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The Spy in early America: The emergence of a genre.

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Abstract : This dissertation investigates the very beginnings of spy fiction in the United States by examining the large body of literature about spies during the Revolution which appeared from shortly after the Revolution through the antebellum period. By examining the paradoxical figure of the heroic spy, the dissertation explores how the spy story emerged as

the adventure tale of the Revolution, the spy became a potential hero, and how the spy embodied many of the concerns of the new nation of the United States. The dissertation first explores the many plays, poems, and stories told about the men, British Major John Andre' and the American Captain Nathan Hale, whose stories transformed the spy from a furtive, disreputable peddler of information into potential heroes. The study moves from history into fiction as it next examines James Fenimore Cooper's 1821 novel, *The Spy*, as the first American spy novel and its legacy to other American spy fiction from the early nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Moving from the establishment of "spy fiction," the study then demonstrates how tropes of spy fiction influenced and were influenced by the memoirs of Revolutionary War spies, and how one memoir inspired the first cynical American spy novel, Herman Melville's *Israel Potter*. The gender issues of the antebellum period are explored through the spy fiction written by women and the female characters of spy fiction by both genders. The theory of most analyses of "spy fiction" presumes that it emerged as a colonizing literature of the waning days of the British empire. This study, reading spy literature as a much earlier genre, examines American spy fiction as a genre which is both postcolonial and colonizing, reflecting the United States' quirky position as a former colony which began colonizing others even before it won its independence.

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