From *Persuasion* to *Precaution*: The Difference

By Norman Barry

Introduction

Precaution, published in England in 1821, shortly after the anonymous 1820 American edition**,** was given the subtitle, "***Matrimonial Balance."*** Andrew Thompson Goodrich of New York City and Henry Colburn of London were Cooper's publishers.

> ***LITERARY NOTICE.***
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> ☞ **A. T. Goodrich & Co.** have received the manuscript copy of an original and highly interesting work, entitled, "PRECAUTION," a novel, which they will immediately put to press. Jy 3
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> ***Evening Post*** (New York) Monday, July 3, 1820, p. 3.

Unfortunately, no correspondence with Henry Colburn, Cooper's first London publisher, has survived. It would appear that publication in England was seven months and six days after initial publication in the United States. **[1]**

> London; Printed for HENRY COLBURN and Co., Conduit Street: of whom may also be had, just published:
> **PRECAUTION**, or **the MATRIMONIAL BALANCE**. In 3 vols. £1. 1s.
> ***Cambridge Chronicle & Journal*** (Cambridge, England), February 9, 1821, p. 3.

> **PRECAUTION,**—The Novel just published under this title is of the Cœlebs School. It will please both the young and the old: the former will like it because it is full of marriages, and the latter because it inculcates in every page the value of precaution on entering the matrimonial state. The author is extremely happy in the delineation of character. The portrait of Mr. Benfield, a worthy old Bachelor, whom a disappointment of the heart has early driven into retirement, after sitting one Session in Parliament, and acting the Courtier and the Beau for one season at the commencement of the last reign, is particularly amusing; and the readiness with which he connects his monotonous present with his gayer past, by finding likenesses in every one he esteems, however unlike, to Lord Gosford, the companion of his former days, or Lady Juliana, the mistress of his youth, has something in it not less entertaining to the imagination than touching to the affections.
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> ***Globe*** (London, England) Monday, April 30, 1821, p. 3.

New American Novel—"We understand," says an English Journal, " that the novel just published under the title of ***Precaution***; or ***The Matrimonial Balance***, which promises to become so great a favorite among all classes of readers, is the production of a distinguished American. Whoever may be the writer, we have to congratulate the public on the accession of a new Novelist, possessing a peculiar felicity for this species of composition."—*Ibid.*

Southern Patriot (Charleston, SC), Thursday, July 26, 1821, p. 2

The didactic approach of "precaution" is deemed advisable for a young lady to find a suitable spouse. Particularly the questions of the proper education and the proper Christian mindset are given close attention. The novel is a starkly Christian novel, for only a partner who is a devout Christian would be an acceptable partner. A life formed by principles resting on a solid Christian foundation is seen as a necessary precondition for future happiness in marriage.

As **Precaution** was the very first novel Cooper published, it has often been regarded, with only passing critical attention, as a mere fledgling novel of such low caliber that it can basically be ignored. This paper will attempt to dispel some of these misconceptions. ***Precaution*** will be approached from a number of angles: the times, the man, the writer, the ideas and convictions expressed, and how those elements were woven into Cooper's later works will be considered.

I. The Cooper Family in 1820

Susan Fenimore Cooper's ***Pages and Pictures*** (1861) **[2]** presents a fascinating anecdote describing a pivotal event which led her father to launch his career as a professional writer: his disgust with a new novel his family had just received from England leading him to assert he could write "a better book." The exact date of the incident is undocumented, although Wayne Franklin assigns it to "around the middle of May", 1820.**[3]** By May 31, we know that Cooper had already progressed to the eighth chapter of the second volume of his first novel entitled ***Precaution*** [4].

As little Susan had only turned seven on April 17, 1820, the question arises as to her powers of recall after some four decades. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that both her father and Susan had remarkable powers of retention. **[5]** Also, it cannot be ruled out that Cooper's decision to "write a better book" and how this decision came about were topics of conversation within the family circle at a much later date.

That her three sisters could have been any help in May of 1820 is even less likely as they were only small children: Caroline Martha Fenimore was 4 years of age, her sister, Anne Charlotte Fenimore, 3, and the infant Marie Francis Fenimore not yet one year old. The young father of four daughters was still 30, and his wife Susan Augusta DeLancey was 28.**[6]**

In other words, the Coopers were a young family with four little daughters. An uppermost question in Cooper's mind as a young father with four daughters was no doubt the proper way to raise them and how to lay the foundation for a secure future in the hands of the right partner. This became the subject matter of ***Precaution.***

II. Deaths in the Family and the Dissolution of the Cooper Estate

The recent deaths of family members by 1820 had also clouded the happiness of the young Cooper family. Close to or during the time ***Precaution*** was in the making, Susan Augusta DeLancey Cooper's mother Elizabeth Floyd DeLancey (1758-1820) passed away on May 7 due to typhoid. In his May 31 letter to Goodrich **[7]** Cooper points out that the death of his wife's mother had left her in "low spirits" and that his writing was not merely for "employment" but also for "the amusement of my wife." In the preceding year, Cooper had lost his last two surviving brothers, William (1786-1819) and Samuel (1787-1819). Of his mother's 12 children, only James and his sister Ann, now Mrs. Pomeroy, had survived. And the question of the resolution of their father's lost inheritance was leading to legal actions between brother and sister, and this in the month of May 1820. **[8]**

III. Psychological Impact of the Impending Loss of the Cooper Estate

Cooper's term "employment" in his May 31 letter deserves interpretation. Given the circumstances the young family faced, one wonders whether launching a novel might not have also been a therapeutic effort to divert Cooper's mind from the harsh realities he and his family were facing. Ann Cooper Pomeroy and her brother James, the only surviving heirs to their father's enormous but encumbered estate were left psychologically unprepared for the blows to come.

> "Cooper refused to concede that he no longer enjoyed the income to support his active and refined way of life, especially as the severe depression of 1819 deepened. Unable to pay his debts, Cooper faced lawsuits from the unpaid contractors who had constructed Fenimore House, his unoccupied lakeside mansion in Otsego. Rather than retrench to live more frugally, he gambled his sinking estate on an especially risky investment, buying with borrowed money a whaling ship, the *Union*. To secure his $9,723 in loans, Cooper encumbered his few remaining properties in Scarsdale and Otsego Township with mortgages. In 1823, when the *Union* proved a disappointment, Cooper had to sell those properties, including Fenimore house."
>
> —Alan Taylor, ***William Cooper's Town, Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic*** (New York: Vintage Books,1995), Ch. XIV "Inheritance Lost," p. 396.

IV. Cooper: "Budding Author" or Market Analyzer?

The National Novelist Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), a U.S.-based nonprofit organization, is geared for prospective writers to overcome their inhibitions by attempting a novel of 50,000 words in just one month. The main idea is simply getting 50,000 words together. Content is not judged. Masterpieces are not the object, although a reworking of the manuscript is allowed for later publication.

Cooper's ***Precaution*** was wrapped up on June 12, 1820, according to his letters in roughly one month, his wife being his "tribunal of appeals."**[9]** Cooper consulted a number of his friends including two native Englishmen, James Aitchison and Charles Wilkes, who could give him

pointers on English social life. **[10]** NaNoWriMo offers a similar approach by allowing budding authors to exchange views with fellow writers.

In a rather disjointed letter to his American bookseller/publisher, Andrew Thompson Goodrich, dated 19-20? October 1820 (***L&J***, vol. 1, pp. 65-66), Cooper makes some remarkable statements:

> "I do not wish to puff the book **[*Precaution*]** into notice for two reasons—My pride and a desire to let it creep—for although I believe it a respectable novel I do not think it a great one—if it were—I should be a great writer indeed—for no book was ever written with less thought and more rapidity—I can make a much better one—am making a much better one [i.e., ***The Spy***]—and I send this out as a pilot baloon [*sic*]—I made it to impose on the public—and merely wish to see myself in print—and honestly own I am pleased with my appearance—considering that from 14 to 28 pages of the book were written between 9 o clock in the morning and 9 at night—nothing very great could be done that was so written and it is a fact that no plot was fix'd on until the first Vol. was half done—enough of this—if you can blind their eyes—no one who knows will tell I am sure—Any one who reviews such a work [should] be a *christian*."

The question of word count, the required number of pages to make the customary American two-volume novel, and, last but not least, fitting matter to that total with a basic orientation towards the length of Walter Scott's ***Ivanhoe*** (1819), was uppermost in Cooper's mind. **[11]** ***Precaution***, claimed to have been written in only a month, is *three times* the target length of NaNoWriMo! And, to top it off, although, in the letter quoted, Cooper might bemoan its supposed inferiority to the novel then in progress, ***The Spy***, sales of ***Precaution*** in Britain turned out to be twice that of ***The Spy***. **[12]**

The notion of tricking one's readership by appearing to be what one is not was already initiated with the publication of ***Precaution***, supposedly an American edition of an English novel. (British publication was one year later.) Cooper succeeded in tricking not only the Americans into believing he was English, but even the English were duped:

> "Early English reviews were both frequent and complimentary. ***Precaution*** received only one American review; the three British journals that noticed the book were generally favorable, and none perceived that the writer was an American."
>
> George Dekker and John P. McWilliams, Editors, ***Fenimore Cooper, The Critical Heritage*** (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 27

The Preface to **Precaution** makes the following self-effacing statement:

> "It can scarcely be said that the work was commenced with any view to publication; and when it was finally put into a publisher's hands, with 'all its imperfections on its head,' the last thought of the writer was any expectation that it would be followed by a series of similar tales from the same pen." **[13]**

Particularly, Cooper's amazing statement to Goodrich that ""no plot was fix'd on until the first Vol. was half done" **[14]** can be questioned. Susan, on the other hand, in her 1883 reminiscences, wrote:

> "He [=her father] persisted in his declaration [that he could write a better novel], however, and almost immediately wrote the first pages of a tale, not yet named, the

> scene laid in England, as a matter of course. He soon became interested and amused in the undertaking, drew a regular plot, talked over the details [of the plot] with our mother, and resolved to imitate the tone and character of an English tale of the ordinary type."**[15]**

Given Cooper's misrepresentations, one wonders if he was not downplaying the amount of effort he put into ***Precaution*** so that, should it fail miserably, he could always claim that it had been done off the cuff with little thought as to plot development.

In Chapter 1 (seven and one-half pages in length), Cooper injects some twenty characters, at least 13 of whom are developed as the theoretically "non-existent" plot unfolds. Those left to suffer a stillborn death are only "decoration" in the form of children or a dispensable spouse or mother-in-law. To get some idea of just how well thought out Chapter One was written, on the second page, sister Emily, our heroine, was able to quieten her loudmouth brother John Moseley by asserting:

> "John, you forget the anxiety of a certain gentleman [meaning Brother John] about a fair incognita at Bath, and a list of enquiries concerning her lineage, and a few other indispensables."

The final two paragraphs of chapter one pick up on this "fair incognita," who will later be essential for plot development, while providing a perfect way of rounding off the first chapter.

It should be obvious that Cooper's Preface to ***Precaution*** was a misrepresentation of his intentions**.** ***Precaution*** was a project definitely intended for publication. Cooper had no need of taking a break after completion of ***Precaution***. It would seem that ***The Spy*** may even have been launched before ***Precaution***'s final completion on June 12,**[16]** or—if not— immediately following. Already on June 28, 1820, Cooper could write the following to his New York bookseller and publisher-to-be Andrew Thompson Goodrich:

> "I have commenced another tale to be called the "Spy" scene in West-Chester County, and time of the revolutionary war—I have already got about Sixty pages of it written and my female Mentor [=Mrs. Cooper] says it throws Precaution far in the back-ground."**[17]**

Cooper describes his anonymous ***Precaution*** as a "pilot balloon." **[18]** Was the experiment really the naïve question whether he could write, or—more pragmatically—how to come to grips with the mechanics of advertising and publishing in both the American and British book markets? Describing the effort as one "to cheer up Susan," lacks credibility. Surely there were better things to do to cheer up a wife in mourning than spending the whole day writing. Cooper's "employment", i.e., throwing himself into writing during a major crisis in his life, had a definite aim: to stabilize his emotional fabric while laying the basis for a future literary career.

Whether Cooper's apparent "minimalist" effort can be taken at face value as the unadulterated truth, or whether Cooper had been working on ***Precaution*** for a much longer period than he asserts is left to the reader to decide. The quality of the novel, regardless of what we, nowadays, might term somewhat "conservative" content, is at the very least surprisingly "respectable." Given its length, the near overload of characters, and complexity of plot, this reader contends that ***Precaution*** is not a work that a mere mortal can polish off in only one month. Also, the notion of a literary "neophyte" or "amateur" fails to jive with Cooper's self-proclaimed "turbo-accomplishment."

Cooper's ***Precaution*** was not begun as a novel but, as he describes it, as "a moral tale:"

> "I commenced the writing of a moral tale—finding it swell to a rather unwieldy size—I destroy'd the manuscript and chang'd it to a novel."—***L&J***, vol. 1, p. 42: May 31, 1820.

The question of just how long Cooper had been working on his "moral tale" and the number of pages it would require before a writer like Cooper would use the term "unwieldy," suggest that the "moral tale" laid the groundwork for what was afterwards to become ***Precaution***.
A hint at a possible time frame of composition is provided in the same letter of May 31:

> "The arrangements for the late election and the subsequent death of the Mother of Mrs. Cooper having compelled me to remain at home for the last two or three months…."

Yet even a time frame of "two or three months" would be a signal accomplishment.

Wayne Franklin asserts, "He was energized by a combination of naiveté and calculation" **[19]**
"Calculation," with regard to duping his readers into believing that the novel was a republished "British import" in order to augment sales, rings true. But "naiveté" seems less likely. Cooper was sounding out the book market to see whether it could indeed support an American novelist.

V. It Rubbed Me the Wrong Way

As George E. Hastings pointed out in his 1940 article, "How Cooper Became a Novelist," one, and only one, book stands out: Jane Austen's posthumously published novel, ***Persuasion.***

Persuasion, one of Austen's shortest novels, has sometimes been regarded as a possible "unfinished" work**.** Yet Cooper's "disgust" surely went deeper than questions of style. If there is any truth to the anecdote that already the very first pages provoked Cooper's ire, a quick look at content which would rankle Cooper will also determine major changes as reflected in ***Precaution'***s plot.

Persuasion was published some six months after Jane Austen's mysterious and premature death at the age of 42, on July 18, 1817. Her brother Henry arranged for ***Persuasion'***s publication along with that of ***Northanger Abbey***, completed but unpublished in 1803. Also, as her novels thus far had all been published anonymously, the novelist's identity was finally, posthumously, revealed.

That Cooper was able to take events in ***Persuasion*** and *recast* them into subject matter much more in conformity with his sensibilities, does not mean that ***Precaution*** is an "imitation" of ***Persuasion*** even though the overt structure is, in numerous cases, maintained. The striking deviations from ***Persuasion***, namely, *the difference*, will be in the crosshairs of this article.

VI. It Rubbed Me the Right Way

In Cooper's letter of 15-16? October 1820 to his New York bookseller and publisher Andrew Thompson Goodrich, Cooper makes the following statement:

> "It [=***Precaution***] is not ***Cœlebs*** but it is in this respect but little behind ***Discipline***—*plot much better* [*my emphasis*]…" —***Letters and Journals***, vol. 1, p. 66.

Here again, Cooper's reference to his own plot suggests that it was not grabbed out of thin air.

Hannah More's hugely successful novel, ***Cœlebs in Search of a Wife***, **[20]** represented a yardstick by which Cooper could measure the success of his novel. Also, Mary Brunton's didactic novel ***Discipline***, aimed at inculcating Christian values into an unruly daughter, provided religious coordinates. **[21]**

Cooper was right in his positive assessment of ***Precaution***'s plot, which was much more dynamic.

On the other hand, both readers and reviewers have often bemoaned Cooper's forays throughout his literary career into exposition as both tedious and an unwanted break upon plot development. One wonders if Cooper might have regarded the expository didactic aspect of Hannah More's writing as providing him with a license to comment freely on his own plots.

Apart from the 1820 letter to Goodrich, the name Hannah More crops up twenty years later in a letter to Cooper's niece, Mrs. Hannah Woolson (Hannah Cooper Pomeroy). The niece, Hannah, 34 years of age, had just lost three of her six children to typhoid fever. Cooper invites her to spend the summer in Cooperstown and, by way of offering some consolation for her terrible loss, injects a pious thought from Hannah More. **[22]** In other words, the legacy of Hannah More extended into the 1840's. (One wonders if the niece's name "Hannah" and the subject of three dead "daughters" might have jolted Cooper's memory.)

VII. How to Save Your Estate: The Elliots of *Persuasion* vs. The Moseleys of *Precaution*

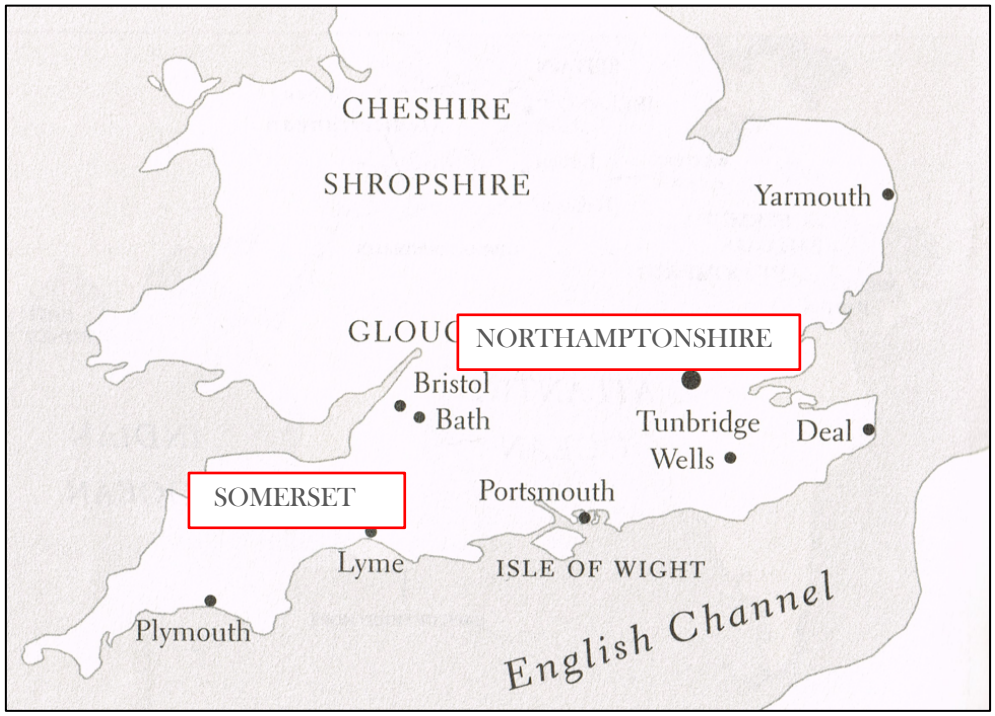
Two aristocratic British families with large estates are contrasted in the first chapter of each novel. The question of upkeep and how to reduce expenses is of paramount consideration. One tends to think of the PBS "Downton Abbey," where a similar problem arises.

Sir Walter Elliot, baronet, of Kellynch-hall (Somerset, southwestern England), in ***Persuasion*****,** is profligate and enamored of himself: "Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter…." **[23]** Due to a profligate lifestyle beyond his means, he is hopelessly indebted yet unable to conceive of sacrificing any of the amenities he enjoys. His wife, thirteen years deceased, who had been able to at least "soften or conceal" his acts of immoderation, is no longer present to somewhat disguise his excesses.

The question of how to make ends meet predominates in chapter one. Given the financial insecurity confronting Cooper, it can definitely be argued that Jane Austen was thrusting an unforgiving mirror into Cooper's face and asking him if he did not recognize some of Sir Elliot's features in his own face.**[24]** Cooper's decision to write a "better" book may well have been at the same time a decision to write a "nicer" book, one in which a reworking of ***Persuasion***'s House of Elliot into ***Precaution***'s House of Moseley might become much more to Cooper's taste: a tale in which his own failings might at least be somewhat obscured by showing the changes necessary to create a Cooper world as it *ought to be* or, even better, *should have been*.

In contrast to the inept and narcissistic baronet, Sir Walter Elliot, who is wallowing in debt with his estate in dissolution and who, all the while, seems incapable of understanding how to reduce expenses, Cooper begins ***Precaution*** with Sir Edward Moseley, baronet, "of Moseley Hall, B——, Northamptonshire," East Midlands **[25]**, a man of limited intelligence yet enlightened enough to take decided action to save his family estate. Sir Elliot, on the other hand, is incapable of lowering himself to a residence in the country (in contrast to Sir Edward Moseley of ***Precaution***) and opts for the gaiety of Bath.

Not the baronet Sir Edward but his extravagant mother was responsible for the near loss of the Moseley estate. Sir Edward, on receiving his inheritance, had prudently embarked upon an austerity program. This required seventeen years of economy while residing in his "respectable mansion" **[26]** in the country. At the beginning of the novel, the reader is informed that seventeen years of abstinence had elapsed, and now, one and one-half years later, Sir Edward is allowing himself the amenities which he had so long forsaken. His London house in St. James's Square, which had been let for so many years, would now serve as the family's winter quarters. As an added reward for his parsimony, his children's futures are now on solid financial ground. Although Cooper can point to Sir Edward's "wise" decision, suggesting a modicum of wisdom, he allows that the baronet had only limited "brilliance."**[27]** Whether this negative assessment should be regarded as a reference to Sir Edward's laissez-faire attitude toward the spouses his daughters might choose is left up in the air.



Persuasion: Kellynch-hall, Somerset. ***Precaution***: Moseley Hall, Northamptonshire. **[28]**

The difference between ***Precaution*** and ***Persuasion*** with regard to saving an imperiled estate could not be clearer: ***Persuasion*** depicts Sir Walter Elliot's estate as encumbered with debt due to Sir Walter's own incompetency and vanity. This indictment strikes too close to home as reflecting unfavorably on Cooper's own person. Consequently, in showing what he, Cooper, would have done if given the chance, the "Redeemer," Sir Edward Moseley, through

a stringent austerity program, has saved his estate and provided financial security for his children.

VIII. Daughters, Daughters, Everywhere!

Sir Walter Elliot has three daughters: Elizabeth (the eldest daughter, unmarried and fearfully approaching 30), Anne (two years younger, also unmarried), and Mary (4 years younger than Elizabeth but married to well-to-do Charles Musgrove, hence Mary, the youngest, was moved up a notch to "number two" in social status in the Elliot family.

Anne is the heroine of the novel. Her family sometimes forgets she even exists. Particularly her vain father and haughty elder sister do not recognize Anne's intelligence and potential. In this family, Elizabeth is the decided favorite and has complete control of the Elliot household. Anne is viewed as "haggard," her youthful "bloom" having faded, and, a most unfounded conclusion, rather useless. The reader is informed that eight and one-half years prior, Anne was coerced — shall we venture "persuaded?"—into rejecting her suitor, Captain Wentworth, whom she deeply loved, but who was regarded as socially "unacceptable" as he was "navy" and, at the time, without notable possessions. Sir Walter did not tire of lambasting the ugliness of those in the navy as well as the shortened longevity the profession exacted. He also felt that the navy was all too often used as a springboard to catapult men of lowly origins into "undue distinction."**[29]** The latter points would obviously have rankled the young Cooper who, even in 1823, was still attempting to receive his final 20 months of pay from the Navy. **[30]** Cooper's young wife, Susan Augusta DeLancey, had made her husband vow to tender his resignation. Cooper was nonetheless proud of his service as a midshipman and never regarded it as a hindrance in social circles.

Sir Edward Moseley, of Moseley Hall, has three daughters, Laura, Jane and Emily. Emily, the youngest, is the heroine. Laura, in Chapter One, is to be married to Francis Ives, a future rector as soon as his position is established. Unlike the deceased Lady Elliot, Lady Anne Moseley is still alive and anxious to find well-situated husbands for her daughters. As with Sir Walter, character does not seem to count as much as title and possessions.

IX. The Rejection of Favoritism

In ***Precaution*** there is no overt favoritism in Sir Walter Moseley's immediate family. In ***Persuasion,*** apart from Anne's unfair treatment at the hands of her family, there is the tragic tale of "poor Richard," the unruly son of Mary's parents-in-law," the Musgroves, who had joined the navy and died while in service. The tale of Dick Moseley's fate may also have been viewed by Cooper in the context of his own life as a midshipman.

> "The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son, and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea, because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard of, and scarcely at all regretted, when the intelligence of his death abroad had worked its way to Uppercross, two years before." —***Persuasion***, Ch. VI, p. 96.

David M. Shapard, annotator of ***Persuasion***, makes the following statement:

> "This passage, especially the statement that the Musgroves were fortunate that their son died, has shocked some readers. Its cynicism does reflect a tough-minded attitude frequently found in eighteenth-century literature, and in Jane Austen, though usually in more modulated form." —***Persuasion***, Ch. VI, p. 97.

To add insult to injury, the reader is then informed that the hypocritical Lady Musgrove, years after the loss of her unwanted and unloved midshipman son, suddenly has fits of bereavement although at the time of his death, she could not have cared less**.[31]** As the unruly Cooper had served in the U.S. Navy as a midshipman after his expulsion from Yale, it seems likely that the fate of the Musgroves' son may have come as a bit of a shock.

To illustrate the consequences of discrimination within a family, Cooper spins the tragic tale of an uncle of the novel's hero. The unfortunate Francis Denbigh, who, due to the accident of a pock-marked face, had to play second fiddle to his younger and more attractive brother George. George felt deep affection for his brother and had no idea of Francis's love for Marian. When George and Marian married, Francis was driven to madness, deserted the ancestral home and was, by sheer chance, discovered seven years later, no longer in his right mind and soon to expire. Cooper's comment on "poor Francis:"

> "Had Francis Denbigh, at this age, met with a guardian clear-sighted enough to fathom his real character, and competent to direct his onward course, he would have become an ornament to his name and country, and a useful member of society. But no such guide existed. His natural guardians, in his particular case, were his worst enemies." —***Precaution***, Ch. XLII, p. 430.

It goes without saying that the younger brother George, the father of our hero, reaped the benefits of Francis's demise. In a deliciously humorous autobiographical description of George's married life, Cooper wrote:

> "George on marrying resigned his commission at the earnest entreaties of his wife [just as Cooper had done!] and retired to one of her seats [the Angevine Farm in Scarsdale, Westchester County, was a gift to Cooper's wife from her father **[32]**] to the enjoyment of ease and domestic love [Cooper, the gentleman farmer with a taste for landscaping]. The countess was enthusiastically attached to him; and as motives for the indulgence of coquetry were wanting, her character became gradually improved by the contemplation of the excellent qualities of her generous husband."
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XLIV, p. 457

One wonders whether Cooper had the pluck to read these humorous lines to his despondent wife.

X. Dangerous Ladies

Before beginning with dangerous men, one should stress that Cooper distributes guilt regardless of gender. Unlike in ***Persuasion***, which, apart from Sir Walter Elliot, who is unsuccessfully and with considerable lackluster placed in the sights of the widow with the protruding tooth, Mrs. Clay **[33]**, ***Precaution*** offers jarring examples.

The question is put in ***Precaution***, "Which is worse?—an intriguing daughter or a managing mother?" The consensus naturally fell on the intriguing daughter. **[34]**

In the tragic case of Francis Denbigh, his brother George can only be faulted for his own ignorance of the situation. The culprit was a woman, the scheming Marian, our hero's mother.

> "Marian Lumley was the only surviving child of the last Duke of Annerdale, with whom had expired the highest honors of his house. But the Earldom of Pendennyss, with numerous ancient baronies, were titles in fee; and together with his princely estates had descended to his daughter as heir-general of the family. A peeress in her own right, with an income far exceeding her utmost means of expenditure, the lovely Countess of Pendennyss was a prize aimed at by all the young nobles of the empire.
>
> "Educated in the midst of flatterers and dependants she had become haughty, vain, and supercilious; still she was lovely, and no one knew better how to practice the most winning arts of her sex, when whim or interest prompted her to trial."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch, XLIV, pp. 451-452.

A marriage with the elder son Francis would catapult her to the enviable possession of a "ducal coronet." Hence, Marian's decision to win Francis over. Love was not even a consideration, only her overweening desire for ever higher status. On George's return from America, Marian wavered, and herself succumbing to the good-looking and socially adept George, Francis was summarily cast overboard. Due to Marian's capriciousness, Francis disappeared into the darkness of own despondency only to die a madman after seven years.

A second example of an intriguing daughter is Caroline Harris, Sir William Harris's only child, whom he spoiled rotten. Sir William is a friend of Sir Edward Moseley. While discussing the snares set by a conniving lady on the prowl for a husband, the Marquess of Eltringham offered the following means of self-preservation:

> "I view these husband-hunting ladies as pirates on the ocean of love, and lawful objects for any roving cruiser like myself to fire at. At one time I was simple enough to retire as they advanced, but you know, madam," turning to Mrs. Wilson with a droll look, "flight only encourages pursuit, so I now give battle in self-defence."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch, XXXIV, p. 343.

The "roving cruiser" of Eltringham successfully escaped capture by Caroline Harris. Her next victim was the somewhat dim-witted Captain Henry Jarvis, who, sadly, was not a peer. Undaunted, Caroline hatched out a plan with Captain Jarvis's mother to elevate Henry into the august ranks of peerage through a bribe. The plot was, however, due to indiscreet utterances and Captain Jarvis losing part of the money at the gambling table, foiled. Afterwards, the Jarvises discreetly disappear into a remote part of the country. The ultimate fate of the status-aspiring Caroline Harris is not related. **[35]**

XI. The Watchdogs: Mrs. Wilson of *Precaution* vs. Mrs. Russell of *Persuasion*

Francis Denbigh met a tragic end because there was no guardian. Cooper's ***Precaution*** takes as its leitmotif a very "cautious" approach to raising a child, and daughters are in the limelight. The striking difference between ***Persuasion*** and ***Precaution*** is the much greater emancipation, maturity and good judgment evinced by Anne Elliot compared with ***Precaution***'s rather suppressed Emily Moseley. Emily's every move is watched by Lady Charlotte Wilson, Sir

Edward's sister, whereas Anne Elliot, despite her godmother Lady Russel, enjoys considerable freedom to do as she pleases.

Emily's complete dependence on and absolute faith in Mrs. Wilson is seen in the following lines:

> "Emily knew her [=Mrs. Wilson's] heart, felt her love, and revered her principles too deeply, to throw away an admonition, or disregard a precept, that fell from the lips she knew never spoke idly or without consideration." —***Precaution***, Ch. VI, p. 73.

Mrs. Russel is not, in Anne's case, "Big Sister Watching." Even with men, Anne is not reluctant to get acquainted and learn something about them, whereas a Mrs. Wilson would first have to "sniff them out." Mrs. Wilson, in her godmother function, is determined to see to it that Emily's upbringing is such that she will not only find the right husband but that she should find the right *Christian* husband who adheres to the mandates of the church.

Anne's moral watchdog is the widow Mrs. Russell, who is not related to Sir Walter. Nowhere in the novel is there any mention of Mrs. Russell's determination to make Anne a good Christian although she is definitely interested in keeping Anne from making a mistake in her choice of partners.

Yet Mrs. Russell sadly does not exhibit a higher moral stature than Lady Moseley of ***Precaution***. In contrast to Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Russell can be subject to emotions incompatible with Christian humility. **[36]** Although Anne allowed herself to be "persuaded" by Mrs. Russell and the Elliot family to reject the man she loved, she now knows, after eight years since her broken engagement, that it was a tragic mistake to have succumbed to their reservations. **[37]**

In the person of Mrs. Wilson, Cooper's emphasis on a Christian upbringing in a woman is coupled with an implicit rejection of Mrs. Russell as a worthy guide for Anne's moral life. In general, it can be said that Cooper's affirmation of the importance of imbuing a strong sense of religion in a young person's mind (and particularly a young woman's) is a hallmark that characterizes him as an American writer who felt that it was a writer's duty to uphold a strong moral stance. Although Cooper specifically stated in the novel that the author was a man, **[38]** ***Precaution*** was initially taken as a ladies' novel whose author was both British and a woman**.[39]**

XII. What are the "Best Books" for a Young Lady?

Even the question of literature is subjected to strictures approaching censorship:

> "…Mrs. Wilson had inculcated the necessity of restraint, in selecting the books for her perusal, so strenuously on her niece, that what first had been the effects of obedience and submission, had now settled into taste and habit; and Emily seldom opened a book unless in search of information; or if it were the indulgence of a less commendable spirit, it was an indulgence chastened by taste and judgment that lessened the danger, if it did not entirely remove it."
>
> —***Precaution***, Michigan Historical Reprint Series, Ch. XXII, p. 215

Apart from Mrs. Wilson's iron adherence to the right "principles," books should serve a practical purpose of providing solid information and teach that which is "useful." This message

hearkens back to the restrictive teachings of Hannah More (1745-1833). In her ***Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune***, we read:

> "The chief end to be proposed in cultivating the understanding of women, is to qualify them for practical purposes of life. Their knowledge is not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor ever in any profession; but it is to come out of conduct. A lady studies, not that she may qualify herself to become an orator or a pleader; not that she may learn to debate, but to act. She is to read the best books, not so much to enable her to talk of them as to bring the improvement which they furnish, to the rectification of her principles and the formation of her habits. The great uses of study are to enable her to regulate her own mind, and to be useful to others."
>
> —Third Edition, 1799, pp. 1-2

Due to Mrs. Wilson's principles, which Emily had inculcated, only the "best books" were instinctively read:

> "It might be said Emily Moseley had never read a book that contained a sentiment or inculcated an opinion improper for her sex or dangerous to her morals; and it was not difficult for those who knew the fact, to fancy they could perceive the consequences in her guileless countenance and innocent deportment."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XII, p. 127.

Although ***Persuasion*** offers no concrete prohibitions as to the proper literature a young lady should read, Anne is able to suggest to Captain Benwick (supposedly a man still in mourning due to the loss of his fiancée) —"such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering, as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest examples of moral and religious endurances." **[40]**

XIII. Poetry or Prose?

Anne also adds a word of caution regarding poetry:

> "…she ventured to hope that he [=Captain Benwick] did not always read only poetry; and to say, that she thought it was a misfortune of poetry, to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could estimate it truly, were the very feelings which ought to taste it sparingly."
>
> —***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. I, Ch. XI, p. 192.

Certainly, Cooper adopted Anne's admonition in ***Precaution*** with regard to Jane Moseley's exorbitant and often uncritical love of poetry. Of Jane, Cooper wrote.

> "…poetry was the food she lived on, and in works of the imagination she found her greatest delight." —***Precaution***, Ch. VI, p. 71

When a neighbor's "vulgar" daughter, a Miss Jarvis, lavished praise on the Irish national poet Thomas Moore (1779-1852), Jane, sensing "a perverted taste," "took a volume of Moore's songs, and very coolly consigned them to the flames." **[41]** Needless to say, Moore would have

preferred having his work judged on its own merit rather than on the merits or demerits of a Miss Jarvis.

XIV. A Lively Imagination

A lively imagination is regarded as a pitfall for a young lady. The question, "What is love?" posed by godmother Mrs. Charlotte Wilson when conversing with Lady Anne Moseley. Mrs. Wilson, not waiting for a response, gives her own assessment:

> "In nineteen cases in twenty of what we call affairs of the heart, it would be better to term them affairs of the *imagination* [=*Cooper's emphasis*]."
> —***Precaution***, Ch. VII, p. 83]

Mrs. Wilson's assessment of Jane:

> "I think her admirably calculated to make an invaluable wife and mother; but she is so much under the influence of her fancy, that she seldom gives her heart an opportunity of displaying its excellences; and again, she dwells so much upon imaginary perfections, that adulation has become necessary to her."
> —***Precaution***, Ch. VII, p. 84

Jane, in ***Precaution***, serves as Cooper's paradigm of an uncurbed imagination. Her poetic leanings make her an easy prey to an unscrupulous suitor, Colonel Egerton, who is able to conquer her heart through poetry. When Egerton's disreputable past surfaces, Jane is devastated, although her "love" for Egerton may best be classified as infatuation. Later in the novel, she encounters a reputable suitor, "the Rev. and Hon. Mr. Harland, … son of an Irish earl," **[42]** a young clergyman who "now Lord Harland" **[43]**, asks for Jane's hand in marriage. Jane, whose heart is still a "slave" to the absconded Egerton, rejects Harland's proposal. Cooper adds the following comment.

> "It was the misfortune of Jane to keep the world too constantly before her, and to lose sight of her really depraved nature, to relish the idea of humbling herself so low in the opinion of a fellow-creature [i.e., confessing the Egerton episode to Harland]. The refusal of Harland's offer was the consequence, although she had begun to feel an esteem for him, that would no doubt have given rise to an attachment in time, far stronger and more deeply seated than her passing fancy for Colonel Egerton had been." —***Precaution***, Ch. XXXV, p. 356

One can easily imagine, given the context of ***Precaution***, with its emphasis on the spiritual and very Christian aspect of shoring up human character and protecting a young lady from a broken heart and consequent disillusionment, that Jane's rejection of Harland was no doubt more tragic that her "passing fancy for Egerton." At the end of the novel, Jane, like the proud Elizabeth in ***Persuasion***, is still single with no suitor in sight.

"Imagination" in Cooper's ***Tales for Fifteen*** (1823), published under the pseudonym of Jane Morgan, provides a similar warning. Julia, the young lady of the tale, lets her imagination run wild only to discover that the love she feels for the perfect man (whom she has never met), a fictive "Antonio," was the willful creation of her a "supposedly best friend, Anna, who, without the slightest thought of the possible consequences, had built him up in her letters to Julia!

Living in a dream world was not only a potential threat to Jane but an actual threat to old Benfield:

> "Like Mr. Benfield **[44]**, she [=Jane] was in danger of raising an ideal idol, and of spending the remainder of her days in devotion to qualities, rarely if ever found identified with a person that never had existed."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XXVIII, pp. 276-277

The epigraph at the beginning of "Imagination" is taken from Shakespeare's ***Midsummer Night's Dream***:

> "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again;
> Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note, So is mine eye enthralled by thy shape;
> And thy fair virtues force perforce doth move me,
> On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee."
>
> —Act III, Scene 1, lines 143-147.

The Queen of the Fairies, Titania, has been maliciously drugged with a few drops of "the western flower", causing her to fall in love with the first creature she should encounter." The first creature she beholds is the weaver Bottom, whose head has been "translated" into an ass's head. So, when Titania speaks of being "enthralled by thy shape," it is the shape of an ass.

Bottom's response to Titania's statement of "love at first sight" (and sound):

> "Me-thinkes mistresse, you should have little reason for that: and yet to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together, now-adayes."
>
> —Act III, Scene 1, lines 148-150.**[45]**

XV. A Discerning Nature

Jane's pride and consequent unwillingness to "humble herself" is contrasted with the reservations of both Emily and her godmother, who were quick to recognize that all was not right with Colonel Egerton.

Emily to Mrs Wilson:

> "Did you hear him [=Egerton] talk of those poems, and attempt to point out the beauties of several works? I thought everything he uttered was referred to taste, and that not a very natural one; at least," she added with a laugh, "it differed greatly from mine. He seemed to forget altogether there was such a thing as principle: and then he spoke of some woman to Jane, who had left her father for her lover, with so much admiration of her feelings, to take up with poverty and love, as he called it, in place of condemning her want of filial piety—I am sure, aunt, if you had heard that, you would not admire him so much." —***Precaution***, Ch. VI, p. 75.

Anne, in ***Persuasion***, is, like Emily, adept in sizing up a man's character. Lady Russell, unlike Mrs. Wilson of ***Precaution***, is not so fortunate. But, then again, Anne has outgrown a Lady Russell and can manage on her own. When the questionable heir presumptive of the Elliot estate, Cousin William Walter Elliot was making overtures to Anne, and Lady Russell even felt him "deserving her" **[46]**, Anne sensed that she really did not know the man:

> "Mr. Elliot was rational, discreet, polished,—but he was not open. There was never any burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight, at the evil or good of others. This, to Anne, was a decided imperfection." —***Persuasion***, Vol. II, Ch. V, p.304

A major difference between the two novels is the question of just how much oversight and guidance a young lady may require to be able to render one of the most important decisions of her life: namely, who to marry. In ***Persuasion***, Lady Russell's estimation of the situation was not always correct. In ***Precaution***, Lady Wilson generally sums up the situation at a glance.

XVI. The Masquerade

Persuasion, on the very first page, sets out Sir Walter Elliot's social status in the ***Baronetage***. In ***Precaution***, instead of the amazing directness of ***Persuasion***, the reader must wait till Chapter 40 **[47]** before Cooper reveals George Denbigh's true lineage in ***Debrett's Peerage***. Indeed, ***Precaution***'s plot is much concerned with unravelling that entangled lineage, which has been coyly concealed by Cooper for most of the novel. The question, "What's in a name?", takes on new and plot-relevant meaning in ***Precaution*** while leading the reader through numerous entangling genealogical escapades. In the meantime, the reader and main characters of the novel, are often left in a state of confusion as to George Denbigh's true identity. As it turns out, Emily's George Denbigh is indeed Lord Lumley, just as he is Earl Pendennyss.

It was Jane, who first began to suspect that there was more behind the man named George Denbigh than meets the eye:

> "How happens it that the death of old Mr. Denbigh was announced as plain Geo. Denbigh, Esq., if he was the brother of a duke? Said Jane, forgetting for a moment the presence of Dr. and Mrs. Ives, in her surviving passion for genealogy: "should he not have been called Lord George, or honorable?"
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XXXVIII, p. 391

Cooper's lame explanation of how the name "Lumley" had somehow been forgotten may, or may not, strike the reader as convincing:

> "The name of Lord Lumley, now Earl of Pendennyss, was known to the whole British nation; but the long retirement of his father and mother had driven them almost from the recollection of friends. Even Mrs. Wilson supposed her favorite hero a Lumley. Penndennyss Castle had been for centuries the proud residence of that family; and the change of name in its possessor was forgotten with the circumstances that led to it."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XLV, p. 468

Whether Lady Anne Moseley's ignorance can add authenticity to the above assertion, is far from certain:

> "These Denbighs could not be people of much importance—I have never heard the name before."
>
> "It is the family name of the Duke of Derwent, I believe," dryly remarked Sir Edward. —***Precaution***, Ch. VI, p. 70

Pendennyss, incognito Denbigh, had even taken a bullet for Emily when a loaded gun was accidentally fired in her direction [Ch. XVIII], and was much admired for his courage. Due to his disguise, he was mistakenly implicated as a result of a mislaid pocketbook for severe misconduct with regard to the lovely Bath incognita, the widow, Mrs. Julia Fitzgerald of Spain, referred to in Chapter One. As it turned out, the villain was naturally Egerton. Emily, kept in the dark as to Denbigh's true identity, had no other choice than to reject his proposal of marriage.

Through Mrs. Wilson's unrelenting efforts to point Emily to religion for spiritual support following unpleasant revelations about Denbigh (which later turn out to be spurious **[48]**), Emily has been better equipped than Jane to master her feelings. Yet it cannot be said that her feelings for Denbigh/alias Lumley/alias Pendennyss have been completely extinguished:

> "She never indulged in romantic reflections in which the image of Denbigh's was associated. This she had hardly done in her happiest moments; and his marriage [=fake news!], if nothing else had interfered, now absolutely put it out of the question. But, although a Christian, and an humble and devout one, Emily Moseley was a woman, and had loved ardently, confidingly, and gratefully. Marriage is the business of life with her sex,—with all, next to the preparation for a better world,—and it cannot be supposed that a first passion in a bosom like that of our heroine was to be suddenly erased and to leave no vestiges of its existence."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XXXVIII, pp. 386-387.

The unanswered question of why an earl would stoop to a disguise is at least partially answered due to the death of his mother, who left a letter confessing to the immoral life of a coquette: "Self was my idol," while urging George and his sister Marian "to place reliance on that Heavenly Parent who will never desert those who seek him in sincerity and love." **[49]** When his ailing father died during Francis Ives' first sermon, the death notice simply read "Died, suddenly, at B----, on the 20th instant, George Denbigh, Esq., aged 63." **[50]** Why? Was it undue press exposure of his parents' history Pendennyss was trying to hide? Or, being forewarned by his mother's confessions, was he seeking an adequate wife who could love him for his own sake rather than for his vast fortune—Hannah More's "Cœlebs in Search of a Wife?" In this case, was the object of his deception simply to become better acquainted with the lovely Emily? **[51]** Cooper leaves the reader squirming for a convincing answer. Or, shall the reader really attach importance to the following statement, which suggests the caprice of a whim:

> "From the same motives that had influenced him before—a wish to indulge, undisturbed by useless ceremony, his melancholy reflections—he desired that his name not be mentioned." —***Precaution***, Ch. XLV, p. 468

It should be pointed out that Denbigh had an unusual accomplice: Dr. Ives, unbeknown to the Moseleys, had been his deceased father's chaplain. It was while visiting the Ives family that the good rector was constrained to secrecy regarding Denbigh's actual name. Pitying Denbigh for the loss of his father, Dr. Ives consented, while adding:

> "[Ives] laughingly declared it was bad enough for a divine to be accessory to, much less aiding in a deception; and that he knew if Emily and Mrs. Wilson learnt of his imposition, he would lose ground in their favor by the discovery."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XLV, p. 469

In the final chapter, Dr. Ives premonition is confirmed when Mrs. Wilson states:

> "The only unpleasant thing I have ever observed in him [=Pendennyss]," said Mrs. Wilson gravely, "is the suspicion which induced him to adopt the disguise in which he entered our family." —***Precaution***, Ch. XLIX, p. 512

Dr. Ives' response:

> "He did not adopt it, madam—chance and circumstances drew it around him accidentally; and when you consider the peculiar state of his mind from the discovery of his mother's misconduct—his own great wealth and rank—it is not so surprising that he should yield to deception, rather harmless than injurious."
> —***Ibid.***

The reader is likely to sympathize with Mrs. Wilson's objection to George Denbigh's (and Dr. Ives') conduct, which, on close analysis, was indeed injurious and definitely not forthright. That the plot turns on the Earl of Pendennyss' deception, which hardly seems in keeping with pronounced "Christian" principles, is the great anomaly of the novel. The plot of ***Persuasion*** does not turn on a deception by Captain Wentworth, Anne's husband-to-be, "eight years and a half" **[52]** after the initial engagement was broken off. Indeed, it will be remembered that Anne's rejection of the disreputable Cousin Elliot was his lack of "openness." **[53]** Although Anne was "persuaded" to break off the initial engagement to Wentworth, she is definitely not a two-time loser. In ***Persuasion*** she now has a mind of her own, is capable of questioning Lady Russell's judgment (which is indeed sometimes faulty) and is alive to the weaknesses of those around her. In spite of Anne's rather liberated mindset, which allows her considerable freedom with regard to social contacts, Jane Austen could write the following to her niece:

> "You may *perhaps* like the Heroine, as she is almost too good for me."
> —***The Annotated Persuasion***, p. 317, footnote 28, Letter of March 23, 1817

One wonders what Jane Austen, had she lived, might have thought of the heroine of ***Precaution***— sainthood?

XVII. "Lumley"

The name "Lumley" in ***Precaution*** has a mystifying character. It was not enough to camouflage Pendennyss with Denbigh, but even "Lumley" is thrown in to add to the confusion. The question, "What's in a name?" becomes ever more pressing. The name "Lumley" is first mentioned at the end of Chapter 12 by Dr. Ives who intimated to his wife that he was sorry that his son Francis had not chosen "my little Emily" instead of Emily's elder sister Laura. He then goes on to drop the name "Lumley" in connection with Emily:

> "There is but one man I know that I could wish to give Emily to: it is Lumley."
> ***Precaution***, Ch. XII, p. 127.

Not quite 300 pages later (Ch. XL, p. 415) when finally confronted with the shock of ***Debrett's Peerage*** is the reader informed that "Lumley" is indeed Pendennyss! **[54]**

The tricky use of "Lumley" in ***Precaution*** may be enervating and require the reader to hold his breath until he nearly faints, but it at least serves the questionable objective of obscuring Pendennyss' ancestry. ***Persuasion*** does not play such games with the reader. **[55]**

XVIII. Off to Fight the Good Fight

The bonds of wedlock now secured, the final lines of ***Persuasion*** read thus:

> "Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less, the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance."

Cooper was obviously not happy with leaving a questionable future for Emily and George hanging up in the air. The result: the earl joined his regiment ("the pride of the army" **[56]**) and set forth to fight the Napoleonic War.

Emily's parting words to George are particularly moving:

> "Ah! Pendennyss—my husband," sobbed Emily, sinking on his bosom, "take with you my prayers—my love—everything that can console you—everything that may profit you. I will not tell you to be careful of your life; your duty teaches you that. As a soldier, expose it; as a husband guard it; and return to me as you leave me, a lover, the dearest of men, and a Christian."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XLVII, p. 488.

Pendennyss in Chapter 48 **[57]** prolongs the life of a mortally wounded Egerton, who is about to be slain by a Frenchman (the attacking cuirassier's arm was severed). When Pendennyss afterwards returns to the dying Egerton, who expressly requested his presence, Egerton confesses his misdeeds before expiring. **[58]** Sadly, Cooper leaves the content of those confessions to the reader's imagination.

A British novel of manners has been transformed in these final chapters into an historical romance. Whether Pendennyss at Waterloo **[59]** was composed at the same time as ***The Spy*** was launched or whether the conclusion of ***Precaution*** may have led Cooper to move from the Napoleonic War on European soil to America's preceding War of Independence is tantalizing. A historical thread connecting the two seems apparent. **[60]**

XIX. The Legacy of *Precaution*

A) That Better Book: The Dare

The notion "one-upmanship" as a marked characteristic of Cooper, reflecting his willingness to take risks and his strong sense of competitiveness, receives comprehensive treatment in

Professor Steven Harthorn's eye-opening dissertation ***James Fenimore Cooper, Professional Authorship, and the American Literary Marketplace, 1838-1852***.

Certainly the notion of the "dare," i.e., that he could indeed write a better book was not limited to Cooper tackling Jane Austen's ***Persuasion*** in ***Precaution***. Only three years later, ***The Pilot*** was a direct attack on Sir Walter Scott's ***The Pirate*** (1822). Cooper's ***The History of the Navy of the United States of America*** (1839) was geared to overhaul Thomas Clark's ***Naval History of the United States: From the Commencement of the Revolutionary War to the Present Time*** (1814). ***Mercedes of Castile*** (1840) was an unsuccessful attempt to outdo Washington Irving's then definitive four-volume ***Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus***" (1828) & William Hickling Prescott's ***A History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*** (1838). And finally, ***Ned Myers; or, A Life before the Mast*** (1843) was an obvious reaction to Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s ***Two Years before the Mast*** (1840). **[61]**

The characterization of Cooper as "ungovernable," i.e., a maverick, capable of lashing out in literary directions his publishers might warn him against, no doubt led, in several instances, to ill-considered productions. ***Home as Found*** (1838) is perhaps the most notorious instance of miscalculation although even Cooper, on the very day it was published, was aware of his own mistake. **[62]**

B) The Religious Imperative—Love God!—and the Theological Argument for Self-Sacrifice as Exemplified in "The Helmsman of Lake Erie"

The strong religious overtone of ***Precaution*** is a hallmark of Cooper's writings. Cooper felt that, as a writer, it was his duty to uphold certain moral standards in his novels. ***Persuasion*** may mention churchgoing, but the word "Christian" does not crop up once except with reference to a young lady's "Christian name." **[63]** "Christianity" is also never mentioned.

Precaution introduces Cooper's major Christian theme which is repeated time and again in his succeeding works: the religious imperative, "Love God!""

> "It is a dreadful truth, that the bonds of natural affection can be broken by injustice and contumely; and it is yet more to be deplored, that when from such causes we loosen the ties habit and education have drawn around us, a reaction in our feelings commences; we seldom cease to love, but we begin to hate. Against such awful consequences it is one of the most solemn duties of the parent to provide in season; and *what surer safeguard is there, than to inculcate those feelings which teach the mind to love God, and in so doing induce love to the whole human family*?" [*—my emphasis*] **[64]**

By loving God, we learn to love the whole of humanity. This opens the door for the need to devote oneself whether in small ways or by making the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of others. The love of God becomes a guarantee for personal integrity and the honesty of the individual:

> "He was known, from one end of lake [*sic]* Erie to the other, by the name of honest John Maynard; and the secret of his honesty to his neighbors was his love of God."
>
> — "The Helmsman of Lake Erie:" ***The Church of England Magazine***, No. 527, June 7, 1845, pp. 365-366.

The ability to face death without fear is the mark of the true Christian:

> "Christianity alone can make us good soldiers in any cause, for he who knows how to live, is always the least afraid to die."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XLVIII, p. 498.

The deep faith that this life is a mere "probation" to a better existence after death is evident in both "The Helman of Lake Erie" and in ***Precaution***:

> "He [=John Maynard] died the death of a Christian hero—I had almost said, of a martyr; his spirit was commended into his Father's hands and his body sleeps by the green side of lake [*sic*] Erie."
>
> — "The Helmsman of Lake Erie:" ***The Church of England Magazine***, No. 527, June 7, 1845, pp. 365-366.

> "The peculiarity of her [=Julia Fitzgerald's] religious persuasion afforded an introduction to frequent discussions of the real opinions of that church, to which Julia had hitherto belonged, although ignorant of all its essentials and vital truths. These conversations, which were renewed repeatedly in their intercourse while under the protection of his sister [=Marian, Earl Pendennyss' sister] in London, laid the foundations of a faith which left her nothing to hope for but *the happy termination of her earthly probation* [*my emphasis*]."
>
> —***Precaution,*** Ch. XXVI, p. 257.

Mrs. Wilson insists on a true Christian for Emily's husband, and not one in "name only." It will, in the opinion of Mrs. Wilson, who has throughout the novel intrepidly "endeavored to make Emily a Christian," **[65]** lead to "happiness far exceeding anything she [=Emily] now enjoys." **[66]**

Nowadays, many would not unconditionally insist upon a future partner being a "true" Christian as a precondition to marriage, or that to be truly "religious" one must be a Christian, or that only Christians have integrity and are honest. It would appear that we have, though the years, become more tolerant of others' religious views. Yet in Cooper's times, the notion of a Christian upbringing was regarded as a way not only to inculcate values but also a means to protect a young person from making a fatal mistake in life. **[67]**

The imperative "Love God!" is the foundation of many religious faiths. Consider Judaism:

> "And Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy might." —***Deuteronomy (King James Version)***, Ch. 6, Verse 5.

C) Protestantism or Catholicism or Simply Your Own Convictions?

There is also the great dividing line between Protestant and Catholic in ***Precaution*** as exemplified in the case of the young Spanish widow Julia Fitzgerald, who, raised a secret Protestant by her sectarian Protestant mother (whom Cooper designated as a Christian *in name only*), was sent by her father to a nunnery for two years. Julia, during this time, refused to take her vows because she insisted on adhering to the Protestant faith. As chance would have it, a wounded British officer, a Major Fitzgerald, was nursed back to health by Julia in the cloister's dormitory. They married, only to enjoy one month of marital bliss before the major was killed. Afterwards, Julia is "rescued" by a "disagreeable and unknown guardian" (none other than

Egerton!), who offered "personal indignities" (one suspects this does not mean rape). She is rescued from her villainous "guardian" and brought to England by Earl Pendennyss. **[68]** The mistaken belief that George Denbigh (alias Earl Pendennyss) was the wretch, who attempted to take advantage of Julia, was the reason why Emily rejected Denbigh's marriage proposal.

Here, a taste of Julia's sentiments regarding Catholics:

> "The countess [=Julia's mother] was guilty of the unpardonable error of complaining to her child of the treatment she received from her husband; and as these conversations were held in English, and were consecrated by the tears of the mother, they made an indelible impression on the youthful mind of Julia, who grew up with the conviction that next to being a Catholic herself, the greatest evil of life was to be the wife of one."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XXVI, p. 252.

Fortunately for Julia, her father was willing to make concessions so that she could return to Spain. The following lines were written to Pendennyss:

> "My Lord,
>
> "I hasten to write you what I know it will give you pleasure to hear, concerning my future prospects in life. My uncle, General M'Carthy, has written me the cheerful tidings, that my father has consented to receive his only child, without any other sacrifice than a condition of attending the service of the Catholic Church without any professions on my side, or even an understanding that I am conforming to its peculiar tenets. This may be, in some measure, irksome at times, and possibly distressing; but the worship of God with a proper humiliation of spirit, I have learnt to consider as a privilege to us here, and I owe a duty to my earthly father of penitence and care in his later years that will justify the measure in the eyes of my heavenly One."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. XXXVII, p. 378.

Although at first reading one might assert that Catholicism is being demonized (a common practice in the United States at the time), one should note that Julia's mother, supposedly a Protestant, is not a true Christian and is also not able to instruct her daughter in the teachings of either Catholicism or Protestantism. Cooper, in his ***American Democrat***, comes down hard on religion in America, stating: "The nation is sectarian, rather than Christian." **[69]**

Also, the amazing concession of her father, freeing Julia to follow her conscience while only requiring her to attend Mass, sounds very much like Cooper. As seen in his ***Heidenmauer*** (1833), the Catholic Church can be depicted in a positive and inviting light—not simply as decadent and corrupt. **[70]** In ***The Heidenmauer***, Cooper even admits the validity of those aspects of pagan religions, which contributed to the formation of Christianity, an enlightened view far ahead of his times. Although his family was staunchly Episcopalian and Cooper not only attended church but also worked within the framework of the Episcopalian church, he did not officially join until shortly before his death and, in all likelihood, to please his family.

The letter Julia received from her uncle opens the door to a completely different model of education than that received by Emily or even, in a much more watered-down version, by Anne. Julia is allowed the opportunity to follow her conscience in making decisions regarding what is right (or wrong) in religion. She is not watched over by a godmother, who could theoretically correct every false move. She is granted a degree of maturity and discernment while allowing

"a proper humiliation of spirit." Returning to ***The American Democrat***, we can inject the following quotation, which permeates so many of Cooper's writings.

> "Religion's first lesson is humility; its fruit, charity."
> —***The American Democrat***, "On Religion."

D) Filial Piety [71]

In other words, the untutored Julia is, by Cooper's definition, already a very religious young lady. That she was not only willing but regarded it her duty to care for her father in his final years is an act of Christian charity.

Earl Pendennyss relationship to his father was also marked by "filial piety." The somewhat antiquated expression crops up often in Cooper's writings. It is a Christian duty that Julia and Pendennyss readily embrace. It will be recalled how Pendennyss cared for his ailing father to the very end, or why Emily immediately faulted Colonel Egerton for his lack filial piety when praising a tale of elopement (—p. 15 of this article). That Mrs. Wilson was deeply concerned with instilling the duty of filial piety in Emily is apparent in the following lines:

> "Mrs. Wilson had found it necessary to give her charge very different views on many subjects from those which Jane and Clara had been suffered to imbibe of themselves; but in no degree had she impaired the obligations of filial piety or family concord. Emily was, if anything, more respectful to her parents, more affectionate to her friends, than any of her connexions; for in her the warmth of natural feeling was heightened by an unvarying sense of duty."
> —***Precaution***, Ch. VIII, p. 92

Within the plot of ***Persuasion***, it is difficult to discern "filial piety" playing a major role, not that Anne's sense of duty towards her father may nonetheless be completely intact. Sir Walter Elliot and his elder daughter Elizabeth are too smitten of themselves even to take notice of Anne's presence, much less to desire her presence. Anne can lend her support to her inadequate sister Jane, who, as a mother has neither the aptitude nor the nerves for raising children:

> "But I do not know that I am of any more use in the sickroom than Charles, for I cannot always be scolding and teasing a poor child when it is ill; and you saw, this morning, that if I told him to be quiet, he was sure to begin kicking about. I have not nerves for the sort of thing."
> —***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. I, Ch. VII, p. 106.

Also, as a wife, Jane is far from exemplary, always talking behind her husband's back. Such acts of impropriety do not occur in ***Precaution***.

E) Observance of the Sabbath

Although "filial piety" is a predominant theme in ***Precaution*** in contrast to ***Persuasion***, observance of the Sabbath finds its ways into both novels. Particularly Mrs. Wilson is quick to observe and even quicker to condemn Emily's brother John, who coaxes his lovely wife Grace into going out riding rather than attending church, **[72]** or, should it be a rainy day, staying at home rather than risk catching cold. **[73]**

> "She [=Anne] distrusted the past [=Cousin Elliot's past], if not the present. The names which occasionally dropt of former associates, the allusions to former practices and pursuits, suggested suspicions not favourable of what he had been. *She saw that there had been bad habits; that Sunday travelling had been a common thing* [*my emphasis*]; that there had been a period of his life (and probably not a short one) when he had been, at least, careless in all serious matters; and, though he might now think very differently, who could answer for the true sentiments of a clever, cautious man, grown old enough to appreciate a fair character? How could it ever be ascertained that his mind was truly cleansed?"
>
> —***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. II., Ch. V, p. 304

Thus we see that Anne, like Mrs. Wilson, views travelling on the Sabbath, which would preclude church attendance, a "bad habit" and an indication of a bad character.

F) The Christian Deathbed

A recurrent theme in Cooper's works is the Christian deathbed. **[74]** Dr. Ives' son Francis, in his very first sermon as rector, chooses this topic. **[75]**

Cooper's ***The Chainbearer*** (1845) provides the ultimate depiction of a deathbed scene. Two fatally wounded men are placed in the same room and are about to die. **[76]** The question posed is whether a Christian death will ease the suffering in a dying man's final hours. One, the squatter Thousandacres, holds fast to his earthly possessions while the other, Chainbearer, is able to let go of his "earthly chains" in preparation for the life to come. Although Thousandacres may be regarded as a scoundrel, his response to his wife Prudence's appeal to "let go," can move even the most hardened souls.

Denbigh was able to save Emily's life by placing himself between Emily and the loaded gun as it discharged. At the moment she addresses Denbigh, his life still hangs upon a thread. With the rejected medicine in her hand, Emily whispers the "softest notes of persuasion," with the same emphatic repetition Thousandacres avails himself of when answering Prudence. There is a marked kinship of both style and pathos in the two seemingly disparate scenes.

> "Mr. Denbigh—dear Denbigh," said Emily, with energy, unconsciously dropping her voice into the softest notes of persuasion, "will you refuse *me?—me*, Emily Moseley, whose life you saved?" —***Precaution***, Ch. XVIII, p. 181,

> "Think no more of the lumber, my man, think no more of the lumber," said Prudence, earnestly; "time is desp'ate short at best, and yourn is shorter than common, even for a man of seventy; while etarnity has no eend. Forgit the boards, and forgit the b'ys, and forgit the gals, forgit 'arth and all it holds!"
>
> "You would n't have me forgit you, Prudence," interrupted Thousandacres, "that's been my wife, now, forty long years, and whom I tuck when she was young and comely, and that's borne me so many children, and has always been a faithful and hard-working woman—you would n't have me forget *you*!"
>
> —***The Chainbearer*** (SUNY)**,** Ch. XXVIII, p. 468**.** **[77]**

The conversion of a dying man to Christianity is often treated in Cooper's novels. ***Precaution*** also places emphasis upon the benefits of a Christian death:

> "To the Christian, dying in peace with both God and man, can it alone be ceded in the eye of reason, to pour out his existence with a smile on his quivering lip." —
> — ***Precaution***, Ch. XLVIII, pp. 497-498.

The Chainbearer describes the death of the converted land surveyor Chainbearer (Andries Coegemans) compared with that of Thousandacres:

> "That final breath in which the spirit appears to be exhaled, was calm, placid, and as easy as comports with the separation of soul and body; leaving the hard, aged, wrinkled, but benevolent countenance of the deceased, with an expression of happy repose on it, such as friends of the dead love to look upon. Of all the deaths I had witnessed, this was the most tranquil, and the best calculated to renew the hopes of a Christian." —***The Chainbearer*** (SUNY), Ch. XXIX, p. 484.

G) The Anomaly of the Ruse

Earl Pendennyss availed himself of a ruse to gain access to the Moseley family without revealing his true identity. Dr. Ives felt the brunt of Mrs. Wilson's dislike of such a deceitful maneuver as he himself was an accomplice in the deception. On the one hand, Pendennyss has a sterling character that can even win over the virtuous Emily; on the other, there is the man who would stoop to such a disguise.

Cooper's works are ultimately geared to instill moral precepts and to strengthen character. Yet his methods of presenting those works to the public could at times involve a touch of trickery, schoolboy prankishness, perhaps a bit too much hubris, and an undercurrent of mischievous humor. That ***Precaution*** was offered to the American public as a British novel apparently written by an anonymous British lady is one aspect. (Consider the pseudonym "Jane Morgan" in his ***Tales for Fifteen***.) That his self-effacing preface to ***Precaution*** claimed that it was not begun with the intention of publication or with the view to his publishing future works is obviously misleading. One may even wonder as to the veracity of the assertion that the novel was completed in a mere month. Just how much truth was Cooper feeding the public and even his American bookseller/publisher Goodrich in 1820?

The anonymous "Helmsman of Lake Erie" stands out as a model sketch of a Christian's self-sacrificing death. Yet the method adopted to avoid identification by having the sketch published not in the United States but in England so as to trick the American reading public bears Cooper's stamp. Just as ***Precaution*** claimed British authorship, so could "The Helmsman of Lake Erie." In each case, the author's identity was veiled. **[78]**

XX. Concluding Remarks and Impressions

A) Susan Fenimore Cooper's Assessment

Cooper's eldest daughter, Susan, in ***Pages and Pictures***, her homage to her deceased father, presents an introduction to ***Precaution*** as well as an excerpt comparing two acts of charity, and the question which of the two was the most Christian in character.

Susan wrote:

> "While this tale was written under an assumed name, it must be understood that there were two particulars in which it was perfectly sincere. The author's reverence for the Christian religion, and his respect for the purity of female character, were entirely unfeigned. Throughout a long life he was never known to trifle with either subject."

Precaution was published anonymously. ***Tales for Fifteen*** was, however, written under an "assumed name." Whether 61, a day short of 62, may be regarded as a "long life" may also be disputed. On the other hand, Susan's major points, "reverence for the Christian religion" and "respect for the purity of female character" are two vital motifs in Cooper's writings, which critics should not underestimate.

B) Susan Fenimore Cooper and Hannah More on the Role of a Christian Woman in Society

The saying, "Like father, like son" may, in Cooper's case, be interpreted as "Like father, like daughter." Cooper was conservative with regard to a woman's role in society. His daughter provides confirmation. A recent paper by Susan Goodier links Christian faith and the role of woman:

> "Finally, as [Susan] Cooper contended, the directives of Christianity made it very clear that woman necessarily held a subordinate position relative to man. No woman could call herself a Christian if she denied her subordinate role." **[79]**

In 1870, Susan's "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America," appeared in ***Harper's New Weekly Magazine***. **[80]** As might be expected, Susan rejected women's suffrage as impinging on the "purity of female character." Nowadays a man might be asking for trouble if he dared to repeat Susan's arguments before an emancipated American woman. Of interest, however, is that in the nineteenth century, and even among highly educated American women such as Susan, there were serious reservations as to what an extension of women's political rights might lead to. Hannah More **[81]**, whose life was in great measure devoted to the question of the proper education of a woman, was, in this respect, of the same political persuasion as Susan. She, like Susan, believed that no respectable Christian woman should lower herself to participate in the political arena. **[82]** Hannah's extremely popular religious novel, ***Cœlebs***, obviously served as a model for Cooper's ***Precaution*** (and, in the novel, for Lord Pendennyss in search of a Christian wife **[83]**). This conservative stance of the virtues of a Christian woman and the duties they entail is launched in ***Precaution*** and is reflected in Cooper's works, which are perhaps the most religious in the Literature of the Early Republic. Coming to terms with that stance without condemnation based on today's prevailing views, often unthinkingly taken for granted, may pose a difficult hurdle for some literary critics.

C) An Imitation?

To assert that ***Precaution*** is an imitation of ***Persuasion*** is misleading. Indeed, Cooper's first novel challenges the reader with a complicated plot (at least 50% longer than Austen's) that is able to take exception to a number of aspects of ***Persuasion*** while creating much more action than Austen was willing to muster. Indeed, apart from Louisa's accident and resulting head injury at Lyme, the action in ***Persuasion*** is rather flat.

The much more mature and self-sufficient Anne is, at 27 years of age **[84]**, nine years Emily's senior. She knows what she likes and whom she still loves. She has a mind of her own and sees others with objective precision.

Cooper places Emily's age (she has "just completed her eighteenth year") close to that of his wife at the time the couple married. Susan Augusta DeLancey Cooper (1792-1852) married James Cooper on New Year's Day, 1811. Anne's broken engagement with Captain Wentworth lies eight and one-half years in the past, close to both Emily's and Susan's age at marriage. The difference in age obviously makes an "imitation" impossible.

Whereas ***Persuasion*** turns on whether Anne and Captain Wordsworth will reconnect without any guessing as to who Wentworth is, ***Precaution*** casts doubt on the integrity of George Denbigh and his true identity. ***Persuasion*** also allows the reader to view the action principally from Anne's point of view, whereas in ***Precaution*** the reader may sometimes feel that Emily's mind is somewhat closed off or a terrain to be protected from indiscriminate eyes.

D) The Chameleon Factor

A conspicuous aspect of Cooper's ***Precaution*** is the manner in which particularly female (but also male) characters outwardly exhibit their emotions. In ***Persuasion***, cheeks may off and on "glow," or "redden" or be "flushed," but in ***Precaution*** the characters may "blush" (or experience both "blushes and tears"), a face can be "suffused with the color of a rose," a cheek "vied with the richest tints of the flower," a man can "color highly with shame and pride," or simply "color." "Flushings of the face and heavings of the breast" is another expression that leaves its mark. Whereas Austen is much more sparing in allowing her characters to change color, Cooper, in ***Precaution,*** almost seems to revel in such descriptive coloring.

E) How Long Does a Man Love a Woman and Vice Versa?

Captain Wentworth had spent too much time with the Musgrove daughters with the unfortunate result that it was rumored that an engagement with Louisa Musgrove might soon be forthcoming. Louisa was playfully and quite recklessly throwing herself off the Upper Cobb (=part of Lyme's harbor installations) to be caught in the arms of Wentworth:

> "…she was too precipitate by half a second, she fell on the pavement on the Lower Cobb, and was taken up lifeless!"
>
> —***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. I, Ch. XII, p. 210.

Louisa survived but remained for several months convalescing in Lyme at the home of Captain Harville and his wife, who is a nurse. Captain Benwick, betrothed to the recently deceased Fanny Harville, has received accommodation at the Harvilles' home at Lyme. Although in mourning for the loss of his dear Fanny, he nonetheless falls in love with Louisa and she with him. Captain Wentworth is somewhat amazed but relieved. Captain Harville, Fanny's father, is appalled that Benwick could forget his beloved daughter so quickly. Captain Harville, given that Captain Benwick is now about to marry Louisa Musgrove although supposedly still in mourning for Fanny, enters into a discussion with Anne, regarding, "Who loves longest—a man or a woman?"

> [Harville:] "Poor Fanny! She would not have forgotten him so soon!"
> "No, replied Anne, in a low feeling voice. "That I can easily believe."

> Captain Harville smiled, as much as to say, "Do you claim that for your sex?" and she answered the question, smiling also, "Yes. We certainly do not forget you, so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit."
>
> ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol II, Ch. XI, p. 444.

Although they are unable to reach a consensus, the dialogue concludes with each of the contestants feeling a warmer attachment for the other than when the question was first posed. A similar probing dialogue questioning the depth and length of feelings of the human heart is nowhere to be found in ***Precaution***. Why? The assumption is that even in death, the couple will be reunited in a new and better existence. Pendennyss' mother Marian provides a disquieting counterexample.

F) Concluding Impressions

Emily, in the end, has found her Prince, and Pendennyss has found his Emily. Until this happy conclusion is achieved, the plot twists and turns and keeps the reader riveted, although at times somewhat at a loss regarding genealogy. The guessing game of ancestry is reserved till late in the game. Just the opposite occurs in ***Persuasion***. From page one we are informed of the ancestry of Sir Walter Elliot. The only guessing involved is whether, or where, or how Anne will finally get "the big fish" that got away. Given the complicated plot and subplots of ***Precaution*** (e.g., Jane's betrayal by the charming but unscrupulous Colonel Egerton, Julia FitzGerald's exile from Spain, the unsettling factors leading to the tragic death of Francis Denbigh, or even how the mild-mannered rector Dr. Ives hooked an admiral's daughter **[85]**), ***Precaution*** thrills more than confuses the reader. Although Emily may seem somewhat too "coddled" by Mrs. Wilson compared with the much older and maturer Anne, Mrs. Wilson does not exhibit any of the character flaws we see in Mrs. Russell. In other words, whether the reader is a "godmother fan" or not, Emily is in safe hands. ***Persuasion*** is an easier, somewhat straightforward read; ***Precaution***, more thrilling, more action, more plot, and, in the case of Julia, a surprisingly tolerant approach to religion. Two aspects of the novel, are however, confounding: 1) It is not the "beginner's novel" one would expect. Cooper, already in 1820, was a highly talented novelist. 2) Given the quality and complexity of ***Precaution***, it strikes this reader as highly unlikely that such a work could have been conceived and completed within only one month.

—Bad Schussenried, May 8, 2021

Notes:

1) Wayne Franklin, ***James Fenimore Cooper, The Early Years***, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007). [Henceforth, ***Early Years***]

> "An English edition was published by Henry Colburn in Hanover Square only three months after the appearance of the American,…." — p. 268.

If the New York ***Evening Post***'s July 3 notification of impending publication is correct, this would mean British publication already in 1820. Identical advertisements of impending publication have also been located in the New York ***Commercial Advertiser*** (July 3, 5, and 6, 1820).

2) Susan Fenimore Cooper, ***Pages and Pictures, The Writings of James Fenimore Cooper, with Notes*** (Secaucus, N.J.: Castle Books, 1980), 1865 edition reprint, Introduction, p. 19.

See George E. Hastings' pivotal article establishing Jane Austen's ***Persuasion*** as the spurned novel. **"How Cooper Became a Novelist,"** ***American Literature***, March 1840, Vol. 12, no. 1, (Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2920387), pp. 20-51.

On pages 21-22, Hastings points out two different versions of Susan's account:
a) From ***Pages and Pictures***, first publication in 1861: only a few pages were read. Source: a new book.
b) From ***"Small Family Memories"***, January 25, 1883 (in ***Correspondence of James Fenimore Cooper***, Volume 1): the first "chapter or two" were read before the novel was discarded. Source: "one of Mrs. Opie's or one of that school."

A letter from Mrs. Cooper to her sisters dated December 29, 1830, reveals that there was contact between the Coopers and Mrs. Amelia Opie when they were in Paris. (George E. Hastings' article, p. 23).

As correspondence between ***Precaution*** and ***Persuasion*** encompasses much more than only a few pages or chapters, there can be no doubt that *all* of Austen's ***Persuasion*** was subjected to careful scrutiny by Cooper. The works of Mrs. Opie and the "Cœleb School" may rightly be regarded as models upon which Cooper built, but certainly not anything Cooper would have rejected.

3) ***The Early Years***, p. 248.

4) James Franklin Beard (Editor), ***The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*** henceforth, ***L&J***] in 6 volumes (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), vol. 1, p. 42. The first reference to ***Precaution*** in Cooper's ***Letters and Journals*** is May 31, 1820, in a letter to his New York publisher, Andrew Thompson Goodrich. In this letter Cooper states: "I am now writing the eighth Chapter of the second volume." However, the choice of a novel was not how Cooper began:

"I commenced the writing of a moral tale—finding it swell to an unwieldy size—I destroy'd the manuscript and chang'd it to a novel."

5) ***L&J***, vol. I, p. 64, ftn. 1. Sometime between September 20 and October 6 of the same year, an outing with her parents together with the novel ***Precaution***, and the names of her playmates in Governor Jay's nursery were related by Susan, 63 years later!

6) Wayne W. Wright (Compiler), "The Cooper Genealogy," Library Notes, New York State Historical Association, 1983. Online in James Fenimore Cooper Society Home Page.

7) ***L&J***, vol. I, p, 41: Letter 25, To Andrew Thomas Goodrich —*Most strictly confidential ,Scarsdale* [=*Cooper's emphasis*]—May 31st 1820.

8) ***Early Years***, Ch. 10, "Legal Troubles," p. 318.

9) ***L&J***, vol. I, p. 43, Letter 26. To Andrew Thompson Goodwich—Scarsdale—June 12th 1820:

> "…I have finished my labors this day—The ten or twelve last chapters are certainly written in great haste—But Mrs. Cooper who is my tribunal of appeals, says the book is better at the end than the beginning."

10***)*** a) ***L&J***, vol. 1, Letter 29. To Andrew Thompson Goodrich, Angevine—July 4th 1820, p. 47: for James Aitchison to whom ***The Spy*** was dedicated (see ftn. 1).

b) ***L&J***, vol. 1, Letter 125. To Charles Wilkes, Paris, Jan. 25th, 1828, p. 247, biographical note, for Charles Wilkes (1764-1833).

c) ***Early Years***, p. 249, for both men.

d) Susan Fenimore Cooper's "Small Family Memories" (Jan. 25, 1883) in ***Correspondence of James Fenimore-Cooper***, Vol. I, edited by his grandson, James Fenimore Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), p. 39. [Henceforth, **"Small Family Memories"**]. Reading the manuscript to the Jay family, including Governor Jay. The manuscript was said to have been written by "a friend of the family."

11) ***L&J***, vol. 1, Letter 25. To Andrew Thompson Goodrich. *Most-Strictly confidential* [=Cooper's emphasis], Scarsdale—May 31st 1820, p. 42. Word count and pages plus fitting matter to total length:

> "I am now writing the eighth Chapter of the second volume—the first contains twenty-five chapters—in the whole volume (i.e. the first) one hundred and twelve closely written pages of about eight Hundred words each—this I compute will make an ordinary volume, such as Ivanhoe, which I took for a guide—of two Hundred and fifty pages of *matter*—my present plan is to complete the second volume to the same size—What I want to know follows—
> "Would two Hundred and twenty-four pages of manuscript, of eight Hundred words each, and a fair proportion of conversation make two common sized volumes?"

See also: ***Early Years***, pp. 248-249.

Given 224 x 800, Cooper's ***Precaution*** was crafted with the goal of 179,200 words! He was concerned that this might be insufficient.

12) James D. Wallace, "Cultivating an Audience: From *Precaution* to ***The Spy***," in Robert Clark (Editor), ***James Fenimore Cooper, New Critical Essays*** (London and Totowa, N.J.: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1985, p. 43:

> "Though it [=***Precaution***] sold poorly in the United States, it was actually rather popular in England, where it had twice the sale of ***The Spy*** and had by 1851 gone through five British editions.[19]"
>
> —19. William Charvat, ***The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*** (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), p. 73

That ***The Spy*** was an appeal to American patriotism may well have dampened sales in Britain.

13) Brunton, Mary (1778-1818). ***Discipline*** (1814), p .3. Good Press, Kindle-Version:

"But, besides that my readers will probably take the liberty of estimating for themselves my merits as a narrator, I suspect, that professions of humility may possibly deceive the professor himself; and that, while I am honestly confessing my disqualifications, I may be secretly indemnifying my pride, by glorying in the candour of my confession.
"Any expression of self-abasement might, indeed, appear peculiarly misplaced as a preface to whole volumes of egotism;…."

—In other words, a self-effacing preface should not always be taken at face value.

14) ***L&J,*** Vol. 1, p. 66, Letter 49, To Andrew Thompson Goodrich, [19-20? October 1820].

15) **"Small Family Memories,"** p. 38.

16) ***Early Years***, p. 265. Wayne Franklin states, "he (=Cooper] had begun a second book, ***The Spy***, while still at work on it [=***Precaution***]."

17) ***L&J***, vol. I, p. 44, Letter 27. To Andrew Thompson Goodwich—Angevine—June 28th 1820.

18) ***L&J,*** Vol. 1, p. 66, Letter 49, To Andrew Thompson Goodrich, [19-20? October 1820]: "I send out this pilot baloon [*sic*]."

19) ***Early Years***, Ch. 8, p. 248.

> With regard to "calculation," see p. 265:
> "Letting on that Goodrich was republishing a British work protected Cooper's secret [i.e., his identity] even as it played to the Anglophile tendencies of the native marketplace. The ruse was reasonable. Set in England and imitative of English models, ***Precaution*** actually could pass for an import.
> . . . ."Cooper probably enjoyed the deception involved in making the book seem 'English' in order, as he put it, 'to impose on the public,' to trick the readers."

20) Karen Swallow Prior, ***Fierce Convictions, The Extraordinary Life of HANNAH MORE—Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist*** **[**Henceforth: ***Fierce Convictions***.](Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Books, 2014), pp. 131-132:

> "***Cœlebs in Search of a Wife***, More's only novel, was released anonymously in December 1808. . . . .
> "Within two weeks, 'booksellers, all over the country became clamorous for copies,' and ten more impressions were sold in the first six months, twelve in the first year. By 1817, More was called upon for a corrected copy for the fifteenth edition. The novel was viewed in France favorably by Madame de Staël, whose salacious novel had left More so dismayed. Over the next ten years, the novel became a cause *célèbre* all over Europe, being translated into French and German and appearing in Iceland and Sweden. Across the ocean in America, thirty editions were printed before More's death."

Given the incredible success of ***Cœlebs***, one wonders if its popularity and lucrative sales might not also have provided Cooper with an incentive to consider writing as a career.

21) a) George E. Hastings, "**How Cooper Became a Novelist,"** pp. 49-50:
"Mary Balfour Brunton's ***Discipline*** is a didactic novel of manners built around the central lesson that a devout Christian life is the only source of true happiness."

b) ***L&J***, Vol. 1, p. 52, Footnote 2:
"2. ***Discipline*** (1814) was a novel by Mrs. Mary Brunton (1778-1818), the wife of a Scottish clergyman. It was pirated in Boston by Wells and Lilly and in Philadelphia by M. Carey and M. Thomas in 1815. In 1819, Goodrich pirated her ***Emmeline***, published posthumously with a 'Memoir' of Mrs. Brunton by her husband."

22) ***L&J,*** Vol. IV, pp. 29-31, Letter 573. To *Mrs. Charles Jarvis Woolson (Hannah Cooper Pomeroy)*, Hall, Cooperstown, April 19th 1840. In footnote 1, p. 31, the reader is informed that Cooper's niece Hannah lost three daughters, aged 5, 4 and 2. Two older daughters, aged 7 and 9, recovered, and the youngest, an infant daughter to whom she had just given birth, was unscathed.

23) Jane Austen, ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Annotated and Edited, with an Introduction, by David M. Shapard [Henceforth, ***The Annotated Persuasion***] (New York: Anchor Books, 2010), Vol. I, Ch. I, p. 4.

24) Alan Taylor, ***William Cooper's Town, Power and Persuasion in the Frontier of the Early Republic*** (New York, Vintage Books,1995). [Henceforth, ***William Cooper's Town***.] The question of mitigating circumstances of the heirs in spite of their high life and negligence in checking the balance sheets is discussed in ***William Cooper's Town,*** pp. 374-375:

> "[William] Cooper raised sons who could not cope with the financial problems that they inherited. He had unwittingly built an illusion of secure wealth which he then conveyed to heirs trained to expect a life of luxury. Apparently enriched by the judge's will, the Cooper heirs lived in a grand style, constructing elegant new mansions and launching costly new ventures, both civic and mercantile. Schooled in gentility, the young Coopers were far better at spending money tastefully but prodigiously than at managing a difficult estate through the severe times that prevailed in rural New York during the late 1810s and early 1820s. Until it was too late, they spent money in the serene but mistaken belief that their fortunes were as large and as secure as William Cooper's will made them appear. Deceived by that will, the heirs overvalued their assets, underestimated their liabilities, and overspent their legacies. Consequently, the historians who take his will and his ***Guide in the Wilderness*** at face value perpetuate the illusion that disastrously deceived the Cooper heirs."

25) J. Fenimore Cooper, ***Precaution. A Novel*** (New York: Hurd and Houghton/Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1871), Ch. XX, p. 198. (The Michigan Historical Reprint Series). Henceforth, ***Precaution***.

26) ***Precaution***, Ch. I, p. 34. It should be noticed that, although a country residence, Cooper elected "respectable mansion" instead of "comfortable cottage" for Sir Moseley so as to maintain and reaffirm his dignity as an aristocrat. Was Cooper thinking of himself?

27) ***Precaution,*** *Ibid*. Whether limited "brilliance" refers to Sir Edward's role as a father and perhaps to Lady Moseley as well, who seem to lean back and allow chance or caprice to

determine the fates of their daughters, provided the social standing of the suitor is "adequate," is open to conjecture.

28) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, "Maps," p. 512: Important locations in Austen's novel are provided by David M. Shapard. This map was chosen so that the rough location of the counties of Northamptonshire in ***Precaution*** and Somerset in ***Persuasion*** could be illustrated. Naturally, Bath plays a significant role in both novels.

29) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. 1, Ch. III, p. 36.

30) ***L&J***, vol. 1, pp. 89-91, Letter 61, To Smith Thompson, New York—Jan. 8, 1823

31) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Ch. VI, p. 98: "She had gone to her letters, and found it all as she supposed, and the reperusal of these letters, after so long an interval, her poor son gone for ever, and all the strength of his faults forgotten, had affected her spirits exceedingly, and thrown her into greater grief for him than she had known on first hearing of his death."

32**)** ***William Cooper's Town*****,** , Chapter 14, "Inheritance Lost," p. 395:

> "John Peter De Lancey was shocked by his son-in-law's fiscal mismanagement and dwindling fortune. To prevent Cooper from selling or mortgaging his lone remaining Scarsdale property, De Lancey maintained the Angevine Farm in a trusteeship. Offended by this restriction, James Cooper angrily removed his family in late 1822 to a rented house on Broadway in New York City."

33) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. I, Ch. V, p. 64: "Mrs. Clay had freckles, and a projecting tooth, and a clumsy wrist, which he [=Sir Walter] was continually making severe remarks upon, in her absence; but she was young, and certainly altogether well-looking, and possessed, in an acute mind and assiduous pleasing manners, infinitely more dangerous attractions than any merely personal might have been."

34***)*** ***Precaution***, Ch. XXXIV, p. 342.

35) ***Precaution***, Ch. XXXVI, p. 368 & Ch. XXXVIII, p. 392.

36) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. II, Chapter I, p. 232: "Lady Russell had only to listen composedly, and wish them happy; but *internally her heart revelled in angry pleasure, in pleased contempt* [*my emphasis*], that the man who at twenty-three had seemed to understand somewhat of the value of Anne Elliot, should, eight years afterwards, be charmed by a Louisa Musgrove."

37) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Volume I, Chapter IV, p. 54.

38) ***Precaution***, Ch. XV, p. 147: "the writer of these pages is a man."

39) **"Small Family Memories,"** pp. 39-40.

40) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. I, Ch. XI, pp. 192 & 194.

41) ***Precaution***, Ch. VI, p. 72.

42) ***Precaution***, Ch. XXXV, p. 350.

43) ***Precaution***, Ch. XXXV, p. 354.

44) Not merely young unmarried ladies, but even an eighty-year-old bachelor gent, like Mr. Benfield, can succumb to the vagaries of the imagination:

> "Mr. Benfield, like many others, continued to love imaginary qualities in his mistress, long after her heartless coquetry had disgusted him with her person; a kind of feeling which springs from self-love, which finds it necessary to seek consolation in creating beauties, that may justify our follies to ourselves; and which often keeps alive the semblance of passion, when even hope, or real admiration, is extinct."
>
> —***Precaution***, Ch. III, p. 52.

Mr. Benfield is favorably mentioned with regard to "delineation of character" on p. 1 of this article in the short London ***Globe*** review.

Mention should be made of Hector, Natty's "pup." "Hector" is mentioned in passing as Mr. Benfield's (good-looking) bulldog. ***—Precaution***, Ch. VI, p. 70:

45) William Shakespeare, ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, ***A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare,*** edited by Horace Howard Furness (New York, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), p. 125.

46) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. II, Ch. V, p.300.

47) ***Precaution***, Ch. XL, p. 415: "—the first of Debrett's Peerage—."

48) To add to the genealogical confusion, it was rumored that Emily's George Denbigh had married Lady Laura Stapleton, sister of the Captain Lord Henry Stapleton of the Royal Navy. (—Ch. XXXII. p. 314). As it turned out, the lovely Lady Laura had indeed married Lieutenant Colonel George Denbigh, a kinsman of Lord Pendennyss, who served as groomsman during the ceremony.

49) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLV, p. 466.

50) ***Precaution***, Ch. V, closing lines.

51) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLV, p. 469:

> "The doctor objected on the ground of principle, and the earl desisted; but the beauty of Emily, aided by her character, had made an impression not to be easily shaken off, and Pendennyss returned to the charge.
>
> "His former jealousies were awakened in proportion to his admiration; and, after some time, he threw himself on the mercy of the divine, by declaring his new motive, but without mentioning his parents."

52) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. II, Ch. X, p.432.

53) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. II, Ch. IX, p. 376: for Mrs. Smith's damning appraisal of Cousin Elliot's character.

54) ***Precaution***, Ch. 46, p. 472:

> "In truth, there was no possible event that, under the circumstances, could have given both aunt and niece such heartfelt pleasure, as the knowledge that Denbigh and the earl were the same person."

55) Susan Fenimore Cooper, "The Lumney Autograph" (—or, "Lumley" Revisited?):
In 1851, Susan Fenimore Cooper's satirical short story on the mania of autograph collecting was published in ***Graham's Magazine***. Apparently, the well-written and humorously wicked tale was penned six years earlier in 1845. Its title: "The Lumley Autograph." Although what follows is mere speculation, Susan's choice of "Lumley" in the title may be a *forgotten remnant* of her father's ***Precaution***, published a quarter of a century earlier.

The cherished autograph of her satirical tale containing the dying words of a neglected and underfed poet who signed his name Otway [=Thomas Otway, 1652-1685]. The name "Lumley" had nothing to do with the writer of the lines to his patron, vainly begging for entrance and a few crumbs of bread.

It was Rev. John Lumley, who accidentally discovered the scrap of paper with the lines penned by the dying poet. In other words, the "Lumley Autograph" was really the "Otway Autograph," discovered by a man named Lumley.

As the collection of autographs preceded philately and was all the rage in "cultured" circles, the bit of paper increased enormously in value through the years until, after exchanging hands in many adventures, the precious "autograph" (the name of the dying poet was no longer legible) returned to the hands of the renowned collector Lady Holberton. An evening dinner party was thrown to celebrate the momentous event. As fate would have it, the Lumley Autograph and half the precious album which housed it, went up in flames when the album inadvertently came in contact with a "wax-light." And "Lumley" was no more. Yet the Lumley Autograph was in reality the Otway Autograph, and the autograph itself was no longer legible.

The "Lumley" of ***Precaution*** may also strike the reader as an illegitimate invention, or an invention that is simply developed too little and too late in the game. Susan's satirical story, written with a much better cutting edge than either Cooper's ***Monikins*** or "Lake Gun," also tosses in a tragic young Bristol poet significantly named "Chatterton" (and, out of the blue, an unidentified but "charming Emily"). Would Cooper's demure daughter have dared to add a dash of criticism of ***Precaution***'s confusing aristocratic nomenclature by consciously resurrecting the name "Lumley?"

56) ***Precaution,*** Ch. XLVII, p. 487.

57) ***Precaution,*** Ch. XLVIII, p. 494.

58) ***Precaution,*** Ch. XLVIII, p. 503.

59) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLVIII, p. 496:

> "The indefatigable Blucher [=Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher]
> arrived, and the star of Napoleon sank.

> "Pendennyss threw himself from his horse, on the night of the eighteenth of June [=June 18, 1815: The Battle of Waterloo], as he gave way by orders, in the pursuit, to the fresher battalions of the Prussians, with the languor that follows unusual excitement, and mental thanksgivings that this bloody work was at length ended."

60) Lafayette's gift to George Washington, the key to the Bastille, the spark from the American Revolution igniting the French Revolution, hangs in the hallway of Mount Vernon to this very day.

61) Steven P. Harthorn, "James Fenimore Cooper, Professional Authorship, and the American Literary Marketplace, 1838-1851." PhD. Diss, University of Tennessee, 2005. [Henceforth, Harthorn.] Examples of "one-upmanship:"

a) ***The Pilot*** vs. ***The Pirate***: p. 81.
b) ***The History of the Navy of the United States of America*** vs. Thomas Clark, ***Naval History of the United States: From the Commencement of the Revolutionary War to the Present Time*** p. 88.
c) ***Mercedes of Castile*** vs. "Washington Irving's ***Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus***" (1828) & William Hickling Prescott's ***A History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*** (1838): p. 211.
d) ***Ned Myers; or, A Life before the Mast*** (1843) vs. Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s ***Two Years before the Mast*** (1840): p. 139

Also, a strong sense of competitiveness, in the sense of outselling a rival's travel books: for example, ***Sketches of Switzerland*** (1836) selling better than Alexander Slidell Mackenzie's ***Spain Revisited*** (1836): p. 112.

62) Harthorn, p. 263 for "ungovernable." P. 43 for Cooper's own anticipation of ***Home as Found***'s failure.

63) ***The Annotated Persuasion***, Vol. II, Ch. VI, p. 324.

64) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLIV, pp. 450-451.

65) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLIX, p. 513.

66) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLIX, p. 514.

67) Mrs. Opie, ***Simple Tales in Four Volumes***, Vol. IV, Second Edition (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806), "The Orphan," pp. 207-282: The tragic tale of the orphan and penniless girl, Jane Vernon, who is offered a home by the kindly Mr. and Mrs. Hanbary. The Hanbarys also have a young and very industrious student as their ward, also an orphan, named Mr. Douglas, who seeks their residence during his holidays, but on a very irregular basis. Jane soon becomes infatuated with the student but realizes that he seldom takes notice of her. As a result, she pines away. Only after some of her verses (—Alas! The evil of poetry revisited!) are discovered by the Hanbarys do they finally realize that Jane is becoming ever more ill due to a broken heart. When Douglas is informed, out of a sense of duty, he attempts to convince her that he loves her (although his interest in Jane is minimal). Unfortunately, efforts to revive the young lady come too late. The argument in this case is that if Jane had had a religious foundation to fall back on, her life would have been spared and she would have had the possibility of finding happiness without Douglas.

68) ***Precaution,*** Ch. XXVI, p. 256.

69) James Fenimore Cooper, ***The American Democrat*** (with an Introduction by H. l. Mencken), Liberty Classics, Reprint of the 1931 Edition (New York: A. Knopf), "On Religion," p. 239.

70) Norman Barry, "*The Heidenmauer*; or, Have we Progressed beyond the Pagans?" www.johnmaynard.net/Heidenmauer.pdf

71) Julia Fitzgerald's willingness to return to Spain had nothing to do with patriotism but very much to do with the notion of "filial piety." Cooper, in response to a letter informing him of his election to the New Jersey Historical Society wrote the following:

> "Although I was taken from New Jersey an infant, some of my earliest school boy days were passed within her limits, and I have never lost the impression then made in her favour. . . . .
>
> "I shall not consider labour expended in behalf of New Jersey as time thrown away, but as a simple exhibition of natural filial piety."
>
> —***L&J***, Vol. V, p. 168, Letter875. To William Adee Whitehead, Hall, Cooperstown, Sept. 18th, 1846.

This extended use of "filial piety" to refer to fond memories of a place and not a person should be considered when Cooper chose to return to the United States after seven years in Europe. Could filial piety be an underlying motive for Cooper's return?

72) ***Precaution,*** Ch. XXXIX, p. 400.

73) ***Precaution,*** Ch. XLIX, p.506. Cooper, himself, saw no problem in allowing his wife to stay at home on a chilly, rainy Sabbath:

> ***L&J***, Vol. V, p. 350, Journal XLIV, Sunday, 14 May 1848:
>
> "Numbers. Raining and cool. Most of us went to church, notwithstanding. About seventy persons attended. The Judge [=Samuel Nelson] was there, having got home last evening. In the afternoon I read the service for my wife, who did not like to risk t the weather."

Of course, John Moseley would have stayed home with his wife: "I like to hear a good sermon, but not in bad weather." —***Precaution, ibid.***

74) Norman Barry, "'The Helmsman of Lake Erie' in Light of the Role Played by Religion in the Fictional Writing of James Fenimore Cooper or, The Secret Why the Good Man, When Dying, does not Groan" — https://johnmaynard.net/MARTYRSDEATH.pdf

75) ***Precaution***, Ch. V, p. 66. Both George Denbigh (=Earl Pendennyss) and his ailing father are present during this sermon, during which, the father passes away.

76) James Fenimore Cooper, ***The Chainbearer. Or, The Littlepage Manuscripts*** (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2020), Ch. XXVII, p. 449 (Kindle Edition).

77) The allegorical name "Prudence" is surely no accident in this novel. Of the three books in Thousandacres' library was a copy of ***Pilgrim's Progress*** (—***The Chainbearer***, Ch. XIX, p. 337). Prudence, together with Piety, Charity and Discretion, in John Bunyan's allegory, ***The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*** (1678) is one of the four mistresses of Palace Beautiful.

78) For an in-depth study of how "The Helmsman of Lake Erie" found its way to England, see Norman Barry, "Two Transatlantic Passages: The Convoluted Path of "The Helmsman of Lake Erie" to Poughkeepsie; Or, How to Hide (and Smuggle) a Manuscript."

Online: https://johnmaynard.net/COOPER_HELMSMAN.pdf

79) Susan Goodier, "Susan Fenimore Cooper and Elizabeth Cady Stanton: Views on the Political life of Women," 2017. Online at James Fenimore Cooper Website.

80) Susan Fenimore Cooper, "Female Suffrage: A Letter to the Christian Women of America," ***Harper's New Weekly Magazine***, (Vol. XLI, June-November, 1871), pp. 438-446, 594-600. Online at James Fenimore Cooper Website.

81) ***Fierce Convictions***, p. Ch. IV, "The Meaning of the Female Pen," p. 40:

- "Indeed the romantic poet Samuel T. Coleridge later described her as 'undisputably the first literary female I have ever met.'"[10]

- 10. Quoted in Martin J. Crossley-Evans, ***Hannah More*** (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1999, 14.

82) ***Fierce Convictions,*** Ch. VI, "Learned Ladies," p. 83. Even being accepted into the Royal Society of Literature was going one step too far for Hannah:

> "Upon being named an honorary member of the Royal Society of Literature, she demurred. "I have written a strong remonstrance, declining the distinction," she wrote, "partly on the ground that I have no claim to it, but chiefly that I consider the circumstance of sex alone a disqualification."

83) Hannah More, ***Cœlebs in Search of a Wife*** (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1858, Kindle), Ch. 2, pp. 17-18:

> "In such a companion [=i.e., future wife]," said I, as I drove along in my post-chaise, "I do not want a Helen, a Saint Cecilia, or a Madame Dacier; yet she must be elegant, or I should not love her: sensible, or I should not respect her; prudent, or I could not confide in her; well-informed, or she could not educate my children; well-bred, or she could not entertain my friends; consistent, or I should offend the shade of my mother; pious, or I should not be happy with her, because the prime comfort in a companion for life is the delightful hope that she will be a companion for eternity."

84) Anne's age must be placed at 27 although Vol. II, Ch. XI, p. 464 of ***The Annotated Precaution*** mentions her "eight-and twentieth year." Anne Elliot was born on August 9, 1787 (first page of Vol. I, Ch. I). The beginning of the novel's action is the summer of 1814 and

extends to February 1815. Note Vol. II, Ch. V, p. 290: "the elegant little woman of seven and twenty."

Emily Moseley, on the other hand, "had just completed her eighteenth year." — ***Precaution***, Ch. XII, p. 126. The nine-year difference in age between Anne Elliot and Emily Moseley may also account for Anne being more self-sufficient and less in need of a godmother's guidance.

85) ***Precaution***, Ch. XLIII. An amusing bit of ancestry is injected. Instead of scheming mothers, we have an instance of scheming fathers. Earl Pendennyss' grandfather, General Frederick Denbigh and his close friend Admiral Howell, Isabel Ives' father, decide to play matchmakers with their children, George Denbigh (Earl Pendennyss' father) and Isabel (shortened to "Bell").

As might be expected, George, encouraged by his father and by Isabel's obvious charms, asked Isabel for her hand. Alas! Isabel had already given her heart to a young clergyman named Ives, whose initial proposal had been rejected by her father. The luckless George, when Bell revealed that only he stood in the way to her happiness, generously retracted his proposal and afterwards, when his father inquired if the match had been sanctioned, only yawned and pretended to have no interest in the girl. The General, completely dumbfounded by his son's feigned dislike of Bell, blurted out that both he and the Admiral had been set on the marriage. George, himself shocked that he had been so shamelessly manipulated by his father, "joined a regiment under orders for America" (p. 440) and was abroad for two years.. In the meantime, the General informed the Admiral that his son had failed to follow his advice.

The Admiral, sensing that he could win their bet that the child would under no circumstances disobey its parent and, at the same time, conscious of his daughter's true feelings, sent for Ives. Then, before the astonished eyes of General Frederick, the young man was asked if "he still wished to marry that girl, pointing to his daughter." As can be imagined, an affirmative response from the young couple was ecstatically forthcoming. Then, (perhaps with a twinkle in his eye and a sense of conquest in his voice): "There Fred. Denbigh, that is what I call being minded." (p. 447).