



Fenimore cooper's the spy: historical fiction for nation-building

Jasur Khudoyberdiev

Senior Lecturer of Global Education Department, Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT), Uzbekistan

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Abstract: It was commonly believed that literature focused on aesthetic purposes while politics occupied a separate realm with distinct characteristics. However, a number of literary figures could demonstrate the ability to skillfully employ literary genres to convey their political agendas explicitly addressing political issues in their writings. This article examines James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, and its significant role in building a new independent state and shaping a new national identity at a period when the Revolution and leaders like George Washington were regarded as a founding father of a nation. Cooper successfully expresses the hard terrain of historical fiction intended to foster nation-building by crafting interesting events and stories. This article could contribute to an understanding of early American literature and its implications for national consciousness.

Keywords: Literature, independence, politics, American literature, national identity, America, novel

Introduction: A great contribution to the genre of the historical novel in American literature was made by James Fenimore Cooper, whose works vividly depict the deserts, wild forests, and borders of America. The works deal with the topics of nature and man, as well as the relationship between Native Americans and European settlers. Cooper is considered an important figure in the development of the historical novel genre. His works made a great contribution to the popularization of American literature throughout the world. In his collection of works, we can see dozens of novels, short stories, travelogues, and other genres. Professor Stephen Railton (2015) of the University of Virginia writes about this: "In many ways, Cooper became the founder of the novel genre in America.

Although other writers had previously aspired to this position, he was the first famous, successful American writer in the land of opportunity to prove that a work of art could earn the status of a republican citizen." Another scholar asserts that Cooper's significant contribution to the literature was his formal innovations in the field of historical fiction, as was done by a great writer Scott (Franklin, 2017). It was clear that the new trends in Cooper's works took place due to American social and political developments that differed radically from those in Europe. Thus, his expression took a different approach.

METHOD

It is known that Fenimore Cooper was a complex political and literary figure of his time, and it is difficult to interpret his work solely based on the criteria that define American romanticism. Because the basic principles of the Enlightenment- the struggle for freedom against colonialism and the ideas of independence- formed the basis of many of Cooper's works, including the novel "The Spy." Cooper understood the goal of any revolution as a political activity aimed at replacing monarchies. His novel "The Spy" is considered an effective means of spreading political ideas. Apparently, Cooper sought to change the political views of his readers to democratic aspects of governance.

At this point, referring to the opinion of the literary critic Lenz (2017), James Fenimore Cooper wrote works of open political orientation in order to describe his social and political views. The writer's political point of view is based on the ideological approach inherited from the Enlightenment. Cooper wanted to replace hereditary monarchy with forms of representative power. This recognition allows us to analyze Cooper as a writer of the Enlightenment.

Despite the fact that in "Spy", the elements of romanticism are landscape natural landscapes (landscape and seascape), rich in emotions, the work is ideologically also characteristic of the Enlightenment period. During Cooper's life and work in 1789-1851, the ideas and glory of the Enlightenment were felt in America, and this process was reflected in the writer's works. The writer grew up under the influence of Enlightenment ideas, which influenced the aspirations of his predecessors. The authors of the American Revolution put forward a radical ideology promoting popular discontent. Thomas Paine's treatise "Healthy Thought" reflects and shapes the ideological views of the era in which Cooper was born. "Speaking as an ordinary citizen, Paine, citing familiar words and examples from everyday life, intensified the struggle against monarchy, the principle of succession, and

imperial rule," argue Gross and Kelley (2014). Thus, Cooper and his associates supported and actively promoted the popular Enlightenment political ideology in their works.

In short, the period in which Fenimore Cooper lived and worked was a transformational period of intense changes in America, and the features of Enlightenment and Romanticism of this period are clearly visible in the writer's works. 45 years after the founding of the United States, James Fenimore Cooper laid the foundation for original American literature with themes characteristic of the New Country. Based on this position, Cooper's novels not only formed the national image traditions of the novel but also proved that the American people have a unique destiny and expressed a characteristic feeling. Fenimore Cooper created historical, social, utopian, satirical, and maritime novels in which the majority of the characters were Indians. In his novels, he tried to illuminate the positive and negative sides of the tragic fate of the indigenous population of the continent. The ideas of the struggle for independence are reflected in his works. Puritan themes are often reflected in Cooper's works (White, 2006). Most scholars assert that despite the creation of a new genre of spy novel, his novel "The Spy" is based on some strong and profound moral issues. The main topic of The Spy is the moral suffering and uncertainties of the colonists during the War of Independence—who were simultaneously identified as patriots of the British Empire and traitors on the other hand. Interestingly, this difference in perspective caused American families to split into two estranged parties from one another and turned the conflict into a sort of Civil War.

The study focuses on the discourse of heroes, which is abundant with interactions that are full of emotional content. Throughout the early 19th century, Representatives of America's historical heritage. The novel's main characters' speeches in "The Spy" are stylistically distinctive due to their use of colloquial language, replicating the characters' psychological and physical attributes.

Many American literary critics consider James Fenimore Cooper to have played a pivotal role in the development of the unique novel and satire genres. The author's writings, sayings, and aphorisms continue to hold relevance today. Fenimore Cooper was instrumental in creating the Western novel as a new literary form, earning him recognition as a teacher and inspiration for numerous generations of American authors. While his novels were characterized by their independence and uniqueness, they also inspired many imitations. Although he utilized some well-established plot clichés derived from the works of Walter Scott, Cooper also incorporated distinctive elements that set his novels

apart (Frank, 1997). *The Spy*, originally published at the end of 1821, was one of the first American novels to deal with the Revolutionary War as its primary and explicit subject matter, and all of the events revolved around it. Therefore perhaps, the success of the novel touched off a boom in the history of American historical novel-writing.

Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy* provides a vital text for understanding political trends taking place in North America at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, including authoritarian tendencies dating back to the young USA. *The Spy* expresses the first president's antidemocratic tendencies rather than adopting the conventional portrayal of Washington and the other founders as unquestionable heroes (Chapman, 2021). Great writer Cooper challenges his contemporaries with attempts to criticise American political ideals and figures or assert romantic myths about the country's founding. This method of approaching the novel and the ideas raised in it may help us achieve three goals. First of all, this method enables readers and scholars to comprehend Cooper as an author who is conflicted about the power of the U.S. politicians, which is similar to what contemporary academics have dubbed critical patriotism, rather than as an aristocratic writer determined to maintain the existing status quo. Second, it gives teachers of American literature a conceptual place to start. Lastly, by interpreting *The Spy* as both exposing and opposing antidemocratic tendencies in the early republic, we and our students may be able to create a framework that allows students to examine authoritarian tendencies without turning to the harsh viewpoint that characterizes so many of the modern calls to oppose tyranny.

Fenimore Copper is claimed to have faced several types of uncertainty when it came to produce his novel. First of all, as a putative American author, he had to break free from Britain's imaginative legacy and contribute to the establishment of a literary culture of America that was completely comparable to political independence. Secondly, if he were to do more than simply change the plot-lined narration from the domestic English novel, he would have to do hitherto untested creative, subject, and voice abilities (Lee, 2009). In *The Spy*, the writer with good reason, finally recognised the importance of marking his focus on local American manners and scenes from his new motherland. In this way he had his own share in building his nation and establishing national identity.

CONCLUSION

Cooper's novel, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground*, was an immediate success in North America and beyond. The American public valued the novelist's

effort when everything related to the Revolution and George Washington was considered almost sacred, and it symbolised freedom and nationhood. Cooper was able to present American readers with local settings and character types, as well as ordinary soldiers and folks, in his excellent novel. James Fenimore Cooper followed the hard road of writing historical novels with the aim of nation formation by skillfully expressing ideas about the process of dramatic historical transformation and human progress. This short article is an attempt to demonstrate how much of the novel's nationhood discourse, the gradual evolution of American identity, is hidden behind the prevailing romance façade of American nature.

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