

# Political Prattle in James Fenimore Cooper's Favorite Book: Reciprocal Readings of the ABC Letters and The Monikins.

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## Political Prattle in James Fenimore Cooper's "Favorite Book": Reciprocal Readings of the A.B.C. Letters and *The Monikins*

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When it was first printed in 1835, *The Monikins* was widely criticized for its egregious faults, and only in the past three decades has that viewpoint softened, as scholars have defied a critical history laced with remarks that *Monikins* is "well-nigh unreadable," "unbelievably dull," "obscure," and "disconnected."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Robert Spiller's assertion in 1963 that *Monikins* "contains the germ of almost all of Cooper's ideas" has begun to take hold in discussions of the novel that its author deemed "an entirely new kind" of book.<sup>2</sup> If *Monikins* does not cohere like

Cooper's more conventional novels, if its momentum feels stifled by rambling dialogue and sprawling prose, and if its animal fable and allegory seem more muddled than clear and simple, perhaps these qualities should be suffered rather than deplored. After all, Cooper presents himself as the editor, not the author, of John Goldencalf's Antarctic adventure, so we might think twice to expect Cooper's typically rich, leisurely style of narration beyond the "rare moments of sublimity" (1) in the editor's preface<sup>3</sup>.

I wish to add to the conversation about *Monikins* as something other than an aesthetic and financial failure by connecting it to another Cooper performance in the 1830s in the *Evening Post*.<sup>4</sup> Given the concurrence of Cooper's pseudonymous letters to the *Post* from 1834 to 1836 and the publication of *Monikins*, the shared interests of the letters penned by "A.B.C." and the satirical novel bear a closer look, particularly for the way in which reading the letters alongside *Monikins* begins to fulfill Cooper's sense that his "favorite book...will be better understood hereafter" (*LJ* 3:206).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, a reciprocal reading underscores the satirical function of prattling and sophistry in relation to Cooper's assessment of political philosophy and real politick in his historical moment, an assessment that hinges on questions about constitutional construction, public opinion, and a cultural epistemology that were evolving through Cooper's transatlantic vision.

Numbering twenty in all, Cooper's letters pit A.B.C. against the Whig press and politicians on several topics that figure as satirical fodder in *Monikins*.<sup>6</sup> Coursing through the letters is A.B.C.'s fervent commentary on comparative government, Constitutional interpretation, political partisanship, and international relations. One issue at hand is the intensifying crisis over the 1831 Franco-American treaty, which required the French to pay reparations for plundering American shipping vessels during the Napoleonic wars.<sup>7</sup> The lower house of the French government refused to appropriate funds dictated in the treaty, and after patience and diplomacy had all but expired in December 1834, President Jackson declared that failure to pay was "just cause of war."<sup>8</sup> In response, Whigs condemned Jackson's aggressive threats to the French, saying that "King Andrew" was once again assuming tyrannical control of the U.S. government.<sup>9</sup> A.B.C.'s stance is to defend Jackson within the purview of the Constitution, arguing that political divisiveness was fueled by fallacious interpretations of the Constitution and sophistic arguments gushing from crafty, self-interested politicians, such as the recent Democrat-defector, Augustin Smith Clayton.<sup>10</sup> The first A.B.C. letter, dated 19 December 1834, takes Clayton to task on a number of his "mistakes" and sophisms regarding the treaty, the Constitution, and the American and French governments. While no character in *Monikins* is clearly Clayton's double, the monikin philosopher Dr. Reasono, himself a prattling purveyor of sophistry, is a likely comparative, particularly when he expatiates on the intellectual prowess of monikins for having their brains located in their hindquarters. Otherwise, the Franco-American treaty re-appears near the end of *Monikins* when Leaplow legislators propose five ludicrous solutions to rectify Leapthrough's refusal to indemnify Leaplow, all of which transfer the debtor's obligations back to the

creditor.<sup>11</sup> Here Cooper derides Whig legislators and "ingenious logicians" (274), such as Clayton, whose "equivocal sophisms" (275) "substitute construction for constitution" (*LJ* 3:83)<sup>12</sup> and dishonor the "national faith" (*LJ* 3:86).<sup>13</sup> Cooper's bout with the Whigs and his defense of Jackson continue in the monikin country of Leaplow where baseless charges are brought against the "despotic" Great Sachem for demanding payment (274).

So too does *Monikins* advance Cooper's abiding interest in the comparative evaluation of American and English life.<sup>14</sup> Though many critics expected *Monikins* to extol America and condemn its transatlantic forebear, Cooper is deeply critical of both England and the United States. While his portrait of Leaphigh slams England for its permanent caste of social ranks, its monarchy headed by an empty throne behind a red curtain, and its obfuscating philosopher of the status quo, Dr. Reasono, Cooper's portrait of Leaplow, or the United States, is far from flattering.<sup>15</sup> Initially, Goldencalf's impressions of Leaplow glow with republican equality, but soon the superficial sheen of democratic enfranchisement and the balance of tripartite power dissolve to reveal the real politick of Leaplow, where social positions are arbitrarily inverted, the interests of the few trump that of the many, and newcomers are swiftly elected to the legislature without having achieved citizen status. Partisan politics between the Perpendiculars and the Horizontals has distorted the Great National Allegory, or Constitution, under layers of liberal construction designed to advance political careers rather than the letter of the law, and as legislative control oscillates between the two Leaplow parties at each election, rhetorically sly politicians abandon one party to reinvent themselves in the other, without the slightest notice of the Leaplow electorate.<sup>16</sup> In this way, *Monikins* exposes the rhetorical "hocus pocus" of partisan differences and the "pure mystification" of political leadership (*Gleanings: England* 387, 383).<sup>17</sup>

In regard to the Constitution, Cooper's originalist argument takes different forms in the A.B.C. letters and *Monikins*. Whereas A.B.C. insists on the clarity of the Constitution phrased in "terms that already had fixed significations" (*LJ* 3:86, 124), *Monikins* espouses strict construction through the crafty polemics of satire, particularly in Goldencalf's revelations about constitutional interpretation. After being instructed at length about Leaplow's deference to Leaphigh opinions, Goldencalf lands in Leaplow confident that he will "study the constitution [to] teach the Leaplowers their own laws and...the application of their own principles!" (238).<sup>18</sup> Brigadier Downright anticipates failure in this enterprise, knowing that literalism of an educated foreigner can do little to liberate Leaplowers, who "are early fed on political pap" from Leaphigh (239). Surprisingly, Goldencalf's firsthand experience in Leaplow as a guest and then an elected official converts the Englishman to a constructionist who advocates allegorical figurations, saying "It would...be an improvement, were all constitutions henceforth to be written [as allegories] since they would necessarily be more explicit, intelligible, and sacred than they are by the present attempt at literality" (261-62). For A.B.C., the flight from the literal jettisons the "express condition of

the constitution" (*LJ* 3:87) for the "exquisite mystification" (*LJ* 3:66) and "broad sophism" that Whig constructionists "ingeniously engraft" into law and legislative protocol to their political advantage (*LJ* 3:67). A.B.C. is appalled that sophisms are tolerated in legislative session with "impunity," and he is likewise confounded that elected officials in Congress would be "so utterly ignorant of the true principles that should govern an American legislator" (*LJ* 3:65). In *Monikins*, Cooper's outrage is delivered through farce in Leaplow's House of Bobees, where politicians circumvent the constitutional ban on resolutions that declare white is black by proclaiming "black is really *lead-color*," which opens room for the redefinition of white as something closer to gray (271). So while the National Allegory aims to safeguard citizens from a legal code that renders absurdities into truths and opposites into equals, political sophistry unleashes double-talk and duplicity into law and public forums.

In Cooper's satirical portrait of America, the natural law underpinning Leaplow's political structure is also in play. Says Brigadier Downright, "As a people, we are a hive that formerly swarmed from Leaphigh; and finding ourselves free and independent, we set about forthwith building the social system on not only a sure foundation, but on sure principles. Observing that nature dealt in duplicates, we pursued the hint, as the leading idea" (177). Reasoning from the physiological fact that every monikin has two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, two lungs, and so forth, Leaplow accordingly built its moral and social structures on duplication, beginning with the "two 'political landmarks,'" or two lines crossing at right angles along which Leaplowers position themselves morally and politically. In every Leaplow district, each politician toes one of the two lines and is, thus, aligned with one of the two dominant parties—the Perpendiculars or the Horizontals. And those who master the gyration of the "rotatory principle," with a head-over-heels summersault to switch from one line to the other, are deemed "patriotic patriots" for recreating themselves within the party-in-power (180). Indeed, in Leaplow "moral saltation is necessary to political success" (314). On the matter of natural law, Downright explains that the authors of the National Allegory prudently avoided inscribing the law of duplicates into the constitution, knowing that including it would "only weaken the nature of the obligation" (177) and "raise a party against it" (177). Sparing the law of duplicates from the legislative machinations of politicians increases the likelihood that, through construction, the law would evolve into a natural cultural logic.<sup>19</sup> Here, Cooper reiterates A.B.C.'s stinging criticism of Whig liberal constructivism, which, in Cooper's view, had been woven inextricably into U.S. political practice and national culture to the point that, like Leaplow, whatever was "cleverly introduced, in the way of construction...is now bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh" (177). Still, radical construction in Leaplow does not foster consensus but spurs exponential disagreement in contesting analogies that purport to make sense of the National Allegory. In Chapter XXV, for instance, entering the conversation about "the allegorical significations of the Great National Compact" (265) are various analogies of family relations, tripods, machines of state, great social beams, and nautical life. Consequently, Goldencalf's goal of reaching "a legitimate

construction" (265) of the National Allegory remains elusive, as discussants are bound by terms of incompatible analogies—many of which originate in Leaphigh—and are unable to move beyond meaningless prattle about the unfixed signification of the allegorical compact.

The principle of duplication also registers pronouncedly in Leaplow's mindless subscription to Leaphigh's public opinion, a relationship that replicates America's indiscriminate consumption of English opinions in transatlantic discourse.<sup>20</sup> What he would later call "the result of party feeling" in *The American Democrat*, public opinion is a centerpiece of Cooper's portrait of Leaplow, where journalists use their "ingenuity" (182) to craft "two public opinions" (183), one for each of the two parties. A kernel of both public opinions is that Leaplow reigns as "the most enlightened nation on earth" (182) for guaranteeing every citizen equality and, without exception, "hold[ing] every citizen as amenable to public opinion, in all he does, says, thinks, or wishes" (182). Indeed, in this purported "free and independent commonwealth" (182), citizens have the freedom to think in one of two ways, both of which are fabricated by a consortium of journalists and politicians who have taken "the finer parts of [monikin] intellects to be ground up and kneaded together" and then "utter[ed] anew" as "the united wisdom of the country" (182). From here, Cooper's assault on American public opinion proceeds in the figure of Judge People's Friend, a Leaplow diplomat to Leaphigh (175).<sup>21</sup> People's Friend explains that envoys must satisfy "both [public] opinions at home," knowing that "there is nothing on which our public opinions agree so well as the absolute deference which they pay to foreign public opinions" (228). To put this belief in practice, he must, "above all things...be in constant relations with some of the readiest paragraph-writers of the newspapers...at home" who, in turn, rely on "some foreigner, who has never seen Leaplow" (228).<sup>22</sup> These remarks about America's shameless deference to foreign politicians and journalists, which resonate in A.B.C. as well, lead directly to Cooper's derisive portrait of American public discourse. Whereas citizens of Leaplow are reluctant to consume the manufactures of Leaphigh on the grounds of patriotic principle, they fully subscribe to a deluge of Leaphigh publications that command the "opinion" market in print: *Opinions on Free Trade, Events, Democracy and the Polity of Governments, Domestic Literature, Continental Literature, Leaplow Literature, Institutions of Leaphigh, Institutions of Leaplow, and The State of Manners and Society in Leaplow* (233). Yes, in Leaphigh, it is common knowledge that "Leaplowers eat, drink, and sleep on our opinions" (233), and the only counter to the influx of Leaphigh opinion publications is one "pinched little thing" (233) from Leaplow, a "small bale" of "*Distinctive Opinions of the Republic of Leaplow*" (234).

By the end of *Monikins*, a harrowing prospect looks all too real to its Democratic author. The Whiggish Leaplower named Gilded Wriggle explains that deference has rendered the mass of Leaplowers "fools...not fit to rule themselves, much less their betters" (252), leaving them subject to the ascendant class's mastery of the discursive vehicles of social advantage: "circulat[ing] freely in genteel society" only

requires "a pretty free use of the words, 'jacobin,' 'rabble,' 'mob,' ...and 'democrat'" (253). Wriggle's betrayal of tactics for seizing political control not only extends Cooper's repudiation of liberal construction but also prepares readers for Goldencalf's litany of morals that punctuate the book in obligatory fable fashion. Several of the morals such as "truth is a comparative and local property" (314) and "civilization is very arbitrary" (314) are at once consistent with Cooper's assault on liberal construction and consonant with the book's embrace of a cultural epistemology. Having renounced his social-stakes philosophy and having traversed continents and national borders, Goldencalf, like his author, has come to accept the cultural nature of truth and has modified his preconceptions about foreign peoples and lands.<sup>23</sup> The realization that "we are all addicted to the weakness of believing our own customs are best" (157) prompts Goldencalf to revise his philosophy, sell his stake in societies around the globe, and finally retreat from the world to his grand estate. For Cooper, extensive European travel ushered in a new era of literary activity that affirms the value of examining one's cultural biases in transatlantic spaces, a sentiment that a *Monikins* reviewer for *The Knickerbocker* blasted as treacherous: "Cooper should remember that, as an author, he belongs to his country."<sup>24</sup> Surely, Cooper is committed, as he says in *Gleanings*, to the United States' "mental emancipation" from England (xxi), but nationalism resembles colonial deference in his satire "bearing equally hard" on England and the United States (*LJ* 4:207-208). Cooper's "favorite book" uncovers the pervasive influence of transatlantic discourse in shaping American political and cultural realities by duplicating in Antarctica a transatlantic world where folly and sophism reveal the cracks of a fractured national imaginary.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> George Dekker spoke against twentieth-century attempts to redeem *Monikins*, saying "although various twentieth-century critics have found things to admire in it, I believe that the consensus still is that, as a whole, *The Monikins* is well-nigh unreadable and certainly does not deserve a revival," *James Fenimore Cooper: The American Scott* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967) 151; "unbelievably dull" appears in Carl Van Doren, *The American Novel* (New York: MacMillan, 1921) 40; "obscure" and "disconnected" in James Grossman, *James Fenimore Cooper: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1949) 94.

<sup>2</sup> Spiller, *Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963) 237; "an entirely new kind" appears in Cooper's "Letter to John Whipple, January 1834," *Letters and Journals* Volume III, 1833-1839, 28 (heretofore abbreviated as *LJ*). At least a few scholars have explored *Monikins* in the spirit recommended by Spiller: Scott Michaelson, "Cooper's *Monikins*: Contracts, Construction, and Chaos," *Arizona Quarterly* 48.3 (Autumn 1992): 1-26; Stephen C. Arch, "Cooper's Turn: Satire in the Age of Jackson," *Literature of the Early American Republic* 2 (2010): 173-204; Christina Starobin, "The *Monikins*, Radical Ideas about Property, Cushioned by the Use of Animals," *James Fenimore Cooper: His Country and His*

*Art*, No. 8 (SUNY Oneonta) 108-23. James S. Hedges's "Introduction" to his reissue of *Monikins* in 1975 (Rpt. 1990, New College and University Press) argues that the book is not wholly "unreadable," as Cooper's style and treatment of the subject matter is appropriate to the satirical purposes of his book.

**3** The edition of *The Monikins* cited throughout this paper is a reissue of the 1835 first edition printed in Philadelphia by Carey and Blanchard. The volume was edited by James S. Hedges in 1975 and reprinted in 1990 by New College and University Press in Albany. The author of this paper is currently using the Philadelphia edition as the copy-text to construct a clear text of *The Monikins* for the Cooper Edition, and he has found that Cooper revised the Philadelphia text for the preparation of the London edition. The narrative recounted in Goldencalf's manuscript is set in 1819, as he arrives in Paris on 17 May 1819 (57). See also page 77 for another reference to the narrative setting.

**4** When Cooper as A.B.C. was writing to the *Evening Post*, its editor, William Cullen Bryant, was absent for some time, and his surrogate, William Leggett, worked in his stead.

**5** Signed "A.B.C.," many of these letters were written as Cooper was finishing the *Monikins* manuscript, proofing the copy, and preparing it for transatlantic printings. Scott Michaelson does draw from the A.B.C. letters in places in his "Cooper's *Monikins*: Contracts, Construction, and Chaos" *Arizona Quarterly* 48.3 (Autumn 1992): 1-26. See page 8, for example. The Whig editors knew Cooper to be A.B.C., though they did not reveal his identity to readers, perhaps believing, as James Franklin Beard suggests, that "their chief weapon against Cooper—personal ridicule—rather blunted by the impersonality of a set of arbitrary symbols" (LJ 3:63-65). Beard also notes that the attack A.B.C. suffered by James Watson Webb, calling A.B.C. "too bloodthirsty, for so amiable a man," probably worked to Cooper's advantage in helping him to "escape the too self-conscious and, at times, querulous tone that mars much of his controversial writing" (LJ 3:64). A footnote by Beard in Volume 3 of *Letters and Journals* also speaks to the *Post's* knowledge of A.B.C.'s real identity and Cooper's reputation. When the *New-York American* replied that it knew nothing about the authority and credibility of A.B.C., whom the *Post* had said had "in a brief compass, utterly demolished Mr. Webster's long and elaborate speech against the Constitutional power of the President to remove the incumbents of Executive offices," the *Post* then responded to the *New-York American* on 17 March 1835 with extended praise for the man they knew to be Cooper: "at the hazard of having the American quote another phrase of ours in italics, and overwhelm us with the wit of another admiration point, we must inform that journal that our correspondent A.B.C. is quite as distinguished as man as Mr. Webster; that he has done far more to advance the interest, fame, and honour of his country; that his name is better known and more highly prized by his countrymen, and not by his countrymen only, but is as familiar as household words in every quarter of Europe, where there is scarcely a hamlet, however obscure, into which some production of his master-

mind has not penetrated. The name of our correspondent, we can further assure the American, is imperishably associated with the literature of our country, and will be frequent in men's mouths, and always with honour, when that of Daniel Webster, forgotten with the factions of the hour which have given it a temporary importance, will be heard no more."

[6](#) Cooper also questions Jackson Democrats, such as John C. Calhoun, who served as Vice President to John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. He resigned as Jackson's Vice President to fill an empty Senate seat.

[7](#) In his Sixth Annual Message to Congress, delivered on 1 December 1834, Jackson notes that French ships seized American merchant vessels and cargo at various times between 1800 and 1817.

[8](#) The lower house of the French legislature is the French Chamber of Deputies. Jackson spoke of "just cause of war" in his Sixth Annual Message, delivered on 1 December 1834.

[9](#) A.B.C. contests the disparagement of Jackson as the "democratic king" in the 7 February 1835 letter (*LJ* 3:94-103), commenting at length that "A 'democratic king' is a contradiction in terms. It is nonsense. He who long acts in accordance with the views of the majority is no king, and he who long acts in opposition to those views, although elevated by the majority, is no democrat. Mr. [John C.] Calhoun has suffered himself to use the slang of the minority. A minority may be right, certainly, but a minority, under this form of government, that wishes to substitute its peculiar views for the fundamental law, is attempting to subvert the institutions" (*LJ* 3:103). Elsewhere, A.B.C. notes that "The Executive is a representative of the constituency, chosen for specific purposes, is amenable to the nation like the Senate, is a separate and an independent branch of the government, and, in the absence of impeachment, has no other responsibility than he owes to God, his own conscience, and his constituents" (*LJ* 3:99). The President, elected by the people of the United States, represents their collective will and is authorized by his election to act on it according to his conscience and will. Staging Cooper's defense of Jackson, A.B.C. campaigns for the president against his greatest rivals, among whom were Augustin Smith Clayton (Democrat-defector to Whigs), Daniel Webster (Whig leader), Henry Clay (Whig), and John C. Calhoun (Democrat; see A.B.C. 115). Calhoun championed slavery, states' rights, limited government, nullification—the latter of which says that a state can nullify a federal law that it determines to be unconstitutional or otherwise an encroachment on a state's right to the autonomy the Constitution grants a state. Later, Jackson allegedly said, "After eight years as president, I have only two regrets. That I have not shot Henry Clay or hanged John C. Calhoun."

[10](#) Clayton, a U.S. Congressman from Georgia, responded to Jackson's address on 9 December 1834 (see Cooper's *LJ*, 3:72). Clayton changed his party affiliation from the Jacksonian Democrats to the Whigs in 1832 and 1833 over the Nullification



Crisis of 1832 (involving a legal dispute over a federal tariff on South Carolina and state's rights) and the Second Bank of the United States (opposing it as a Democrat in 1832, supporting it the following year): Georgia Humanities Council, *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (Web). Clayton also published pseudonymous articles under the name "Atticus" to voice his denunciation of the Second Bank of the United States; see "Augustin Smith Clayton": *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936); *Biography in Context* (Web, 24 Feb. 2014).

[11](#) None of the five proposals in the Leaplow assembly advocate Cooper's Jacksonian position—war. Cooper's position on war can be qualified by his remark that he "sincerely hope[s] that war may be averted without disgrace" (*LJ* 3:70). The proposal that Leaplow should pay Leapthrough ten millions argues that this arrangement will convince Leaplow "to say no more about the transaction at all" (274).

[12](#) One example of construction that is common to *Monikins* and A.B.C. involves Cooper's disdain for Congressional usurpation of power beyond the limits of the Constitution. In A.B.C., 7 February 1835, he writes, "The interference of the Senate, with any of [the President's] acts, except through legislation, is a palpable usurpation of authority, arising from a principle that is unknown to the Constitution, and which would never have been recognized in this country had we been more in the habit of thinking for ourselves" (*LJ* 3:99). Unconstitutional usurpation is, in some, a fixture of government in the United States, says Cooper: "The statute books are full of similar legislative usurpation" (*LJ* 3:84). Congressional usurpation of constitutional power is glaring in a *Monikins* episode in which the representative body in Leaplow moves to proclaim "black is *lead-color*" en route to redefine white in a way that will circumvent the resolution in the National Allegory that prohibits black to be white. Also see James Grossman, *James Fenimore Cooper* 93. Otherwise, the A.B.C. letters repeatedly speak about construction—which Cooper says has principally evolved from the Whigs' attempts to "introduce the English system among us" (*LJ* 3:83): "we have a party who wish to substitute construction for constitution, no impartial and observing man can doubt, and really this bold assumption of so obvious a bit of legislative assumption, as established law, and its introduction by way of an illustration, is so flagrantly audacious, it is time that they feel that the constitution is the only safeguard of the union, should at once, take a firm stand against the doctrine" (*LJ* 3:83).

[13](#) The ratified treaty, notes A.B.C., "becomes obligatory on the national faith" (*LJ* 3:86). Elsewhere, A.B.C. argues that "a treaty is a solemn and a grave act, binding nations, with their multiplied interests, to its observance" (*LJ* 3:85).

[14](#) American and English political and social life are at hand in Cooper's nonfiction titles *Notions of the Americans* (1828), *A Letter to His Countrymen* (1834), and his *Gleanings* volumes that recount his travels and impressions of

Europe from 1826 to 1833.

[15](#) In *Gleanings: England*, Cooper "deem[s] the government of this country the very quintessence of hocus pocus" (387); "It is true the English monarchy...is a pure mystification" (383).

[16](#) Clayton and others had navigated a similar maneuver.

[17](#) In his *Gleanings of Europe: England*, published in 1837, Cooper figures a similar semantic reversal in his formulation in a tight analogy: "In England, the government is composed, in theory, of three bases and one summit; in America, it is composed of one base and three summits" (384).

[18](#) These revelations are concentrated in Chapters XXII, XXIV, and XXV.

[19](#) A variation on this reading asserts that the law of duplicates has been constructed to naturalize the established two-party system in Leaplow and a politician's wont for reinvention and "moral saltation."

[20](#) Cooper repeatedly interrogated the formation of public opinion as A.B.C. and in his other writings, and he does so for two principle reasons: the first involves the reception of his writings; the second, the vicious partisan politics of the day, which he surmised was at the root of America's domestic and international troubles.

[21](#) The A.B.C. letters concentrate on extolling the virtues of American government and defending President Jackson's interpretation of his Constitutional powers.

[22](#) The foreign correspondent should be "paid to write for the journals of...some other foreign country" (228-29).

[23](#) The inheritor of a great fortune, Goldencalf advocates a stake-in-society philosophy, which asserts "he who has the largest [financial] stake in society is... the most qualified to administer its affairs" (54). This philosophy suits a man like Goldencalf who takes every opportunity to increase his property holdings and political influence around the world. In the end, Goldencalf's monikin experience compels him to renounce his stake-in-society philosophy, noting that "So far from finding that I love any kind more for all these social stakes, I am compelled to see that the wish to protect [myself], is constantly driving me into acts of injustice against all others" (309). In many ways, Goldencalf's revelation about self-interest trumping civic virtue is at the bottom of Cooper's probe into political orders of the day, including the democratic republic he calls home.

[24](#) Reviewers of *Monikins* suspected Cooper of becoming enamored with European countries, especially England and France. A *Knickerbocker* reviewer concluded that the "social and political strife" in Europe had soured Cooper to his home, reducing him to "a pugnacious spirit" and his literary productions to

"froth" (*Knickerbocker, or New York Monthly Magazine* 6.2 (August 1835): 152-53). A related comment by Cooper appears in his preface to *Gleanings: England*: "There is no very apparent motive why the writer of this book should be particularly prejudiced against Great Britain" (xxi).

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