midwestern farmer's wife, and a handicapped Southern Methodist minister; a Chinese laundryman and businessman, Lee Chew; Fomoaley Ponci, a foreign non-immigrant

Igorrote chief from the recently conquered Philippines who was on display at Coney Island; and an Indian, Ah-nen-la-de-ni. Holt includes everyone in his notion of the "American": Black, white, Indian, Asian, native-born, immigrant, refugee, temporary migrant, sojourner, men, women--people from all walks of life. The book is one of the most inclusive "American" texts early in the century, as the collection virtually transformed the inhabitants of the whole world into potential Americans. The contrast between Croly's exclusive and Holt's inclusive "America" was dramatic. On such a contested terrain, attempts at symbolizing the country had to yield contradictory results.

"**AMERICANS ALL!**" was the title of a poster designed by **Howard Chandler Christy** in 1917, used to promote Victory Liberty Loans, employment opportunities for soldiers, and other war efforts. It depicts a scantily clad young blond woman in front of an American flag, holding a laurel wreath under which an "honor roll" of ethnic names appears: Du Bois, Smith, O'Brien, Cejka, Haucke, Pappandrikopolous, Andrassi, Villotto, Levy, Turovich, Kowalski, Chriczanevicz, Knutson, and Gonzales--they were all to be Americans at a time when World War I made undivided loyalties mandatory. At first glance this may have seemed to constitute an invitation to foreigners who were thus honored to become eligible as Americans--in the vein of Holt's Undistinguished Americans. Yet the allegorical figure who accompanies this incorporation of various ethnic groups into "America" is not a Mulatto madonna with an Indian headdress--this is actually the way the new, oxidized bronze Statue of Liberty on top of the Washington Capitol appeared to Croly in his Miscegenation pamphlet of 1863 "as a symbol of the future American of this continent," "not white, symbolizing but one race, nor black typifying another, but a statue representing the composite race, whose sway will extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, from the Equator to the North Pole-- the Miscegens of the Future" (Croly 1863, 63-64)--but "the American girl," an English-looking white woman, not sturdy like the Statue of Liberty for which the Alsatian sculptor [Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's](#) mother {right} had posed (Gilder 1943, 17; Trachtenberg 1977, 60)--but with a glitzy Christy-style look.

As Martha Banta suggested, the poster did not simply honor ethnic diversity: Christy's image contains a double message as ethnics are asked to assimilate to an Anglo-Saxon norm that is constituted precisely in opposition to them. They are told to be "Mr. American" by conforming to something that they might never become physically. The representative American body of 1917 does not include their features, and their names sound like those of many Hollywood actors and actresses before they changed them into more palatable ones: from Betty Joan Perske to Lauren Bacall; from Dino Crocetti to Dean Martin; from Margarita Cansino to Rita Hayworth; or from Bernard Schwarz to Tony Curtis. Incidentally, most Hollywood performers have stopped camouflaging their ethnic names behind Anglicized ones; and an Anglicized name may now be an ironic comment on the old status quo--as when a transvestite appears under the name "Holly Woodlawn."

Christy's World War I poster could be read both inclusively (as in Holt's *Life Stories*) and exclusively (as in Croly's *Glimpses*); and it is interesting to consider how important the manipulation of such symbols can be for the establishment of a national identity as well as for various ethnic identities.

A very famous example is the Statue of Liberty. The dedication of the statue on 28 October 1886 inspired the aging political poet John Greenleaf Whittier--whose career had climaxed before the Civil War with his widely cited anti-slavery verse--to compose the poem "[The Bartholdi Statue](#)" (1886). [Whittier](#) stresses Franco-American liberty as an enlightening force, singing: "O France, the beautiful!" and concluding with the lines:

Shine far, shine free, a guiding light
To Reason's ways and Virtue's aim,
A lightning-flash the wretch to smite
Who shields his license with thy name!

Whittier thus presents the official "Franco-American" interpretation of the statue as advanced during the dedication ceremony, which included only very brief references to immigrants; yet the poet also celebrates the abolition of slavery as the realization of the dream of American liberty:

Unlike the shapes on Egypt's sands
Uplifted by the toil-worn slave,
On Freedom's soil with freemen's hands
We rear the symbol free hands gave.
(Whittier 1904, 295-96)

Whittier's national and "official" reading thus also contained his own cause, the memory of the abolition of slavery. This element did not remain in the foreground of later interpretations of the statue, despite the inviting presence of the broken shackles of tyranny on the monument.

The poet [Emma Lazarus](#) saw a different statue in her sonnet "[The New Colossus](#)" which constituted a recasting of the statue's officially intended meaning. Lazarus's Statue, a "Mother of Exiles," speaks:

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

(Lazarus 1888, 202-3)

Whittier's apostrophe "shine far" contrasts markedly with Lazarus' well-known motto "send these to me." The New England poet James Russell Lowell seems to have been among the first to recognize the significance of Lazarus's poem; when he was the United States ambassador to England, he reportedly wrote her that he liked her poem better than Bartholdi's statue: "But your sonnet gives its subject a *raison d'être* which it wanted before quite as much as it wanted a pedestal" (Handlin 1971, 61, 63; Jacob 1949, 179). A plaque with Lazarus's sonnet was affixed to the Statue of Liberty in 1903; and though this was noted in the Baedeker of 1909 (72) and in immigrant writing, it remained, according to John Higham's book, significantly entitled *Send These to Me*, relatively unnoticed until the mid-1920s, when the immigration restrictions were legislated (Higham 1975, 82-83). While the overt message of Lazarus's poem seemed to be foremost an invitation to immigrants ("From her beacon-hand/ Glows world-wide welcome") and thus offered a reinterpretation of the Statue of Liberty that was offbeat enough to remain ignored or at least of secondary importance for some time, the reference to the newcomers as "wretched refuse" also permitted a reading that the immigration historian James P. Shenton convincingly paraphrased as "welcome, garbage!" (see also Higham 1975, 85-86). In any event, the nativist James H. Patten applied Lazarus's phrase "Wretched refuse!" in 1906 to "the beaten people of beaten races" who come to America in order

. . . to desecrate
Thy Sabbath and despoil thy rich heritage
Purchased with so much Anglo-Saxon blood and treasure.
(Patten 1906, 16; Solomon 1972, 126)

And, as [Zola Levitt](#) noticed, the adaptation of Lazarus's poem that was used at John F. Kennedy Airport simply omitted the lines with the "wretched refuse". No matter how multivalent Lazarus's imagery was, ethnic writers often adopted her reinterpretation of the Statue of Liberty as the symbolic space where "foreign" and "American" identities meet. In this fashion the Swedish-American journal *Valkyrian*, published from 1897 to 1909, had as its permanent cover illustration the image of a big Valkyrie, whereas a small Statue of Liberty in New York harbor was recognizable in the background (Thander 1991), thus connecting a Norse and an American goddess--proportionate to their meaning; and in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, Ed buys a postcard of the Statue of Liberty with his first spending money and first pastes the card and only then personal photographs into his picture album (Kingston 1980, 67).

The anarchist Emma Goldman {left} gave a curiously ironic testimony to the power of the Statue as the dominant symbol of immigrant arrivals. She remembers in her autobiography *Living My Life* (1931) that, when she first came to America, she was "enraptured by the sight of the harbour and the Statue of Liberty, suddenly emerging from the mist":

Ah, there she was, the symbol of hope, of freedom, of opportunity! She held her torch high to light the way to the free country, the asylum for the oppressed of all lands. . . . Our spirits were high, our eyes filled with tears. (Goldman 1970, I: 11; Giesen 1991, 513)

Yet, as immigration historians have noticed, Emma Goldman could not have seen the Statue, since she arrived in New York on December 29, 1885, months before the pedestal was completed and over half a year before the Statue was assembled! (Giesen 1991, 515). In retrospect, even a radical like Goldman subjugated her own specific memory to the meaning of the Statue that the other Emma had helped to propagate and that had found triumphant expressions in such images as Adolph Treidler's war bonds poster of 1917, "Remember Your First Thrill of American Liberty" (Banta 1988, 28) {right}.

Lazarus's voice opposed not only the sentiments that Whittier was to express but also opinions like those of Croly that were often represented in anti-immigrant cartoons {left} and put into poetry by the New Englander Thomas Bailey Aldrich in his once famous "Unguarded Gates" (1892), another version of "Liberty."

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,
And through them presses a wild motley throng--
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,
Featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho,
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav,
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,
Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their claws.
In street and alley what strange tongues are these,
Accents of menace alien to our air,
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!
O Liberty, white Goddess! is it well
To leave the gates unguarded?
(Aldrich 1892; cf. Zangwill 1910, 199-200)

Aldrich's liberty is not imagined as a "Mother of Exiles" but, in exactly opposite terms, as a "white Goddess" who should guard freedom against the menace of beastly invaders. It is clear that Aldrich did not believe in the message "send these to me," but he also had little faith in liberty's ability to shine very far. Aldrich also polemicized against immigration by arguing that

America's true emblem was no longer the eagle but "some sort of unnaturalized mongrel" (Solomon 1974, 88).

It is a measure of the transformation of public memory that by the time of the Statue's centennial celebrations in 1986 Lazarus's voice had clearly won out over Whittier's and Aldrich's.

At the peak of the new immigration, however, some "old-stock" American intellectuals believed in "race suicide" (Calhoun 1919). Some Americans perceived themselves to be outnumbered by the "invasion" of "strangers" in the country their ancestors, real or adopted, had founded. I say "real or adopted" even in thinking of the group that was dubbed "The Brahmin Caste of New England" in Oliver Wendell Holmes's novel *Elsie Venner* (1859) in order to describe a collegiate "race of scholars" different from the type of the common country boy (Holmes 1891, 1-5). In fact, many of the intellectuals who adopted the term were, as William Taylor pointed out, not old-stock descendants but upwardly mobile young men, several of whom had married into old families (Taylor 1979, 43-44). Such intellectuals also adopted and increasingly stressed the symbols of the Mayflower and Plymouth Rock as mythic points of origin. The invention of Plymouth (and especially Plymouth Rock) as an exclusivist ethnic symbol replaced earlier ideological readings in revolutionary, religious, or abolitionist contexts at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The Pilgrims had landed in 1620 at the Pamet Sound near Truro (Cape Cod); and leaving the Mayflower at Provincetown they sailed on to Plymouth a month later. The rock that commemorates this second landing is of dubious authenticity (Bradford 1952, 72n; McPhee 1990, 112) and, geologically considered, seems to be of African origin (McPhee 1990, 114, 117). In 1741, Elder Faunce, then ninety-five years old, had identified a boulder as the "place where the forefathers landed," a phrasing that was probably misunderstood as referring to the "first landing" (Bradford 1952, 72n; see also McPhee 1990, 115); this led to the increasing sacralization of the rock--as well as of fragments that were supposedly chipped off from it--in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Like relics, exhibits, or souvenirs, pieces of the rock have been taken to Immingham, Lincolnshire (the point of the Pilgrims' departure for Holland) and the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn; other pieces were sold in the 1920s as paperweights by the Antiquarian Society of Plymouth; one piece was sent to President Eisenhower by a citizen (McPhee 1990, 113). In a footnote to *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville observed:

This rock has become an object of veneration in the United States. I have seen bits of it carefully preserved in several towns of the Union. Does not this sufficiently show how all human power and greatness are entirely in the soul? Here is a stone which the feet of a few poor fugitives pressed for an instant, and this stone becomes famous; it is treasured by a great nation, a fragment is prized as a relic. But what has become of the doorsteps of a thousand palaces? Who troubles himself about them?

(Tocqueville 1951, 34 n8; see Sears 1985,16)

James Kirke Paulding wrote an "Ode to Jamestown" before the Civil War, in which, drawing on the Pocahontas story, he celebrated America as the peaceful synthesis of Plymouth and Jamestown, North and South:

Jamestown, and Plymouth's hallowed rock

To me shall ever sacred be,-- . . .
He is a bastard if he dare to mock
Old Jamestown's shrine or Plymouth's famous rock.
(Stevenson 1922, 46-47)

This was apparently the special interest of a Northerner with strong sympathies for the South and for slavery who wanted to reconcile Puritans and Cavaliers and defy abolitionist readings of the rock in the wake of Daniel Webster's address of 1820.

In the world of widely shared national public memorialization, however, Plymouth Rock still seems to have played only a relatively minor role until after the Civil War (see, e.g. Lossing 1873, 36). The Society of Mayflower Descendants, for example, was founded in 1894 (Baltzell 1966, 115). The 1920 tercentenary inspired the National Society of the Colonial Dames (a women's association constituted in 1891, incorporated in 1899, and dedicated to preserve shrines of Anglo-American history under the motto "Not Ancestry but Heredity") to erect the present memorial {right} by the famous architects McKim, Mead, and White, completed only in 1921 (Lamar 1934, 19-44, 132-43) .

A turn-of-the-century Mayflower legend pursued the unanswerable question whose foot had first touched Plymouth Rock. One claimant to this honor was John Alden, another the maiden Mary Chilton. The writer concludes his "historical picture":

A youth in the full vigor of manhood, whose posterity should inherit the virgin land, sets his nervous foot upon the cornerstone of a nation, and makes it an historic spot. A young girl in the first bloom of womanhood, the type of a coming maternity, boldly crosses the threshold of a wilderness which her children's children shall possess and inhabit, and transforms it into an Eden. Surely John Alden should have married Mary Chilton on the spot.

(Drake 1906, 380)

This version makes the supposed "cornerstone of a nation" nicely vivid in the dream of a founding couple, imagined of pure English and Mayflower origin.

It seems likely that the new immigrants and their reinterpretation of the Statue of Liberty helped to strengthen the Brahmins' consciousness of Plymouth. At least the granite-sculpted, toga-clad allegorical figure representing "Faith" that crowns the National Monument to the Forefathers in Plymouth {left}, was dedicated on 1 August 1889, three years after the Statue of Liberty, and does resemble her much larger sister in New York harbor. Faith's left "foot rests upon Forefather's Rock [supposedly an actual piece of Plymouth Rock]; in her left hand she holds a

Bible, not the Declaration of Independence; with the right uplifted she points to heaven" rather than clasping a torch (Burbank 1916, 8).

In his famous essay of 1915, "Democracy vs. the Melting Pot," Horace Kallen argued that it was the new presence of vast non-English populations, the feared "barbarian hordes," in the United States that had the effect of throwing back "the Brito-American upon his ancestry and ancestral ideals," a development that manifested itself in the heightened public emphasis upon "the unity of the 'Anglo-Saxon' nations" and in the founding of societies such as the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution that, Kallen argues, "have arisen with the great migrations" (Kallen 1924, 98-99).

The more heterogeneous the country was perceived to be, the more Plymouth origins came to be stressed as a mark of distinction. This tension erupted in the controversy about the Russian Jewish immigrant Mary Antin {below right}, the author of the autobiography [The Promised Land](#) (1912) {left}. Antin suggested the compatibility of Jewish and American identity, viewing the transatlantic crossing as a new Exodus (as the Puritans had done), and supported Lazarus's reinterpretation of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of welcome to immigrants:

Let it . . . be repeated that the Liberty at our gates is the handiwork of a Frenchman; that the mountain-weight of copper in her sides and the granite mass beneath her feet were bought with the pennies of the poor; that the verses graven on a tablet within the base are the inspiration of a poetess descended from Portuguese Jews; and all these things shall be interpreted to mean that the love of liberty unites all races and all classes of men into one close brotherhood, and that we Americans, therefore, who have the utmost of liberty that has yet been attained, owe the alien a brother's share.

(Antin 1914, 25-26)

What Antin did for the Statue of Liberty, she boldly extended to the core symbols of Brahmin descent: "The ghost of the Mayflower pilots every immigrant ship, and Ellis Island {left} is another name for Plymouth Rock" (Antin 1914, 98). Antin courageously equated the Pilgrim Fathers' increasingly enshrined American beginnings with the modern clearing center (opened 1 January 1892 and closed 3 November 1954) in which approximately twelve million immigrants and remigrants were processed from 1892 to 1924 alone--and about three thousand committed suicide (Bolino 1985; Pereg 1980, 16) {right}. Thereby Antin attempted to subvert the point of view from which a Plymouth Rock and Mayflower ancestry gave a speaker the right to reject an Ellis Island immigrant as a potential citizen. For Antin, any arrival in America after a transatlantic voyage was thus comparable; and her view of Ellis Island as a synonym for Plymouth Rock as well as her self-inclusion as an "American" were to become central to the expansion of the term "American" that

supported the integration of minorities. In developing her elaborate analogy between Puritans and immigrants, she invokes the Brahmin James Russell Lowell and finds that he is a writer who chips away the crust of historic sentiment and show[s] us our forefathers in the flesh.

Lowell would agree with me that the Pilgrims were a picked troop in the sense that there was an immense preponderance of virtue among them. And that is exactly what we must say of our modern immigrants. . . . (Antin 1914, 69)

Antin's position illustrates the complications of national integration in a polyethnic country: nations often need founding myths and stories of origins, beginnings in the past that authenticate the present. Those who do not share such pasts, or at least their myths, can then be excluded from the concept of the nation: if they mean "foreigners" when they say "our forefathers" they may define themselves "out" as aliens--as did those Swedish-American intellectuals in 1890 who wished to celebrate "Our Forefathers' Day" or those Norwegian-Americans who rallied around the association For fædrearven after World War I (Blanck 1990, 90; Øverland 1993, 288); if they mean the Puritan and Revolutionary heroes, as the Russian Antin did, they "forget who they are" or they seem to be sounding a false note, as did the immigrant poet Agnes Wergeland who in 1912 chose the Mayflower rather than the Norwegian Restaurationen for her poem "America Magna" (American and Other Poems, cited in Øverland 1993, 340).

By contrast, a myth of origin in a mesalliance may stimulate polyethnic integration as ever newly combining mixed marriages (and not just ethnically endogamous unions à la Mary Chilton and John Alden) can then be regarded as the fulfillment of a prophecy in the national past, and not as a new and threatening penetration by foreigners; the children of such unions may combine memories of different, even antithetical pasts. Thus immigrants and ethnic minorities can become directly related and affiliated with a shared national past. Such "foundational fictions"--the term is Doris Sommer's --are common in Latin American literature, but problematic north of the border. [[PREVIOUS PAGE](#)][[NEXT PAGE](#) >][1][2][4][5][6][[Bibliography](#)][[NYU Press](#)]

In 1918, the New York trial of the Russian Jewish anarchist immigrant Jacob Abrams {left} who had arrived at Ellis Island in 1908, illuminated the problem involving forefathers. At the point in the trial when Abrams was about to defend himself for having distributed English and Yiddish leaflets against Wilson's war policies by invoking American revolutionary beginnings, declaiming, "When our forefathers of the American Revolution--" the federal judge Henry DeLamar Clayton, Jr. (from Alabama) {right} interrupted, "Your what?" When Abrams repeated, "My forefathers," the judge asked in disbelief, "Do you mean to refer to the fathers of this nation as your forefathers?" In the course of the trial Abrams, who was not even a

citizen, was asked twice "Why don't you go back to Russia?" Later the judge recalled responding to Abrams's phrase, "our forefathers": "What? You were born in Russia and came here four or five years ago and not a citizen, an anarchist, who can never become a citizen. Our forefathers . . . why, just look at it." Abrams received a twenty-year sentence (Polenberg 1985, 397, 407; Fuchs 1990, 68). As Everett V. Stonequist generalized, "individuals of subordinate groups" are sometimes "made to feel that they do not really belong."

In the United States members of such groups may be quite fully Americanized and yet be referred to as "Jews," "Negroes," "Chinese," etc. The native American unconsciously excludes them when he speaks of "Americans." (Stonequist 1937, 185) In-group and out-group uses of the term "American" were in conflict. The Norwegian-American writer Johannes B. Wist, for example, editorializes in his novel *Jonasville* (1922):

If you asked these young people of Norwegian descent what nationality they were, they would immediately answer - not without some indignation at being asked such a question - that they naturally were Americans. What else could they be? But if you asked a Yankee what kind of people these immigrant children were, they would answer without hesitation that they were foreigners or Norwegians. It was not unusual to hear more or less cultivated Americans use expressions such as "half-civilized foreigners" or "dirty Norwegians" about the native-born American descendants of Norwegian immigrants of the second or third generation. . .

Wist remarks: [W]hile it was your duty to be an American, you did not really have permission to be one. (*Jonasville*, 113-114; cited in Øverland 1993, 460)

In such a situation, could immigrant intellectuals freely intertwine American symbols and those of their country of origin as did the Danish-American minister Adam Dan in Sommerløv (1903)?

Danish cross, and stars and stripes,
both beloved the same,
remind us where we built our home
and from whence we came.
(cited in Skårdal 1974, 295)

Or could they plausibly adopt the more unambiguous posture of Jacob Riis who was born in Ribe and who ends his autobiography, programmatically entitled *The Making of an American* (1901), with the author's excitement, upon his return to his native

Denmark, to see the Stars and Stripes waving from an American ship in the Øresund. Roughly in the point of Hamlet's castle Kronborg, Riis--who is recovering from a feverish illness--is not given to hesitation at this sight:

Gone were illness, discouragement and gloom! Forgotten weakness and suffering, the cautions of doctor and nurse. . . . I knew then that it was my flag; that my children's home was mine, indeed; that I also had become an American in truth. And I thanked God, and, like unto the man sick of palsy, arose from my bed and went home, healed.

(Riis 1901, 443)

America could be a miracle cure in immigrant Kitsch.

Some Americans were so resentful of the erosion of the word "American" that alternative terms were launched such as "native Americans," "100% Americans," "only Americans," or "real Americans" --as a white neighbor stylizes himself in order to distinguish himself from Chinese immigrants in Sui Sin Far's book *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912). The Chinese-American characters, however, also accept the identification of "American" and "white" and Mrs. Spring Fragrance quotes "a beautiful American poem written by a noble American named Tennyson" (Siu 1912, 12 and 3). Both Nicholas Roosevelt and Brander Matthews called themselves "American-Americans" (a term coined by Langdon Mitchell) when they reviewed Horace Kallen's manifesto for cultural pluralism, *Culture and Democracy*, in 1924 (Mann 1979, 142); Matthews under the worried headline, "Making America a Racial Crazy-Quilt."

Like the Abrams case, Antin's literary reception shows how difficult the process of becoming "American," of adopting another country's past could be. The New Englander Barrett Wendell {left}, for example, who was among the first professors of English to teach American literature at Harvard University, wrote in a letter of 1917 that Antin "has developed an irritating habit of describing herself and her people as Americans, in distinction from such folks as Edith [Wendell's wife] and me, who have been here for three hundred years" (Howe 1924, 282). Wendell's genealogical consciousness rests on the male line of descent. He says little about his mother's ancestors; and her middle name, Bertodi, is mentioned but not explained in a most detailed genealogical account (Howe 1924, 6-11). His wife Edith Greenough Wendell served, incidentally, as president of the Colonial Dames' Plymouth Executive Committee in 1920 (Lamar 1934, 135, 119, 14). Wendell at least conceded that Antin's grandchildren might "perhaps come to be American in the sense in which I

feel myself so--for better or worse, belonging only here. And that is the kind of miracle which America, for all its faults and its vulgarities, has wrought." (Howe 1924, 282)

Americanness was imaginatively placed in the future. In 1916 the conservative *Atlantic Monthly* journalist Agnes Repplier was also troubled by Mary Antin's presumptuousness in calling the Pilgrim fathers "our forefathers" as well as by her critical attitude:

[W]hy should the recipient of so much attention be the one to scold us harshly, to rail at conditions she imperfectly understands, to reproach us for . . . our slackness in duty, our failure to observe the precepts and fulfill the intentions of those pioneers whom she kindly, but confusedly, calls "our forefathers."

(Repplier 1916, 226-27)

Repplier failed to see any parallels between Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island:

Had the Pilgrim Fathers been met on Plymouth Rock by immigration officials; had their children been placed immediately in good free schools, and given the care of doctors, dentists, and nurses; had they found themselves in infinitely better circumstances than they had ever enjoyed in England, indulging in undreamed-of luxuries, and taught by kind-hearted philanthropists,--what pioneer virtues would they have developed. . . ?

(Repplier 1916, 219- 220)

Reviewing some evidence of the new ethnic heterogeneity, Repplier concluded with the question that gives away her restrictive sense of a national identity: "It is all very lively and interesting, but where does the American come in?" (Repplier 1916, 205). Repplier (incidentally, not of Brahmin New English but of Franco-German background) resented Antin's use of Lowell as a misquoting of the dead (Repplier 1916, 197-201; Lowell 1892, 220-54) and, in turn, invoked the antiassimilationist Horace Kallen in order to support her dislike of "Mrs. Amadeus Grabau," alluding publicly to the fact that Antin had married an "American"--that is, a non-Jewish German-American Barnard professor. Kallen had criticized Antin as "intermarried, 'assimilated' even in religion, and more excessively, self-consciously flatteringly American than the Americans" (Kallen 1924, 86); yet Kallen had also partly adopted Antin's argument and, for example, compared Polish immigrants with the Pilgrims when he wrote: "the urge that carries [the Poles] in such numbers to America is not so unlike that which carried the pilgrim fathers" (Kallen 1924, 106).

Repplier recognized the danger with Antin's position: assimilation, full American identity, even if adopted unilaterally by declaration of will rather than by birth or acceptance from old-stock Americans, and the notion of equal merit of Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island origins entitled Antin to criticize her adopted "promised land" quite openly.

In the first decades of the twentieth century an intellectual and political battle was fought that John Higham called another Kulturkampf. Immigrant intellectuals sharply recognized the unfairness of the situation. Waldemar Ager, for example, wrote in an essay on "The Melting Pot" in 1916:

"There are no definite rules for what is truly "American." . . . We encounter a culture which is regarded as being American, but on closer examination we find that it is "English" and that it has no more valid claim to be native here than the Norwegians' norskdom or the Germans' Germanness."

(Lovoll 1977, 79; cited in Øverland 1993, 469.)

Radical intellectuals among old-stock Americans also could find non-English ethnicity useful for their political purposes as invoking it helped them to attack representatives of the genteel tradition on ethnic grounds--casting it as "Anglo-Saxon" and the result of a British colonial mentality (Higham 1989, 23-26). The most outstanding representative of this tendency was Randolph Bourne who was acutely aware of the political implications of the New Englander's reaction to Mary Antin. "We have had to watch," Bourne wrote in the famous essay of 1916, programmatically entitled "Trans-National America," "hard-heated old Brahmins virtuously indignant at the spectacle of the immigrant refusing to be melted, while they jeer at patriots like Mary Antin who write about 'our forefathers'" (Bourne 1977, 249). Ellery Sedgwick, then the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* (in which both Antin's autobiography and Repplier's critique had appeared) criticized Bourne by saying: "you speak ... as though the last immigrant should have as great an effect upon the determination of our history as the first band of Englishmen." For Sedgwick, Bourne's essay was simply a "radical and 'unpatriotic' paper"--though he did publish it in *The American Monthly* (Bender 1987, 246-49).

In the course of Bourne's essay, the "American" core definitions were revised:

Mary Antin is right when she looks upon our foreign-born as the people who missed the Mayflower and came over on the first boat they could find. But she forgets that when they did come it was not upon other Mayflowers, but upon a

"Maiblume," a "Fleur du mai," a "Fior di Maggio," a "Majblomst."

(Bourne 1977, 249)

While implying in this example that various ethnic histories could be understood as "translations" of an original Mayflower voyage, Bourne did perceive the tremendous cultural opportunity of creating a cosmopolitan civilization that thrives upon the linguistic and cultural richness that ethnic variety brings to what he envisioned as a

truly "Trans-National America" in which each American citizen could also remain connected with another culture (Matthews 1970). Bourne envisioned a cosmopolitan intelligentsia that could struggle free from an English orientation in American culture and from the requirement that newcomers shed their cultural, religious, or linguistic pasts upon becoming Americans (Hollinger 1985, 56-73). [This was compatible with Ager's view that the function of Americanization was "to denationalize those who are not of English descent" (Øverland 1993, 469).] Bourne also did not think that immigrants could remain fixed to their pasts. Instead Bourne advocated the new ideal of "dual citizenship," both for immigrants who came to the United States and for the increasing number of internationally oriented individuals who, like American expatriates in France, were born in one country but live in another. In Bourne's hands the contemplation of Americanness in the face of diversity led to a reconsideration of the nationalist premises of citizenship.

The American blue-blood Bourne argued memorably:

"We are all foreign-born or the descendants of foreign-born, and if distinctions are to be made between us they should rightly be on some other grounds than indigenoussness.
(Bourne 1977, 249)

Yet those redefiners of "America" who wanted to make it more "ethnic" and "pluralistic," such as Kallen, Antin, and even Bourne, paid little or no attention to nonwhite Americans in their attempts at broadening American cultural categories. As Higham writes, their theses were "from the outset . . . encapsulated in white ethnocentrism" (Higham 1975, 208). As Higham also stresses, however, the political attacks in the name of ethnicity pushed the conservatives toward racism, anti-Semitism, nativism, and anti-intellectualism, and it alienated radical young intellectuals from working people--except insofar as they belonged to distinct ethnic groups (Higham 1989, 25-29). Nowhere is Bourne's blind spot more apparent than in his disdain for assimilation.

He writes:

It is not the Jew who sticks proudly to the faith of his fathers and boasts of that venerable culture of his who is dangerous to America, but the Jew who has lost the Jewish fire and become a mere elementary, grasping animal. (Bourne 1977, 254)

It is telling that Bourne, too, used the sinister animal image as well as the nativist term "hordes"--in order to deplore the assimilated "men and women without a spiritual country, cultural outlaws without taste, without standards but those of the mob" (Bourne 1977, 254). Bourne surrendered to a strikingly paradoxical argument for

ethnic purity in the service of cosmopolitan diversity. In order to construct a dynamic pluralistic transnationalism Bourne needed monistic stable ethnic identities based on fixed national origins (that he questioned elsewhere). This is the dilemma of many pluralistic models of American culture, and it may be an inherent problem in "multiculturalism," too.

How, for example, would Bournean ethnic advocates approach such a common and so strikingly impure ethnic phenomenon as linguistic code-switching such as the following instance taken from Johannes Wist's *Nykommerbilleder* (*Newcomer Sketches*) of 1920. Here the Norwegian immigrant Salomonsen who has changed his name to Mr. Salmon says:

Amerika er en demokratisk kontry, ju 'no! ...
Jeg har getta saa jused te' aa speak English, at jeg forgetter mig right 'long, naar jeg juser norsk . .
. Det tek tid for en nykommer at faa saapas hæng of languages, at han kan kætche on te de most
komment English, men det kjem saa'n bey and bey. (Øverland 1993, 454-55; who translates:
"America is a democratic country, you know! . . . I have gotten so used to speaking English that
I forget myself right along when I use Norwegian. It takes time for a newcomer to get enough
hang of the language that he can catch on to the most common English, but it comes by and by.)

Ethnic writers could stress the loss of history or the comic gain in the untranslatable treatment of such moments, so common in ethnic culture. Bourne's reliance on a romantic model of ethnic identity, however, made him loathe much of what made actual ethnic culture tick, "the cheap newspaper ..., the popular song, the ubiquitous automobile, our vapid moving pictures, our popular novels."

We have come to expect from the racial right, from Croly, Aldrich or Repplier, a contempt for assimilation, often used as a code word for that widespread American practice and great cultural anathema of "mixing blood," which the right called "mongrelization." Yet Bourne proposed it from the left and helped to create a legacy of liberal faith in ethnic purity as a necessary foundation of pluralism.

In any event, pluralistic thinking gained ground in the period from the 1930s to the 1950s. In the late 1930s and early 1940s the Slovenian immigrant Louis Adamic helped to further superimpose the American origins at Plymouth Rock and those at Ellis Island, in the section "Ellis Island and Plymouth Rock" in a book entitled, in the Antin tradition, *My America* (1938), and in lectures to hundreds of audiences, with due homage to Emma Lazarus (Adamic 1938, 195; Adamic 1940, 292; see Higham 1975, 85 and Gleason 1980, 244). Adamic wrote that he wanted to work toward an intellectual-emotional synthesis of old and new America; of the Mayflower and the steerage; of the New England wilderness and the social-economic jungle of the city slums and the factory system; of the Liberty Bell and the Statue of Liberty. The old

American Dream needs to be interlaced with the immigrants' emotions as they saw the Statue of Liberty. The two must be made into one story. (Adamic 1940, 299) Adamic reiterated the parallels between "old" and "new" American symbols, exclaimed "Americans All!" (now with more varieties of body features), and invoked Walt Whitman's revived poetic formulation from the preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855): "Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations" (Whitman 1982, 5; see also Adamic 1945), stressing a phrase that has since become associated with Ellis Island. John F. Kennedy made this view of America official in *A Nation of Immigrants* (1964). One must remember, however, that as late as 1956--two years after the Immigration and Naturalization Service had abandoned Ellis Island--the Eisenhower government tried unsuccessfully to sell the island and its buildings (Smith 1992, 84).

Comparisons and parallels between Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island became more and more widespread up to the present moment at which the two alternatively conceived symbols seem to have merged. No satirists seem to comment on the strange fact that America's former First Lady, Barbara Bush, paid one hundred dollars to commemorate her Puritan ancestor Thomas Thayer (who emigrated from England in 1630) by having his name put on a copper plaque on the Wall of Honor now surrounding the Ellis Island immigrant museum (Stanley 1990, Sontag 1993), a wall that displays nearly two hundred thousand other names, among them that of the prototypical Plymouth character Myles Standish and John Alden, though not of Mary Chilton. Has the vision of Johannes Wist who ended his *Jonasville* trilogy with the marriage of the Norwegian immigrant daughter Signe Marie and the Mayflower descendant Miles Standish Ward become a modern reality? Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island certainly seem to have become interchangeable in contemporary American culture. And this is where accounts of an "Americans All! Ethnic All!" success story sometimes end.

Yet the "old-stock"/"new immigrant" distinction on which much of the thinking about "America" and "ethnicity" rested did not, of course, apply to all ethnic groups. Unless forced into the somewhat misleading notion that they constituted "America's first immigrants," American Indians may have had an equally problematic relationship to Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island, though attempts have been made to connect them with both symbols. At Plymouth, Native Americans have been celebrated as the co-inventors of Thanksgiving; and when during the restoration work of Ellis Island skeletal fragments were found, they were blessed in a public ceremony performed by Willy Snake of the Delaware Indians ("Indian" 1987) at Ellis Island. {left}

Those Mexican-Americans whose ancestors became Americans by annexation and conquest are also likely to have a somewhat ironic relationship to the "nation of immigrants" and its symbols of arrival as well as to the narrowing of the meaning of "America" to stand for the United States rather than for the whole continent, as Croly had used the word.

Among immigrant groups proper, American citizens of Japanese descent were, at the very time that Adamic popularized the reinterpretation of the immigrants as new Puritans, stripped of their rights as citizens and property owners and interned in detention camps--as a race (unlike German or Italian enemy aliens, who were generally detained only on the grounds of individual affiliations or political acts).

And other trans-Pacific immigrants? The 17,500 Chinese immigrants who, from 1910 to 1940, were processed through the detention center at Angel Island in San Francisco bay, may have gone through a clearing house modeled on Ellis Island; yet Angel Island, called "Devil's Pass" by the Chinese migrants, undoubtedly treated immigrants much worse than its model. {bottom right} Several of the Chinese poems that were written on the walls of Angel Island comment explicitly on the immigration procedure. For example:

Detained in this wooden house for several tens of days,
It is all because of the Mexican exclusion law which implicates me.
It's a pity heroes have no way of exercising their prowess.
I can only await the word so that I can snap Zu's whip.

From now on, I am departing far from this building.
All of my fellow villagers are rejoicing with me.
Don't say that everything within is Western styled.
Even if it is built of jade, it has turned into a cage.
(Lai 1980, 134; # 69; see also Yin 1991)

This is the most famous of the Angel Island poems, included, for example, in the "Heath Anthology", and read on public radio. However, as Te-Hsing Shan has written, this commonly cited translation may actually result from the conflation and rearrangement in inverted order of two poems that are clearly recognizable on the photograph of the Chinese original; and this is also the way in which an earlier translator rendered them. Shan asks: "Why is there rejoicing from the fellow villagers

for someone who was to be deported back to China with his futile attempt, undeserved suffering, wasted investment, and unfulfilled Gold Mountain dreams? Isn't it more plausible that the second quatrain is written by someone who, probably among a group of fellow villagers, is leaving Angel Island not for China, but for San Francisco, and thus was able to start his long anticipated American dream in Gold Mountain?" The unproblematized English-only version, Shan concludes, "does not adequately address the bi-lingual, cross-cultural, trans-national complexity."

One also wonders what significance any of the old threshold symbols could have for the recent immigrants for whom borderlands, Kennedy Airport, or the "Green Card" might be more suitable alternatives.

I shall here, however, in conclusion, concentrate on the problematic situation of black Americans, one of the "oldest" and most "indigenous" yet most persistently excluded groups that consists mostly of descendants of people who did cross the Atlantic, though involuntarily and as slaves. Is Ellis Island a more appropriate myth than Plymouth Rock for African Americans? How would the American story have to change in order to accommodate black history? In his last writings the late historian Nathan Huggins took American historians to task for dealing with Afro-American history only too rarely, and then usually as an "exception" and "anomaly," in their generalizations about America (Huggins 1990, xliv-xlvi), and I would like to continue his questioning with a few literary texts.

Identifying himself in the *Atlantic Monthly* merely as "a peaceable man," an astute observer wrote during the Civil War that there was a special affinity between Puritans and southern Blacks:

There is an historical circumstance, known to few, that connects the children of the Puritans with these Africans of Virginia, in a very singular way. They are our brethren, as being lineal descendants from the Mayflower, the fated womb of which, in her first voyage, sent forth a brood of Pilgrims upon Plymouth Rock, and, in a subsequent one, spawned slaves upon the Southern soil, --a monstrous birth, but with which we have an instinctive sense of kindred, and so are stirred by an irresistible impulse to attempt their rescue, even at the cost of blood and ruin. The character of our sacred ship, I fear, may suffer a little by this revelation; but we must let her white progeny offset her

dark one,--and two such portents never sprang from an identical source before.
(Hawthorne 1862, 50)

The observer was Nathaniel Hawthorne; and his appears to have been a lonely voice. The relationship between Plymouth Rock and American slavery has more typically been drawn as a contrast rather than as an affinity. Malcolm X, for example, who said at Harvard: "I'm not a Democrat. I'm not a Republican. I don't even consider myself an American" (Sollors 1993, 346) put it most vividly: "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, my brothers and sisters--Plymouth Rock landed on us!" (Malcolm X 1966, 201). This is the quote from the autobiography, though what Malcolm X actually said at Michigan State University on 23 January 1963 was: "this twentieth-century Uncle Tom, he'll stand up in your face and tell you about when his fathers landed on Plymouth Rock. His father never landed on Plymouth Rock; the rock was dropped on him" (Malcolm X 1989, 40). This may be a statement with a "separatist" thrust; yet Malcolm X may also have been thinking of Cole Porter's song "Anything Goes" (1934), which opens with the claim that if the Puritans were to arrive today "'Stead of landing on Plymouth Rock, / Plymouth Rock would land on them."

In Mark Twain's "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims," an 1881 dinner address at a New England Society, he said that "those Pilgrims were a hard lot. They took good care of themselves, but they abolished everybody else's ancestors" (Twain 1992, 782). Then he offered his own putative genealogy:

My first American ancestor, gentlem[e]n, was an Indian--an early Indian. Your ancestors skinned him alive, and I am an orphan. . . . The first slave brought into New England out of Africa by your progenitors was an ancestor of mine--for I am of a mixed breed, an infinitely shaded and exquisite mongrel. I'm not one of your sham meerschaums that you can color in a week. No, my complexion is the patient art of eight generations. . . .
(Twain 1992, 782- 784)

This joyful acceptance of the derogatory term for miscegenation led Mark Twain to a full- fledged attack on the genealogical associations:

O my friends, hear me and reform! . . . Oh, stop, stop, while you are still temperate in your appreciation of your ancestors! Hear me, I beseech you; get up an auction and sell Plymouth Rock! . . . Disband these New England societies, renounce these soul-blistering saturnalia, cease from varnishing the rusty reputations of your long-vanished ancestors--the super-high- moral old ironclads of Cape Cod, the pious buccaneers of Plymouth Rock--go home, and try to learn to behave!
(Twain 1992, 784-785)

Extending Shelley Fisher Fishkin's recent question one could also ask, "Was Mark Twain black?"

For a long time, African American writers have questioned American national symbols by confronting them with the history of slavery, miscegenation, and segregation. In the first novel published by an American Negro, William Wells Brown's *Clotel, or the President's Daughter* (1853), the author dedicated a whole page to the contrast between the two American beginnings of the "May-flower" and of Jamestown, of freedom and of slavery (Brown 1970, 147). At the end of the novel, the titular heroine and slave woman dies, pursued by slave catchers, in the Potomac, "within plain sight of the President's house and the capitol of the Union" (Brown 1970, 177). Her father Jefferson was not only the "author" of the Declaration of Independence but also of unacknowledged slave children--whether or not this was literally the case is not important Huggins continued, since it is "symbolically true" (Huggins 1990, xlvii).

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) W. E. B. Du Bois also specifically mentioned the slave-ship that "first saw the square tower of Jamestown" as an American beginning point (Du Bois 1986, 424) and asked, "Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were there" (Du Bois 1986, 545). Richard Wright, in his *12 Million Black Voices* (1941) came close to Hawthorne's critique when he wrote: "The Mayflower's nameless sister ship, presumably a Dutch vessel, which stole into the harbor of Jamestown in 1619 and unloaded her human cargo of 20 of us, was but the first ship to touch the shores of this New World, and her arrival signalized what was to be our trial for centuries to come" (Wright 1988, 14).

For a black perspective "Jamestown" memorializes--not 1607, John Smith, and Pocahontas--but 1619, the first arrival of Africans in the English colonies that were to become the United States. This is, incidentally, an event that--until very recently--has not been remembered much even in Jamestown itself. It has hardly played a part in the 1907 and 1957 anniversaries of the founding of Jamestown (Hatch 1957, 23-24; Anniversary 1958, 78; Jamestown 1958; True 1983; Roosevelt 1924, 585n, 585, 589), though on 20 August 1994 the 375th year of the African arrival was celebrated at the Jamestown Settlement ("Africans").

African-American artists, however, did react to Jamestown of 1619. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller contributed a commissioned series of sculptures on the "advancement of the Negro since he landed" to the Jamestown tercentennial in 1907; in less than two months, she modeled "fifteen groups with one hundred and fifty figures" that were "in

the nature of models, to be dressed in historic costume (Washington 1909, 293-94; Ovington 1927, 222); and Duke Ellington in 1944 publicly claimed Jamestown descent (Adamic 1945, 195). James Edwin Campbell's poem "The Pariah" makes an explicit case for the merger of Plymouth Rock and Jamestown through the union of the black-white couple that follows the formula: "She the Brahmin, I the Pariah." Speaking about the woman's father, the poem explicates:

Traced he back his proud ancestry
To the Rock on Plymouth's shore,
Traced I mine to Dutch ship landing
At Jamestown, one year before.
([Campbell](#) 1895, 82)

Whereas Paulding wanted to see a Northern-Southern merger of Puritans and Cavaliers, and immigrant enthusiasts such as Zangwill, Antin, and Adamic thought that the whole American synthesis was embodied in the fusion of Ellis Island and Plymouth Rock (leaving out the legacy of slavery that way), the black poet Campbell viewed the matrimony of the black Pariah and the white Brahmin (as in Paulding's "Ode to Jamestown," with echoes of the Pocahontas story and with a focus on an intermarriage) as the hope for a casteless country of Jamestown and Plymouth Rock (ignoring the arrival point of immigrants). Both the "Jamestown" of black Americans and the "Ellis Island" of European immigrants were, in different fashions, symbolic alternatives to the narrow interpretation of America as Mayflower-descended, yet alternatives that-- even though they were both "thresholds"--could also exclude each other.

In 1942, the black modernist poet Melvin B. Tolson contributed to Louis Adamic's journal *Common Ground* the poem "Rendezvous with America," in which he seems to have desired to represent America as the merger of all points of arrival. The poem opens with the lines:

Time unhinged the gates
Of Plymouth Rock and Jamestown and Ellis Island,
And worlds of men with hungers of body and soul
Hazarded the wilderness of waters,
Cadenced their destinies
With the potters'-wheeling miracles
Of mountain and valley, prairie and river.
(Tolson 1942,3)

Tolson's critique of American symbols is directed against their exclusiveness that he tries to break (unhinging Aldrich's "gates") by the listing of many points of entry. The

Whitmanian conflation of old and new national symbols reaches a higher pitch when Tolson explicitly makes a special place for those groups (such as Indians) not included by the "Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island" formula, when blind bigots are rebuked for their prejudices, or when the question "America?" is answered in the following way:

America is the Black Man's country,
The Red Man's, the Yellow Man's,
The Brown Man's, the White Man's.
America?
An international river with a thousand tributaries!
A magnificent cosmorama with myriad patterns and colors!
A giant forest with loin-roots in a hundred lands!
A mighty orchestra with a thousand instruments playing
America!
(Tolson 1942, 4-5)

Tolson worries about inadequacies in the image of the Statue of Liberty; yet his poem, written upon the occasion of Pearl Harbor, sees this inadequacy in a tranquilized Uncle Sam's lack of watchfulness: he "Pillows his head on the Statue of Liberty" (Tolson 1942, 7). In his harmonic vision of a polyethnic America the shadow of one enemy--Japan--remains. In a similar vein, the post-Pearl Harbor *Life* magazine carried the American flag on the cover {left}, while the issue was full of anti-Japanese materials {right}. Perhaps the Japanese enemy image may even have helped with the project of integrating Red, Black, and White (though Tolson does mention "Patriots from Yokosuka and Stralsund" in one of his melting-pot catalogues [3]).

The incorporating mood of the depression and war years affected even politically radical writers such as Richard Wright {left}. He did not only publish radical American paeans such as "Transcontinental" (Salzman 1978, 314-320), but he also let his character Boris Max, the communist lawyer, defend the black murderer Bigger Thomas in the novel *Native Son* with the plea: "In him and men like him is what was in our forefathers when they first came to these strange shores hundreds of years ago. We were lucky. They are not" (Wright 1940, 332). When Wright was invited to go to France shortly after World War II and repeatedly denied a passport, however, he sounded a different note. His friends, among them the painter Marc Chagall, appealed to the French cultural attaché Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Wright received an official invitation by the French government and, finally, after much more maneuvering, a US passport, too. In an allusion to the classic Ellis Island scene, Wright described his emotions in the essay "I Choose Exile": "I felt relieved when my ship sailed past the Statue of Liberty!" (Wright 1948). The feeling is familiar, except that Wright was

leaving the United States for France! A few years later Wright described the American Negro as "an American who is not accepted as an American, hence a kind of negative American" (Wright 1964, 16).

Exclusion of any group from national symbolism may generate not only the insistent argument for the group's compatibility with those symbols but also a rejection of such symbols. This rejection may also be undertaken with the intention of facilitating an ultimate integration on equal footing. Wright's ironic reversal of interpreting the Statue of Liberty was not a unique occurrence. Thus, Du Bois--whose analysis of double-consciousness as "an American, a Negro" is often cited--described in his Autobiography how, upon returning from Europe in 1894 on an immigrant ship, he saw the Statue of Liberty: I know not what multitude of emotions surged in the others, but I had to recall [a] mischievous little French girl whose eyes twinkled as she said: "Oh yes the Statue of Liberty! With its back toward America, and its face toward France!" (Du Bois 1968, 182) While both Du Bois and Wright tilted the interpretation of the Statue from the "immigrant" toward the "Franco-American" reading--that they, however, slanted toward French liberty--neither of them drew here on Whittier's connection between Statue of Liberty and slavery.

The strategy of paradoxically associating the Statue of Liberty with political tyranny is of course a politically radical as much as an ethnic device. Thus Emma Goldman may have misremembered her happy arrival in American with the Statue of Liberty precisely in order to build up a more dramatic contrast between what "the generous heart of America" (Goldman 1982, 11) meant to her when she arrived and her political imprisonment--she highlights a Fourth of July in prison (Goldman 1982, 663)--before she was ultimately deported from Ellis Island in 1919. Seeing the "revolutionary martyrs being driven into exile" she asks whether this was Russia, only to answer:

But no, it was New York, it was America, the land of liberty! Through the port-hole I could see the great city receding into the distance, its sky-line of buildings traceable by their rearing heads. It was my beloved city, the metropolis of the New World. It was America, indeed, America repeating the terrible scenes of tsarist Russia! I glanced up--the Statue of Liberty! (Goldman 1982, 717)

In our days the symbol of Ellis Island is used explicitly to incorporate Afro-Americans, too. Thus the black former congresswoman Barbara Jordan, together with Frank Sinatra, was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor by the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation (*"Chronicle"* 1990); more recently, Alex Haley was honored (posthumously) with the same medal, along with a most amazing lineup of winners:

Natalie Cole, Norman Schwarzkopf, Connie Chung, Elie Wiesel, Strom Thurmond, and Arnold Schwarzenegger ("*Chronicle*" 1992).

It was during World War II and in the Supreme Court decisions and Civil Rights bills of the 1950s and 1960s that the term "American" actually became intertwined with ethnicity and flexible enough to include--in widely accepted public and official usage--such groups as immigrants, African Americans, and American Indians. Minorities have moved into the center of the cultural industry; and the metaphor of the "invading hordes" seems to have fallen into disfavor.

The growth of a more flexible term for an American national identity thus seems to be a success story. Yet it is not only that, and the hymnic synthesis invoked by some poets has hardly become an American reality. After all, the successful expansion of the term "America" came about only in the heated debates about national loyalty generated by two world wars, and after immigration had been severely limited along racial categories. The broad notion of "America" has never really included everybody, all the arguments for compatibility notwithstanding; and the inclusive use of "American" remains ambiguous even today. Xenophilic cosmopolitanism may have helped to alienate some liberal intellectuals from people other than those in distinct ethnic groups and encouraged some conservatives to embrace racism and antiintellectualism with less restraint. The educational system confronts tough debates over which American culture should be taught to children and adolescents. The battle for "America" continues, and there are today more contradictory notions and definitions of what is or ought to be "American" than there are views of the Statue of Liberty.