Equivocal Endings in Classic American Novels
Hester Prynne: a painting by Sigismond De Iranowski
for *The Century Magazine*, 1913.
Equivocal Endings in Classic American Novels

The Scarlet Letter;
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn;
The Ambassadors; The Great Gatsby

JOYCE A. ROWE
Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1988
First published 1988

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data
Rowe, Joyce A.
I. Title
813'.009  PS377

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Rowe, Joyce A.
Equivocal endings of classic American novels.
Bibliography. Includes index.
I. Title
PS374.C56R68 1988 813'.009 87-15868
ISBN 0 521 33532 9

Transferred to digital printing 2004
For
Claudia, Nina and Gerry
Contents

Acknowledgments ix
Introduction 1

1 Nathaniel Hawthorne: “My Kinsman, Major Molineux”: The Several Voices of Independence 14
2 Bleak Dreams: Restriction and Aspiration in The Scarlet Letter 27
3 Mark Twain’s Great Evasion: Adventures of Huckleberry Finn 46
4 Strether Unbound: The Selective Vision of Henry James’s Ambassador 75
5 Closing the Circle: The Great Gatsby 100
Conclusion: Moby-Dick and Our Problem with History 127
Notes 138
Index 159
Acknowledgments

This book began as a doctoral dissertation written under the direction of Quentin Anderson, now Professor Emeritus of Columbia University. It gives me great pleasure and pride to express my debt to him. His commitments, judgments and deep learning have taught me what humanistic scholarship and criticism can mean. Despite the pressure of his own responsibilities, he has been selfless in his attention to the entirety of this project. Rigorous as he is kind and caring, his challenges have enlivened my work and sustained my spirit at every turn.

Readers of this work may recognize how much I also owe to Sacvan Bercovitch, an inspiring and generous teacher, whose powerful ideas about American culture have stimulated me to explore new perspectives on many traditional themes. Professor Bercovitch has kindly read and commented upon part of this manuscript. Werner Sollors saw the manuscript in its initial stages and offered much valuable advice. Carl Hovde has been an astute reader throughout. His suggestions and commentary have been extremely helpful.

I would like to express very special thanks to Jack Salzman, Director of the Center for American Culture Studies, Columbia University. His judgment and enthusiasm made it possible to transform an academic dissertation into a book.

For a grant from the Elliott V. K. Dobbie Fund to aid in preparing the manuscript for publication, I am grateful to the Graduate Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University.

Finally, I want to applaud my family for their unfailing good cheer and self-reliance, for respecting my long hours of solitude, and for their spontaneous faith that the free mind provides its own reward.