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WEST OF WHAT? THE PARADOX OF WESTERN AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: West of What? The Paradox of Western American Literature

This dissertation examines literary articulations of national identity from the 1820s to the 1920s and finds that the qualities that purportedly define the national literature of the United States ("American literature") and the qualities that purportedly define the regional literature of the American West ("Western literature") frequently become conflated and entangled. When American writers attempt to produce texts that articulate the national character, the West is an indispensable source of images and virtues. But at the same time, they also turn to the West when they need to estrange undesirable characteristics. This pattern of making the West the same but different, the essence and also the other of the nation, I argue, produces and reproduces this eponymous paradox: at the same time that *only a subset* of American literature is Western, *all of it* is. Although the precise terms under which the nation and the region are defined change over the period I discuss in "West of What?", I nonetheless show how examining the West's special relationship to the nation produces literary histories of American literature that expose surprising, counterintuitive narratives of many crucial themes, including transnationalism, gender, boosterism, and nativism.

The dissertation's four chapters are arranged chronologically, beginning with the twin births of Western and American literature in the late 1820s. The first chapter, "Alternative Transnationalisms: Timothy Flint and the Atlantic Reviewers," argues that Flint produces defiantly Western writing that actually constitutes a reimagining of American literary transnationalism. I show how Western regionalism complicates our understanding of how the idea of American literature fits into hemispheric flows of people, ideas, and texts by acting as an alternative to rather than merely a subset of the national literature. It uses new evidence published in Flint's *Western Monthly Review* to show that his novel *Francis Berrian* (1826) is as

concerned with sectional rivalries as it is with international ones. The second chapter, "Frontier Manliness: Francis Parkman, Jr., the West, and *The Knickerbocker*," inverts how cultural historians have long understood the relationship between manliness and the Western frontier in the 1850s by arguing that Francis Parkman, Jr.'s iconic travel narrative *The Oregon Trail* (published serially 1847-1849) produces a version of Western manliness characterized by aesthetic vision rather than violence. In my reading, *The Oregon Trail* becomes not a wellspring of a revitalized national manliness, but rather a reinscription of the forms of gender performance that it claims to transcend. The third chapter, "Fiction and Authenticity: Boosterist Periodical Fiction at the Closing of the Frontier," examines a corpus of texts published in Western periodicals that are avowedly boosterist. Their ostensible strategy is to show how the West is different from the nation because it is romantic and exciting and part of the nation, which makes it a safe place for investment, and then to present this paradox in writing that audiences will interpret as authentic. But I show how these texts undermine their own commercial projects in surprising ways, deploying irony and self-awareness in their self-sabotage. The fourth chapter, "Americy to America: Multiculturalism and Nativism in Willa Cather," restructures the relationship between regionalism and transnational modernism in the career of Willa Cather by showing how even Cather, perhaps the writer most closely associated with Western literary regionalism to achieve widespread literary recognition, is unable to produce a cogent differentiation of Western from national literary qualities. I argue that Cather's prairie novels, especially *One of Ours* (1922), express her ardent desire to offer an account of a distinctively Western embrace of European immigrants, even as maintaining Randolph Bourne's ideal of a transnational America proves to be impossible as the West becomes swallowed up by the nation in a surge of national feeling associated with the nation's entrance into WWI.

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Introduction: The West and the Nation

In Paul Laurence Dunbar's 1900 novel *The Love of Landry*, the wealthy New Yorker John Osborne is shocked when his sickly daughter's doctor suggests that she might benefit from a trip to Colorado: "But, Van Pelt, man, Colorado? why, that seems almost beyond civilisation!" This, Dr. Van Pelt counters, is precisely the point: "civilisation has always been a foe to good health. When our ancestors painted themselves, and danced impossible things on the sand, who ever heard of weak lungs?" (3).[1] Mildred's aunt is horrified by the idea of taking the young girl where she will encounter "cowboys and catamounts and things," (6) but for her part, Mildred is unconcerned: "Why, Aunt Anna, I'm going to wear leggings, and go deer-hunting...and I shall come back wearing a sombrero and a buckskin skirt." Anna is unamused: "Don't joke, Mildred, don't joke. It's highly improper, and I'm sure you are joking, for you could never so disgrace your family as to wear leggings and a buckskin skirt" (7). These exchanges between Osborne and Van Pelt and then between Mildred and Anna represent ambivalence about the West and its relationship to the nation as they understand it. On the one hand, these residents of New York

[1] The West has been associated with health since the early part of the 19th century. In *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, historian of the American West Richard White remarks that the very act of traveling to the West was believed to have medicinal properties: "Before the outbreak of the fearsome cholera epidemics of 1850, 1851, and 1852, some of the medical literature of the time presented health as a by-product of the journey itself. The literature led a reader to believe that no disease had the stamina to make the journey to the coast; germs withered and dropped off by the way" (191). The association of the West with health continued through the late 19th century. As neurasthenia, a nervous condition associated with overwork, became a common diagnosis for middle-class men and women in the late 19th and early 20th century, doctors prescribed rest and relaxation, including "Long vacations with fresh air, mild exercise, or simply an absence of care" (Rotundo 188). The West became a popular destination for this kind of cure. More relevant in the case of Mildred Osborne, parts of the West featured a dry climate commonly believed to be effective in the treatment of "weak lungs." The second chapter of this dissertation more closely examines the association of the West with physical vigor, but here I want to emphasize that Dr. Van Pelt's suggestion is in very much in line with popular opinion linking the American West with physical health.

City's Gramercy Park see the West as a place where Mildred can escape the suffocating overcivilization of the East Coast and find a region with natural virtues that will be a boon to her health. That her suitor back in New York is an Englishman figures the transatlantic influences that hold sway in the East Coast metropole. The admirer she finds out West, though, the handsome cowboy Landry Thayer, demonstrates how the region represents America in its most essential and iconic form. Mildred ultimately chooses Landry over the Englishman Arthur Heathcote, but there's one last twist, perhaps foreshadowed by Mildred's blasé attitude toward the prospect of her trip to the Western frontier: Landry, it turns out, is a Philadelphian. He's as much an East Coast society man as he is a rugged Western cowboy. The story begins with East Coast elites setting up the West as the nation's other, a place "almost beyond civilisation," but in the end, the distinctiveness of the West is an illusion, and the man who wears the leggings and goes hunting is a surprisingly familiar and appropriate suitor.

This dissertation is concerned with the same question that proves to be such a problem for Mildred and her family: how to think about the American West in relation to the nation? Families like the Osbornes are American intellectual and cultural elites accustomed to thinking of their nation in terms of their personal East Coast experiences. How can we historicize their conflicting impulses to understand the region as both the ultimate expression of the national character and its opposite? I begin with an example from Dunbar's 1900 novel, which mobilizes a particular set of stereotypes and frameworks for understanding the contrast between the West and whatever the West is "west of," which is to say the nation *proper* or the *real* America. The problem, as we come to understand in Dunbar's novel, is that the things that define the West and the qualities that are imagined by the nation's elites to define the United States as a whole turn out to be too similar to reliably tease apart. The ideological frameworks introduced at the start of

the novel—that American elites can neatly distinguish the West from the nation by establishing a set of cultural dichotomies and indices—proves untenable. As untenable as these attempts to neatly delaminate the West from the nation inevitably prove, this dissertation shows that the fundamental dynamic upon which Dunbar's novel hinges (that the West and the nation are both the same and different, that the West is both the source of the nation's identity and the other against which the nation defines itself) persists from the origins of the idea of a distinctive national literature in the 1820s through the closing of the frontier. Though the details of where the West geographically exists and what features it is imagined to have change in ways large and small over the century or so of American writing that this dissertation examines, this dynamic between the West and nation endures. In Dunbar's novel, the West seems to be irreconcilably different from the East Coast, but it turns out to be far more familiar than it initially appears.

Before going any further, I should note that I do not claim that the Osbornes' sentiments should be understood as being the only way that Americans in the 19th and earl 20th centuries perceive or theorize the relationship between the West and nation. On the contrary, this dissertation offers readers a variety of ways in which American elites produced accounts of the relationship between the West and the nation, and I certainly do not mean to suggest that the elite class represented in Dunbar's novel can stand in for all Americans. When I refer to the image of the West and the image of the nation here, I do not intend to suggest that these images obtain for all Americans. Across lines of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other categories that constitute identity, "the West" and "the nation" might be very different things. This dissertation is concerned primarily with the perspective of a particular group of people: Americans who have the political, cultural, and economic capital to record and widely disseminate if not impose their point of view. The authors of the central objects of inquiry in this dissertation are almost all at

least middle class and, with the exception of Dunbar and Willa Cather (and some minor periodical writers), all white men who were at least born on the East Coast. One might imagine another version of this project that does more to recuperate historically occluded voices in defining discursively produced objects like the West and the nation. However, in this dissertation, I am primarily interested in those individuals best positioned to shape national and transnational discourses about American identity. Even within the relatively small group of Americans who are in position to back their characterizations of the nation with various kinds of capital, though, circulating images of the West and the nation vary. In these chapters, the West appears as the wellspring of a version of literary transnationalism based on the frontier and concerned primarily with U.S.-Mexico cultural and political relations, a proving ground for American manliness, a romantic and exciting (but still safe) destination for tourists and investor dollars, and the place where America's pluralistic ideals might be imagined to reside. The first chapter focuses on Timothy Flint's novel *Francis Berrian* and his periodical *Western Monthly Review*. *Francis Berrian* was the first novel published in the United States to be set largely in Mexico, and the *Western Monthly Review* offered one of the first arguments for the existence of a distinctive Western American literature at the same time that the first arguments for the existence of a distinctive national literature were being published by Samuel Kettell and Samuel Lorenzo Knapp. The second chapter examines the idea of the West as a masculine testing ground, and it focuses on Francis Parkman, Jr.'s travel narrative *The Oregon Trail*, initially published serially in *The Knickerbocker*. This text, E. N. Feltskog claims, "has long been accepted as a classic account of western adventure" (5a) and this text indeed has a pervasive

influence on the West of the national imagination well into the 20th century.[2] The third chapter examines *Sunset*, an influential and widely-read magazine founded at the perfect moment to reflect the rise of tourism and agriculture in the Western economy. This was a magazine owned by the Southern Pacific, making it a useful object through which to understand the turn away from the "Wild West" and to examine new forms of regional commercial promotion and the challenges attending the magazine's need to be both authentic and boosterist. The fourth and final chapter takes up Willa Cather's *One of Ours* (1922). Cather is the most canonical American writer associated with the American West and one of the central figures of literary modernism. *One of Ours* marks a turn in Cather's career, coming after a trilogy of books set mostly in the West—*O, Pioneers!* (1913), *The Song of the Lark* (1915), and *My Ántonia* (1918)—and this chapter shows Cather grappling with the place of the West in the nation at an especially fraught moment for nationalism. The novel is set mostly in the years leading up to WWI and describes a Nebraska youth's experiences and ultimate death on a European battlefield. This novel is uniquely positioned in Cather's career to consider the relationship between region and nation.

All this is to say that "West of What?" does not offer a stable, absolute definition of the West and its characteristics (nor, for that matter, the United States and *its* characteristics) so much as examine a paradoxical dynamic between the West and the nation that obtains across much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It accepts as Western the writing that proclaims itself to be Western and is unconcerned with questions of objective, intrinsic definition. Yet it does seek

[2] Theodore Roosevelt, who stands as an archetypical figure of Western manliness would dedicate *The Winning of the West* to "Francis Parkman, to whom Americans who feel a pride in the pioneer history of their country are so greatly indebted" (1:iii). Though Roosevelt likely makes this dedication largely in recognition of Parkman's work as the historian who wrote *France and England in North America* (1865) rather than as the travel writer who wrote *The Oregon Trail*, this dedication suggests the similarity of their views of the West and its significance in national forms of identity.

to rethink the *relationship* between West and nation and in so doing impinges upon a diverse set of scholarly discourses related to American literary regionalisms and nationalisms.

This dissertation joins two broad conversations that correspond to the West and the nation. With regard to study of the American West, I engage with three main strands of scholarship: recent work on the literary West that attempts to produce more theoretically sophisticated approaches to the West to better capture its transnationalism and complexity, a venerable tradition of scholarship on the American West by historians, most specifically the "New Western History," led by Patricia Nelson Limerick and other historians interested in including hitherto neglected or occluded voices into the historiography of the American West, and, adjacent to the study of the American West specifically, literary critical scholarship interested in American regionalisms (including American regionalisms besides those associated with the American West) and the relationship between those regionalisms and American literary nationalism. This last category pivots from the particularly Western part of this dissertation's scholarly engagements to my engagements with the study of American nationalism. Here, the dissertation joins not only a venerable literary critical tradition engaged in the question of how American literary regionalisms might be defined and placed in relation to American literary nationalism, but more fundamental questions about how Americans invented and sought to maintain a distinctive literary identity.

This dissertation's most immediate interlocutors are scholars interested in the American West. In *Ten Most Wanted* (1998), literary critic Blake Allmendinger is remarkably unsparing in his criticism of Western literary studies: "The leading journal in the field exists in a time warp and reflects an intellectual state of stagnation" and it "produces no noteworthy scholarship"; moreover, "graduate students don't enter a field that they perceive to be dead, and because they

don't enter the field it never has a chance to revive" (5-6).[3] Since the publication of *Ten Most Wanted* at the end of the 20th century, however, there have been a number of developments in the field that have greatly increased its theoretical and methodological sophistication and heeded Allmendinger's call to understand the West in much more expansive terms, chronologically and geographically. A group of critics particularly responsible for exciting new developments in the literary study of the American West that free the subfield from what Allmendinger sees as a plodding (if not backward) historicist mode are publishing their work in the *Postwestern Horizons* series at the University of Nebraska Press. In the 21st century, the *Postwestern Horizons* understands its mission to be the revivification of scholarship concerning the literary West: "By moving past the West as a national place, process, and idea to more methodologically innovative, transnationally daring, and theoretically fertile horizons of scholarship, this series encourages new ways of conceiving cultural production and reception" ("Postwestern Horizons"). *Postwestern Horizons* has reshaped the field and shaken up the grim state of the field that Allmendinger describes. Allmendinger, writing in 1998, sees a field largely disconnected from advances in literary theory in the second half of the 20th century, failing to substantially engage with ethnic and gender studies and unattuned to postmodern developments in critical theory. Beginning in 2004, however, *Postwestern Horizons* has published work that broadens the canon of Western American texts (for example, the first book in the series consists of essays on María Amparo Ruiz de Burton) and offers literary criticism that brings relatively new theoretical approaches to Western texts.

In *Unsettling the Literary West* (2003), literary critic Nathaniel Lewis defines Western writing less in terms of its relationships or obligations to a particular place than in terms of its

[3] The journal he refers to is *Western American Literature*.

strategic commitment to authenticity, a concept he takes from Jean Baudrillard's work in *Simulacra and Simulation* on the "simulacrum," a copy with no original. Lewis proposes that the West is such an object, as popular images of the region are reproduced and circulated throughout the country and these images are read as authentic, even though they don't ultimately correspond to any real referent. Reimagining Western writing's tendency to represent itself as authentic history or reportage rather than literature as an authorial strategy instead of as an aesthetic failure, Lewis recuperates Western writing from those who would dismiss it in favor of genres of writing that more obtrusively announce their formal innovativeness. Most significant for my purposes here is Lewis's reimagination of what the literary West means for the nation. He rejects the idea that the West lacks the inventive genius of properly national literary figures, but rather exposes the power of a reading and purchasing market based on the East Coast to shape Western literary form. The idea that Western literature is in significant part shaped by the nation's ideological appetites is crucial to my arguments here. Regardless of whether Western writers perform their work in open defiance of national standards of taste or in hopes of satisfying it, they are keenly aware of the financial and ideological pressures on their work produced by the nation.

Lewis is aware of the implications of his work with respect to the commercial promotion of the West and the implications of regional tourism on the discourses striving to produce a sense of national identity, but in *Unsettling the Literary West*, he is most concerned with the Western writing that hinges upon authenticity. Because boosterist writing on the West often takes up forms that at least initially appear to be unconcerned with appearing authentic, Lewis opts not to make them a focus in his argument: "Although the West was increasingly centralized in the country's imagination and commodified through tourism and touring spectacles, the region's

emergent writers could rarely take advantage of this centrality, except through parody or nostalgia, evoking a wilder, wide-open West" (111). Lewis's concern here is authenticity, so it's understandable why he sets aside parodic or nostalgic forms of Western boosterist writing in favor of thinking about Western authenticity in light of the emergence of American literary realism. In this dissertation, however, I show how Lewis's argument that authenticity is central to Western writing is as useful for reading "parody or nostalgia" as it is for reading canonical realists. I show how there is a form of authenticity operating within the very generic conventions that would seem to preclude it. I attend to the *representation of the representation* of parody and nostalgia within these boosterist texts, which allows me to fold them into the larger picture of the relationship between Western writing and "the country's imagination" that Lewis describes.

As Lewis uses Baudrillard's ideas to retheorize the West as an avatar of authenticity, American studies scholar Neil Campbell in *The Rhizomatic West* (2008) has applied the poststructuralism of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to imagine the West as a "traveling or mobile discourse" (1). He looks beyond the myth of the West as the essence of a "rooted" American national character in order to see it in another way: "…the West has always had a global dimension as a geographical, cultural, and economic crossroads defined by complex connectivity, multidimensionality, and imagination, even if these have often been elided in favor of a more inward-looking and emotive vision" (2-3). As I examine the relationship between the West and the avowedly national literature of the United States, I follow Campbell in seeing the region and the nation not in a simple dyad bound to the historical frontier. Rather, I see both entities as being from their inception already traveling and mobile within much broader, transnational textual and ideological circulations. For example, in my first chapter, I show how writers discursively producing the West and the nation are both intensely preoccupied with the

reputation of American literature abroad. Whether I'm writing about Timothy Flint attempting to show a partially Hispanophone readership an image of the United States that shares Mexican democratic ideals or about Samuel Kettell or Samuel Lorenzo Knapp attempting to describe a national literary tradition on par with England's, I show how American writers see the American West and the nation as participating in national and transnational flows of people, ideas, and texts. I offer an expanded, largely periodical archive to Campbell's argument. While Campbell focuses mostly on the 20th century and offers a diverse archive featuring film, music, and visual art, I showing how the rhizomatic form of the West extends to the origins of the American West in the early 19th century and to print periodicals.

In addition to providing new readings and new archives for postmodern literary critical work on Western American literature, this dissertation also joins an interdisciplinary conversation linking literary critics with historians of the American West. In his 2004 review of several books at the intersection of history and literature in *American Literary History* "We Should Talk: Western History and Western Literature in Dialogue," literary critic Forrest G. Robinson describes the persistent gap between the two disciplines. According to Robinson, there has long been imbalance in the intellectual traffic between historians and literary critics of the West because while "students of literature turn almost reflexively toward the light of historical scholarship," historians remain preoccupied by what he terms the "fact-fiction binary" (136-137). Thinking with literary critic William R. Handley about the question of what the two disciplines want from each other, Robinson suggests that what literary critics want from historians is acknowledgement of the ways in which history is mediated if not constituted by writing subject to the methods of literary criticism and they "also want the historians to defend their claims of unmediated access to 'facts,' 'reality,' and 'the truth' about the past—claims upon

which the putative boundary between the disciplines principally rests" (133). But for Robinson and Handley, it's much less clear what historians feel they might have to gain from literary critics. For them, history is fact and literature is fiction. As a result, the balance of power in the study of the American West has always favored history over literary criticism.

As Allmendinger points out, the West, for most of the 20th century, has been a prestigious subfield in history, while it has never earned much cachet in literary studies. For him, this is because there never emerged "the literary equivalent of a frontier hypothesis, a unifying theory that argues that the entire corpus of American literature stems from a fascination with the nation's frontier…However, Frederick Jackson Turner's belief—that westward movement, the concept of free land, and the process of settlement, have fundamentally shaped all Americans—legitimized the study of western history in the late nineteenth century and continues, more than one hundred years later, to influence scholarship" (2).[4] Lewis might suggest that this lack of a unifying theory of Western literature is a consequence of the way that Western literature has always been judged in terms of its authenticity, which means that Western writers are incentivized to portray their work as history or reportage and conceal their own creativity (3). "West of What?" stops short of offering what Allmendinger calls a "the literary equivalent of a frontier hypothesis" inasmuch as it does not argue that the American national literary character

[4] Allmendinger calls the work of Henry Nash Smith and Richard Slotkin "too discriminating" to serve as literary equivalents of Frederick Jackson Turner (2). Though he does not expand on this comment, it seems that Allmendinger here refers to Smith's classic *Virgin Land* (1951), which is conceived largely as a response to and critique of Turner, laying bare the mythology of the frontier rather than attempting to create a literary one. Slotkin is, in turn, indebted to the methodological innovations of Smith, who pioneered the Myth and Symbol approach to American culture and earned the first doctorate in the new discipline of American studies. Slotkin's renowned trilogy on the myth of the frontier, again, does not attempt to produce a general account of the West as the source of American identity so much as analyze the enduring significance of the myth of the frontier in American culture.

stems exclusively from a preoccupation with the western frontier. However, it does argue that articulations of the characteristics of Western literature and the characteristics of American literature are, across much of the 19th century and into the 20th century, impossible to disentangle. Without producing the kind of attribution or hierarchy that Turner's Frontier Thesis claims, I argue that the West is both a crucial source (albeit not the sole one) of the nation's distinctive literary character and at the same time a crucial other against which the nation constructs its own identity. As long a shadow as Turner's arguments cast, however, my project also engages with Turner's critics, the most influential of which are known as the New Western Historians.

I engage the history of the American West at a moment of some uncertainty in the field. The historiography of the region had long been dominated by Turner's triumphalist account of westward expansion until the emergence of the New Western History in the 1980s, heralded by Patricia Nelson Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest* (1987). While Turner focuses on the advancement of civilization into wilderness, the gradual folding of the West into the nation, and its ideological contributions to the American national character, Limerick and the New Western Historians understand the West less as a moving process than as a place. They insist that the Turnerian view of the history of the American West neglects the environment and the perspectives of nonwhite people and women. This turn to more inclusive modes of scholarship, highlighting people and narratives hitherto neglected by the academic world, occurs in many disciplines in the late 20th century, and at least in the case of the history the American West, this revisionist approach remained dominant for several decades and might remain dominant for some time to come. Writing in 2004, historian David M. Wrobel observes, "It is clear that the leading New Western Historians of a decade ago are still at the forefront of the field…The New

Western History has certainly transformed the field by catalyzing the study of race, the environment, women and gender, urban issues, and the adoption of comparative frameworks that help us move beyond the easy acceptance of notions of national and regional exceptionalism" (440). While "West of What?" is concerned with the perspectives of elites who are producing the most prestigious and influential accounts of what constitutes and defines Western and American literature, it is nonetheless attuned to the priorities of the New Western History in that it resists collapsing the history of the American West and the history of American identity into a single discourse. According to Robinson, the history of the American West has much to gain from literary criticism: "Calliope has opened the way for Clio. Just as Western fiction has for generations anticipated and helped to shape subsequent historical narrative, so much recent regional scholarship in literature and popular culture is giving definition to present and future perspectives on the past" (141). As much as I draw from sources that appear to be literary, the arguments I make here have stakes that I articulate in intellectual and cultural historical terms. This dissertation heeds Robinson's call for history and literary criticism to work across disciplinary boundaries.[5]

The New Western History has been in ascendance in the field for decades now, leading some historians to wonder what the "Next Western History" might look like. Writing in 2012, María E. Montoya argues in her summary of a roundtable assessing the state of the Western American history organized by the Western History Association's Committee on Race in the

[5] For example, this dissertation's second chapter concerns the cultural history of American manliness, linking the tension between Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian visions of the national economy to discourses about the West as a gendered testing ground. Though my method is literary critical, this chapter shows how literary analysis can be used to make arguments about history beyond the confines of the literary as such; in this case, my arguments have stakes in the cultural histories of labor and gender.

American West, that the New Western History's emphasis on "gender, race, and class" is now a starting point rather than an ending point for historical analysis and that the future of Western American history "builds, through deep archival research and cross-disciplinary analysis, on new western history's insights to reveal how people found work and made homes on the western landscape." This, according to Montoya, will require historians of the West to broaden geographic and chronological frames of reference and "study multiplicity and diversity within place" (272-273). The newer approaches to the literary history of the West I have been describing here could have some purchase, especially in terms of the West's "multiplicity." For example, examining Western history from the perspectives of women, racial and sexual minorities, and a variety of social classes produce divergent images of the West that "travel" in divergent ways, which could reveal the morphing, branching shapes that Campbell describes in *The Rhizomatic West*. Reading and comparing the kinds of accounts of the West and the nation produced by American elites like the one in this dissertation disclose a different kind of "multiplicity," especially over the long time period encompassed by this dissertation. I examine articulations of the identity of Western and American literature that possess varying impetuses. But one might imagine well other versions of this dissertation that make use of a more diverse archive and thus produces even more complex and diverse alternative images of the West than I offer here. My focus for this project is the most influential and canonical accounts of regional and national identity, so I do not prioritize the kinds of voices that Montoya alludes to in this particular project. But I could imagine a version of this dissertation that does more to heed Montoya's call for "multiplicity" by thinking through the influence of a broader group of Americans on the discourses that claim to speak for the nation. There are ways that this dissertation does and does not heed Montoya's call for "multiplicity," and there are also ways

that it heeds and does not heed Montoya and her colleagues' call for a deeper engagement with the archive. The most exciting textual recoveries in this dissertation are not archival in the sense that they take up materials available exclusively at archives, but they are gleaned from attention to hitherto underexamined periodical sources that are cumbersome to access and research. The widespread digitization of periodicals is creating exciting new research possibilities by making access to obscure periodicals more convenient than ever before. As digitization transforms periodical studies, practical barriers to archival work will continue to fall.

As for what Montoya calls "cross-disciplinary analysis" that could sustain a "Next Western History," the emergence of settler colonial studies has recently been revitalizing both historicist and literary critical approaches to the American West.[6] Settler colonial studies is the topic of the Spring 2017 special issue of *Western American Literature* edited by Alex Trimble Young and Lorenzo Veracini. In their introduction, they explain that "settler colonialism describes a mode of colonial domination with which the American West is all too familiar. Settlers are colonists who come to stay. Their primary aim is to dispossess, displace, and destroy Indigenous peoples rather than to exploit them for their labor. Settler social orders are established via logics of elimination and exclusion, dispossessing Natives and then attempting to police the racial, gender, and class boundaries of the settler polity" (3-4). Settler colonial studies, which draws both methodological inspiration and an intense political charge from postcolonial theory and from Marxist approaches to history and literature, exemplifies one possible interdisciplinary approach that could mark a new way forward for the study of the American West. I did not become aware of the increasing scholarly interest in settler colonial studies in the

[6] The journal *Settler Colonial Studies* is established in 2010 to establish and advocate for this new scholarly field.

analysis of Western American literature until it was too late to include it in the structure of my arguments here, but this dissertation nonetheless takes interdisciplinary approaches to its objects and, moreover, puts forward objects of inquiry conducive to settler colonialist frames of analysis. An example of an object that might benefit from a setter colonial framework is the story I present in the dissertation's third chapter, Paul F. Shoup's short story "By Order of the Moon," which uses literary figures to both recount and obscure the story of the genocide of American Indians in the context of Western settler colonialism. My engagement with Cather in chapter four is also in implicit dialogue with settler colonial studies approaches to immigration.[7] Even as this dissertation is grounded in the techniques of literary criticism, it is engaged with scholarly discourses on the West concerned with revising the disciplinary conditions under which the American West might be studied. A more thoroughgoing engagement with settler colonial studies would potentially reframe the stakes of the argument I present here. Rather than focusing on the competing and collaborating efforts to establish distinctive regional and national literatures, a settler colonial approach to the intertwined literature of the West and the nation would examine how these discourses aim to occlude and erase the discourses that precede them. It would take up indigenous and Hispanophone writing that understands its geographic identity in ways that are irreconcilable with the settler colonial conquest of the region by the United States. It would show how the texts like the ones I examine in this dissertation participate in the

[7] See, for example, Tom Lynch's article "'Nothing but land': Women's Narratives, Gardens, and the Settler-Colonial Imaginary in the US West and Australian Outback" in the Winter 2014 *Western American Literature*. Lynch applies a settler colonial studies approach to compare writing by women about the Australian Outback with writing by women concerning the American West, including Cather's prairie novels *O, Pioneers!* and *My Ántonia*. Lynch looks for links between Cather's West and frontiers around the globe. In contrast, I show how if the American West were imagined to be unique, it might mediate a fantasy of distinctive politics delaminable from imperialism.

project of dispossessing the cultures that compose earlier literatures and offering alternative narratives that represent American expansionism in a triumphalist, or at least more favorable light.

This dissertation is not only engaged with scholarship specifically on the West. It's also part of a group of conversations broadly concerned with American regionalism in general and American regionalisms beyond the one associated with the West, especially the American regional tradition associated with the South. This conversation bridges the two broad fields with which I am concerned here: the region and the nation. "West of What?" is conceptually indebted to Jennifer Greeson's *Our South* (2010), which examines the ways in which the South plays a role for the United States that in important ways resembles the role I attribute to the West. For Greeson, the South is a crucial resource in the project of establishing the cultural identity of the United States from the European perspective, but American literary identity is founded upon the cultural distinction American elites construct between what they represent to be distinctively Southern and what they claim to be national. As a result, Greeson argues, the South plays a surprisingly central role in articulations of transnational American literary identity: "Writing the South produces not only an independent national literature but also a masterful, mastering literature integral to the global ascendance of the United States" (10). Like Greeson's *Our South*, Leigh Anne Duck's *The Nation's Region* (2009) attends to the role of the American South in the production of national identity. While Greeson's book emphasizes the significance of the South in the formation of national identity from 1775 into the early 20th century (2), Duck's object is the South in the first half of the 20th century, a moment in which American liberalism and what Duck calls racial "apartheid" in the South appear to be at irreconcilable odds. According to her, in the years leading up to the Depression, the South takes on qualities that the nation desires to

estrange. For Duck, the United States is able to portray itself as a wealthy, democratic, progressive nation precisely because the South is made to bear stereotypes related to poverty and backward racial ideologies. Even as it bears the weight of these negative stereotypes, however, Duck argues that the South serves as a repository of a desirable "tradition" shielded from the capitalist chronotype that structures postbellum America (5).

In this dissertation, I build upon Duck's work by showing how the phenomenon she describes in *The Nation's Region* is not distinctive to the South nor to the particular set of stereotypes that national elites associated with that region. Rather, I argue that a process of ideological estrangement isomorphic to the one Duck describes with respect to the South occurs at various time in American history with respect to the West. To be sure, the undesirable ideologies stereotypically associated with the two regions are different; in the early 20th century, the South is associated with racism and poverty, while the West is, at various times, associated with imperial violence and greed. Yet the West is used by the nation in the same ways as the South, allowing the nation to define its virtues against the shortcomings of a region represented to be anomalous. The West as I describe it in this dissertation even resembles Duck's South in that it preserves certain virtues that the nation fears to lose, like the South becoming a kind of time capsule. The West becomes valuable to the nation because it preserves a nostalgic fantasy of individualism and pragmatism under threat from the social and technological changes that roil the United States at the end of the 19th century. "West of What?" does not directly address Southern literary regionalism as such, but it is in implicit methodological conversation with Greeson and Duck as they seek to account for the tensions and contradictions bound up in any attempt to theorize the relationship between a region imagined to be distinctive and the nation that is imagined to encompass it.

One of the most apparent differences between the South and the West when it comes to theorizing their respective regional identities is the sense of political and geographic shape provided by the idea of the Confederacy, a polity that secedes from the Union over the question of slavery, which begins the Civil War. Because of the clearly demarcated juridical and political separation between the South and the nation that once existed, examining the role of the West in the nation might appear to pose different challenges and demand different methodologies from the analogous examination of the South. But even if the West never secedes from the United States in the same sense as does the South, territorial disputes between the United States and Spain and later with an independent Mexico and the declaration of independence and subsequent annexation into the United States of the Republic of Texas mean that the political histories of the two regions bear more common themes than might be immediately apparent. It is these kinds of similarities in political history that might account for the effectiveness of similar analytical frameworks. For example, Greeson and Duck offer a similar approach to the South as Lewis and Campbell apply to the West; they see the South less as a particular geographic place than as a construct and as a tool that serves particular ideological ends for those crafting the nation's elites' account of American cultural identity. As Greeson puts it, "I do not ask what the South is; rather, I ask what it is good for, what it accomplishes and enables in the broader culture of the United States" (2). This is precisely my approach to the West in this dissertation. I am much less interested in establishing a geographic boundary or set of boundaries for the West than I am in thinking through the lens of ideological utility for the Americans who are in best position to produce plausible and influential definitions of the national identity. The contemporary regionalists I think with in this dissertation take an expansive, imaginative view of the region and

use it as a means through which they can examine the region and the nation in transnational, even global contexts.

Reading the work of specialists in Western literature like Lewis and Campbell alongside the work of specialists in Southern literature like Greeson and Duck reveals that the region has recently become an increasingly important concept in how scholars understand the literary history of the nation. Indeed, this argument—that the region and the nation are so bound together that the discourses that generate them can be impossible to tease apart—is a claim broader than my interventions specific to the American West. The objects I select for examination in this dissertation focus on the West and its unique qualities and capacities with respect to the imagining of a national identity. However, I emphasize that the work I perform in this dissertation, held alongside analogous scholarship related to the American South like Greeson's and Duck's, makes a broader claim about the region as an object of study that I hold to be of equal importance to my claims about the West in particular. While they do so in different ways, the details of which fall beyond the scope this dissertation, other regions, most notably the South with its sense of difference and otherness and New England with its enormous cultural capital and proximity to historical centers of national political power, also perform the work of ideologically producing the nation. In making the case for the American West as a region bound up in the production of national identity, I do not mean to deny that other regionalisms are producing the analogous entanglements or engaging in the same kind of paradoxical otherness and identity with the nation. In this sense, this dissertation not only stakes a claim about the West, but it also instantiates a broader claim about regionalism and the region.

This focus on the region might initially seem somewhat surprising in light of the turn to ever larger units of geographical analysis, including the transnational and the hemispheric (and

even the planetary) that characterizes American literary studies in the 1990s and early 2000s. That turn to the transnational is exemplified by the work of such scholars as Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Anna Brickhouse, and Paul Gilroy, who read American literature in light of Latin American, Caribbean, and transatlantic networks of influence. However, when one considers the way in which these recent studies of American regions construct the region as having always been transnational and hemispheric, porous and mobile, renewed attention to the region is not so much a rupture from the transnational and hemispheric turns in American literary studies as it is a crucial component of them. Though it might seem like the transnational and hemispheric turns in American literary studies are concerned only with the broadest geographic entities and thinking about how nations like the United States fit into ever larger geographic imaginaries, this dissertation shifts attention inwards, towards smaller geographic units. "West of What?" is in conversation with these accounts of American literature that attempt to break out of restrictive, territorial versions of Americanist literary study like those described as a "disciplinary stranglehold" by Wai-Chee Dimock in "Deep Time: American Literature and World History" (2001). Here, I offer readings of the relationship between the literary West and literary United States that fill in the details of the sweeping rejection of nationalist parochialisms that have been occurring in the last few decades, hoping to expose how the region is no less transnational than the nation.

In addition to my methodological overlap and shared concerns with specialists in the literature of the American South who are working to expose and understand the transnational features and impulses embedded in various American regionalisms, I build on the work of other frameworks for thinking about American regionalism, notably Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse's feminist approach in *Writing Out of Place* (2003). Like the other literary critics of

regionalism that I have been discussing, Fetterley and Pryse tend to abstract regionalism from place and they also tend to theorize it in terms of its relationship to discourses proclaiming themselves to be the national literature. They point out, "Significantly, the etymology of the word 'region' does not suggest any connection to 'natural' or geographical boundaries. To be ruled is to be *regional* (the word deriving from the Latin *regere*) …Thus a region is an area ruled by a more powerful entity, earlier a king, in modern times the state or nation" (5). But their work emphasizes the significance of gender in literary regionalism and, equally importantly, attempts to recuperate regionalism as a genre that embraces the voices of those excluded from dominant American literary discourses. They propose regionalism as a strategy for avoiding the imperial politics of American literature around the turn of the 20th century. Fetterley and Pryse usefully theorize regionalism as a politically charged form autonomous from the particular associations carried by specific regionalisms and they also offer crucial definitional work around "regionalism" and closely associated terms like "local color" and "realism."

While my project has much to gain from Fetterley and Pryse's careful definitional work and their positioning of regionalism relative to other major American literary genres in the 19th and early 20th centuries, "West of What?" stakes out a position in tension with their insistence on regionalism as closely associated with feminism, queerness, and the advantages of being minor. For them, regionalism is a method of opting out of the moral and political dangers intrinsic to literary nationalism. There is resistance inherent to the genre; by refusing to be national, it critiques the national. However, this dissertation reads regionalism as deeply bound up in American literary nationalisms and all the problems that Fetterley and Pryse associate with them. Here, the regionalism associated with the American West is complicit in the construction and dissemination of American nationalism. Even when Western writing appears to diverge from

what elites proclaim as the national literature, the Americans that have the kinds of capital necessary to define Western and American literature use the region both as a resource and as a foil to define the national literature. Moreover, as I repeatedly demonstrate in this dissertation, the distinctiveness of the West with respect to the nation is tenuous at best; more often than not, the West and the nation are discourses that can't be each other's others.

This dissertation is in conversation with scholarship on American literary regionalism in general and Western literary regionalism in particular, but it is also part of a much broader critical discourse concerning American literary nationalism that is not necessarily principally concerned with regionalism. I see this discourse as originating in the primary texts I examine in the dissertation's first chapter: the pioneering work done by Samuel Kettell and Samuel Lorenzo Knapp toward defining a distinctive American literature. In the 20th century, scholars like Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*) and Michael Warner (*The Letters of the Republic*) have brought attention to the technological, material, political, and cultural circumstances surrounding the emergence of American nationalism, beginning in the 18th century. Anderson highlights the role of print capitalism and Warner the emergence of what Jürgen Habermas calls a public sphere, one mediated and made productively impersonal by print. More recently, Trish Loughran in *The Republic in Print* (2009) has challenged accounts of the emergence of American literary nationalism that foreground national circulation or print texts. She argues that the crucial years of national identity formation in the early republic lacked a national print culture and, for this reason, it's not possible to attribute the emergence of American nationalism to the emergence of print capitalism. Loughran shows how circulations of print are constructed as national only retrospectively and actually circulate in fractured reading publics corresponding to smaller geographic imaginaries, which might be understood as regional. For her, this

fragmentation of the American reading public was, ironically, crucial in the eventual production of the nation; the lack of a unified national reading public forestalls the kind of strife between large, powerful reading publics that would eventually lead to Civil War. This dissertation builds on Loughran's claim, which is, crucially, an argument about the role of the region as an ideological formation in the emergence of the cultural identity of the nation. Just as Loughran argues that the early literary history of the United States is shaped by forms of otherness produced by regions, I show how in the particular case of the West, regionalism and nationalism emerge together and are inextricable over the 19th and early 20th century.

"West of What?" supplements these accounts of the origins of literary nationalism and the material, ideological, and social technologies that mediate it by arguing for the pivotal role of westward expansion. Anderson, Warner, and Loughran are all ultimately concerned with the question of how American national identity emerges (or fails to emerge) with respect to the circulation of texts. This is precisely the subject of this dissertation. In "West of What?" the region, as produced in national reading publics by the circulation of a wide variety of texts, appears not only as an indispensable resource for the formation of a literary national character, but also as the other against which it is defined. I provide an archive and interpretive apparatus for showing one way in which the processes Anderson, Warner, Loughran, and others have described take place. I trace the emergence of writing that describes itself as Western and as American in print culture, mostly in periodicals, and I show how these discourses contribute to the origin, perpetuation, and circulation of the idea of a national literature of the United States.

This dissertation's claim—that the qualities that define Western literature and the qualities that define the national literature of the United States are, across the 19th and early 20th centuries, frequently entangled and even indistinguishable—problematizes fundamental

discourses and frameworks in the field of American literature. Now is the time to revisit the idea of the American West and its contributions to the literary national character of the United States. There are reasons to turn to the West now from the perspective of trends in American literary studies. As I've outlined in this introduction, postmodern and poststructural approaches are now revitalizing the study of the literary West and producing exciting new interdisciplinary approaches to the field. In this dissertation, I show how considering the ideological work the West performs for the nation and, at times, its indistinguishability of avowedly Western literature from avowedly national literature, contribute to the most enduring and important scholarly discourses on American literature: those that provide accounts of the origins and underlying mechanisms of literary nationalism. By exploring a Western archive, largely in periodical form, a new kind of texture emerges in the story of where the discourses that elites have called American literature comes from. Here, I argue that it has always been bound up with a region that paradoxically provides it both the image of the most essential version of itself and, at the very same time, an other against which it can define itself by contrast.

We are also compelled to turn to the West and its relationship with the nation by the reemergence of particularly odious forms of nationalism and nativism in American culture. As President Donald Trump endorses the nativist politics of Sherriff Joe Arpaio, demands a wall along the nation's border with Mexico, requests a ban on Muslim immigrants, undermines the immigration policy known as Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and otherwise seeks to reframe the conditions under which American identity is defined and historicized, the question of who and what counts as American has immediate and profound stakes for enormous numbers of people living in United States. This dissertation is part of an ongoing scholarly conversation dedicated to producing a history of how such questions have been answered, which

might offer some indication of how such questions might be likely to be answered in the future. In this dissertation, I show how the West and the images associated with it have always been deeply implicated in the production of American identity and, by all indications, remain deeply implicated in disturbing new articulations of American nationalism and nativism. Is this political and cultural crisis a literary matter, one that can be examined, diagnosed, and addressed through the tools of literary criticism? Certainly, literary criticism and literary history should not and cannot be the only tool to combat the worst aspects of American nationalism and nativism. Yet inasmuch as nationalism mediated by print capitalism, as Benedict Anderson shows us, has always been produced as a response to political and ontological crises, it is a reasonable place to start. Politicians often frame policy in terms of its conformity or adherence to identity (people and choices that are "American" or "unamerican"). The shape and scope of identity come from the circulation of texts, often literary ones.

I began this introduction with Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Love of Landry*, a novel in which the West initially appears as antithetical to the culture of the United States. Over the course of the novel, Dunbar reveals that Landry is no foreigner, but rather a quintessential American. However, I close this introduction with an example of a reversal in how images of the West signify with respect to the national identity as it is produced by the discourses of American political and cultural elites. In December 2017, Judge Roy Moore ran for the United States Senate on a platform closely associated with President Trump and Steve Bannon's version of American nationalism. He campaigned astride a horse and showed up to a rally wearing a Stetson and a leather vest. He pulled out a pistol while addressing the crowd to underscore his support of the Second Amendment. Despite running for office in Alabama rather than Wyoming, he relied upon stereotypical images of the West (rather than, say, the South) to associate himself

with values and ideas that represent themselves as quintessentially American. Rather than his performance of cowboy manliness signaling foreignness as it does at the beginning of *The Love of Landry*, Moore saw it as a way that he could signal his intimacy to American nationalism. As I've indicated in this introduction, "West of What?" joins a variety of important scholarly discourses and conversations focused on the American West and the origins of American literary nationalism, but its greatest stakes lie in its bearing on pressing political questions. I write in a moment in American history in which the images and rhetoric of the West are being deployed in discourses about American identity that make the nation less safe for its most vulnerable citizens. Tracing the processes by which these dangerous discourses originate and proliferate could be the first step in imagining ways to resist them.

Chapter 1: Alternative Transnationalisms: Timothy Flint and the Atlantic Reviewers

1.0 Introduction: Regions and Rivalries

In the "Era of Good Feelings" in the wake of the War of 1812, American elites enjoyed a revitalized sense of patriotism and national confidence. But imbricated in the celebration of their military prowess was anxiety about cultural distinctiveness. Having once again defeated Britain to secure their political independence, Americans in the publishing centers on the East Coast seek cultural independence from their colonial progenitors. Well into the 19th century, writers from both sides of the Atlantic argued that inasmuch as American literature exists at all, it was a pale imitation of its British counterpart. These indictments of American literature produced a counter-discourse, emanating from New England, which promulgated an American literature free of foreign influence. However, this nationalist counter-discourse heralded a version of American literature vulnerable to a sectionalist critique. At the same time as writers in New England promote a version of American literature optimized for transatlantic competition, Timothy Flint proposes an alternative American literary geographical imaginary: one centered on the western frontier rather than New England. His 1826 novel *Francis Berrian, or the Mexican Patriot* imagines a transnational political project uniting American and Mexican republicanisms, but reviewers in New England periodicals struggle to fit his work into their nationalist literary paradigm. In response to this rejection by the Yankee literary establishment, Flint founds his own periodical in 1827 in Cincinnati. Flint favors an American literature independent from Britain, but for him, an American national literature cannot come at the cost of marginalizing Western contributions and subsuming the distinctive character of the nation's sections into a static monoculture.

This chapter argues that even at the historical moment in which the intellectual and artistic elites defining American literature most desire to present a united front, Flint exposes

alternative sectionalist literary geographies. While many accounts of the 1820s focus on the era's national harmony and singularity of purpose, the print discourse between Flint and reviewers back East reveals the churning sectional conflict beneath a façade of national unity. Flint undermines his contemporaries' claims that a national literary identity has been established by pointing out the exclusion of Western writing from what writers in Boston and New York deem the national literature. Likewise, even as Flint generates a Western literature that aspires to build a transnational, bilingual discourse binding American and Mexican republicanisms to a Western literary identity, critics from New England attack his handling of history and politics and push Western literature to the margins of American culture by sowing doubt about its literary quality.

The first part of this chapter shows how surprisingly vital the section (as opposed to the nation) is to Flint's sense of geographic identity. Rather than participating in geographic imaginaries focused on the nation and its relationship with the literary production of European rivals, Flint's sense of his identity is dominated by his sense of himself as Western. The second part argues that Flint's sectionalism is best understand in the context of the discursive production of a literary nationalism focused on developing an independent American national literature. This second part reads Samuel Kettell's *Specimens of American Poetry* (1829) and Samuel Lorenzo Knapp's *Lectures on American Literature* (1829) as examples of relatively early American literary histories that promulgate a version of American literature deeply concerned with its prestige in the minds of British arbiters of taste. The third part shows how Flint's friction with literary nationalists on the East Coast manifests itself in Flint's literary writing. It shows how Flint's 1826 novel *Francis Berrian* is as interested in sectional tension as it is in transnational rivalry. The novel's Western geography and hope for harmonious republicanism to unite the United States and Mexico stands in stark contrast with what New England writers

attempt to present as the national literature. East Coast writers instead understand the national literature as a discourse more concerned with comparing itself to British literary production and transatlantic hierarchies of prestige.

Having shown how *Francis Berrian* animates sectional conflict within a period of avowed national unity, the final parts of the chapter examine, respectively, reviews of *Francis Berrian* in the venerable New England periodicals *United States Literary Gazette* and *North American Review* and Flint's irked response to these reviews in his own publication, the *Western Monthly Review*. Tracing the conflict between Flint and the Atlantic reviewers illuminates an early moment in western literary sectionalism and how Flint's literary sectionalism underwrites an alternative version of American literary transnationalism and a time that might otherwise appear to be the zenith of American cultural consolidation.

1.1 Timothy Flint's Bellicose Sectionalism

In the 1827 first issue of his new periodical, *The Western Quarterly Review*, Timothy Flint picks a sectionalist fight:

> We are physically, and from our peculiar modes of existence, a scribbling and forth-putting people. Little, as they have dreamed of the fact in the Atlantic country, we have our thousand orators and poets…We have seen, and we therefore know what one, who has not seen can not know, with what a curl of the lip, and crook of the nose an Atlantic reviewer contemplates the idea of a work written west of the Alleghany mountains. What, say they, a back woods man write! A poet make verses on Red river near the borders of Arkansas! who ever

> heard of any thing worth remembering, that was written any where, except in Europe, or at least in Boston, or New York? (1:9-10)[1]

The editor attacks the geographical elitism of a hypothetical "Atlantic reviewer" disgusted by the very idea of Western literary production. Over these imagined protestations, however, Flint argues not only that literature *can* be worthy of a place in literary memory despite its Western origins, but that there is Western literature made great by its very Western qualities. The *Western Monthly Review* will not be merely a transplanted European or Bostonian periodical; Flint specifically "solicits contributions of short and pithy articles, of such a character, as may be supposed most interesting and useful to western people" (1:20). He proudly presents his sectional bona fides, proclaiming that his publication "throws itself upon the indulgence and patronage of the western people…For himself, his children, his charities, his first ties and duties, are here. Those most dear to him, scarcely know another country; and here, if the people will encourage all the industry, application, and zeal, for their welfare, of which his feeble health is capable, he will hope to find the term of his wanderings. These circumstances give bond for him, that he will be thoroughly a western man" (1:19). The way that Flint positions his intervention in the American literary scene in 1827 indicates that the dichotomy between the West and New England dominates his sense of place. For him, the *Western Monthly Review* provides a corrective to transatlantic literary elitisms that leave his people in the margins.

Flint's attachment to a specific geographic part of the United States resembles literary regionalism. But in this case, describing Flint's geographical investments as regionalism would risk subordinating Flint's literature to a broader, national literature that might encompass

[1] Flint's *Western Monthly Review* begins publication as the *Western Quarterly Review* until a change in publication schedule after the third issue. See the editor's note "To Subscribers" (1:189-191).

multiple regionalisms, such as Southern or New England regionalisms. Furthermore, Flint rarely uses the term "region," and when he does, it is not in reference to a specific mode of literary production tied to a subset of the nation. Instead, he privileges the terms "country" and "nation" for both the Atlantic and western parts of the nation that he positions as opposing geographic entities, as well as the Southern parts of the country, whose distinctive identity he also recognizes (*Western Monthly Review* 2:12-13). This terminology places his geographic terms at odds with usages of "country" and "nation" that others use to describe the entire polity of the United States. This slippage in terminology by which "country" and "nation" come to refer not only to the United States itself, but also other geographic entities, gestures to the ways in which Flint's West challenges Atlantic geographies that use "country" and "nation" to refer to a larger entity that subsumes the West.

Flint's disdain for New England literary culture and attachment to the West is not an inevitable consequence of his upbringing. He was born not a Western "backwoodsman," but rather the sickly fifth of nine children in North Reading, Massachusetts, to a family with deep New England roots. Unsuited to more physically demanding work, he received a ministerial education and graduated from Harvard in 1800. His first job took him to Lunenburg, Massachusetts, where he would serve as minister for a dozen rocky years before personal, political, and theological disagreements led to his ouster.[2] Flint's early career is entirely confined to New England, and there is little in his early biography to suggest that his sectional affiliations

[2] Flint was a Federalist in a predominantly Democratic-Republican town, a prickly personality, and according to James K. Folsom's biography, his "religious orientation was evangelical, non-theological, while his parish was probably orthodoxly Calvinist, brought up within the strong Calvinistic tradition of rational disputation" (24). He also developed what John Ervin Kirkpatrick calls a "taste for chemistry," which Kirkpatrick believes sowed uneasiness among Flint's "more ignorant parishioners" (39).

would change. On the contrary, in a speech on the Fourth of July, 1815 before the Washington Benevolent Societies of Lancaster and Sterling and of Leominster and Fitchburg, Flint offers a stirring defense of New England's unique and valuable culture, its political interests, and its position relative to the rest of the nation. The War of 1812 had taken a disproportionate toll on New England because the economy was based on manufacturing and trade. British shipping blockades were much more devastating there than in the agrarian South. He challenges those who would consider this lack of commercial independence as a genuine weakness and counters that New England's relatively few natural resources spur it to greater heights of enterprise (16). He complains that "It is customary of late for the people of the South and the West, and, more shame still, for many of her own matricide sons, to speak contemptuously of New-England… Her steady habits, her love for the bible [sic], the school-house and the church, excite a sneer. Her cold, arid and rocky hills, the supposed abodes of hunger and penury, are vauntingly contrasted with the fertile plains of the South and the West" (17). The language of bodily disgust in the form of the "sneer" in this passage foreshadows his rhetoric in the *Western Monthly Review*. Ironically, Flint even cautions himself against future sectional disloyalty against New England: "New England, land of my forefathers, whose habits are so congenial, whose associations are so dear to my heart, 'when I forget thee,' or cease to speak of thee with filial veneration, 'may my right hand forget her cunning" (17-18). Flint has no shortage or praise or devotion for his New England home. In contrast, the West appears in this oration as a foreign country and emigration there is described as a dangerous trap. He laments that the economic challenges caused by the War of 1812 have forced many citizens to abandon New England. He cautions that, should emigration continue and families continue to leave for the "western wilderness," as "their imaginations were kindled…with designed and delusive paintings of

palaces, and paradises, and spontaneous wealth, in the west," they would be in for a rude awakening. These immigrants to the West, he prophesizes, will find that "Their air-castles vanished, and they began to think of the churches and schools, of the civilization, of the mild manners, they steady habits, and the pleasant intercourse, they left behind…no fruitfulness of soil, no pleasantness of clime, no advantages simply natural, can compensate the want of moral advantages, of the society and intimacy of people of the same views, feelings and habits" (20). By 1827, Flint may have been "thoroughly a western man," but on Independence Day, 1815, he was a staunch New Englander.

Yet in a letter written July 23, 1815, not even three weeks after the oration in which he so praises New England and so vividly cautions those who would abandon it for the West, he voices his desire to do precisely what he warns others against (Kirkpatrick 54). In hopes of a climate more favorable to his health and a better salary than he had earned in Lunenburg, Flint leaves his Massachusetts home. He takes up missionary work, first in New Hampshire and then throughout the West. He would not live permanently in New England again until the end of his life. His affiliation changes, but he remained ardent in his sectionalism.[3] Whether his feelings are for New England or the West, Flint's sense of his own identity is dominated by section. He is quick to take offense at the suggestion that any section of the nation is better than his own, attacking in print imagined sneering elitists. That this perceived sneering comes from his fellow Americans on the basis of sectionalism rather than from foreigners on the basis of nationalism little soothes his sense of grievance. Somewhere between the difficult early years of life in the West and the beginning of his literary career around 1825, biographer James K. Folsom argues, Flint "finally

[3] Folsom notes that the Flint family history might suggest that Flint's devotion to New England is not as firm as his orations might have suggested. When Timothy is a child, his uncle, Hezekiah Flint, found financial success in Cincinnati, which might have piqued Flint's ambitions (20).

cast his lot with the West…the note of homesickness for New England leaves Flint's writing. He casts his fortune with Alexandria and Cincinnati; and he sees himself no longer as an exile in a strange land but as a quasi-official spokesman for the West and a believer in its ultimate destiny" (46).

Flint's promotion of the West relies on its cultural—specifically literary—distinctiveness. Several articles in the *Western Monthly Review* take up the question of cultural distinctions between the West and the metropolises of the East Coast. Among the themes that emerge from these articles are the ideas that the character of the West is determined by a flattened social hierarchy, caused by high levels of immigration from diverse sources, its low population, and, accordingly, its privileged relationship to nature in comparison to parts of the country that had become more urbanized by the 1820s. For example, in an 1826 piece titled "The National Character of the Western People," Flint claims that visitors to the West will observe a greater degree of diversity than the Atlantic country. The will see "as thorough a combination and mixture of the people of all nations, characters, languages, conditions and opinions, as can well be imagined. Scarcely a state in the Union, or a nation in Europe, but what has furnished us immigrants" (1:133). Despite this diversity, he argues, the West develops a coherent "national" character, as people of disparate origins: "begin to rub off mutual prejudices. One takes a step, and then the other. They meet half way, and embrace; and the society, thus newly organized and constituted, is more liberal, enlarged, unprejudiced, and of course more affectionate and pleasant, than a society of people of *unique* birth and character, who bring all their early prejudices, as a common stock, to be transmitted as an inheritance in perpetuity" (1:133-134). Flint describes a society characterized by diversity, but with a distinctive character that is a product of this diversity. Tolerant in comparison to the Atlantic country, the West forms a distinct identity out

of many. In addition to a higher degree of diversity than exists on the East Coast, Flint describes an American West that is much more rural than the Atlantic country: "The distinctive character of the western people may be traced in its minuter shades to a thousand causes, among which are not only their new modes of existence, the solitary lives which they, who are not inhabitants of towns, lead in remote and detached habitations" (1:136). Though their national character might not be as immediately recognizable as other American sectionalisms, he insists that it exists.

While Flint argues that there is a distinctive character to Western "nationals," he argues that it is harder to discern the literary consequences of this distinctive western literature. He expands upon the literary effects of the West's rural character in a later article in the *Western Monthly Review*. In "Writers of the Western Country," Flint describes a paradox: though writers from the West possess a diminished sense of sectional identity in comparison to other parts of the United States, they nonetheless possess distinctive literary traits. This paradox places him in the awkward position of proudly promulgating desirable Western literary distinctiveness while also scolding Western writers for behaviors that he sees as harmful to the development of a sectional identity. According to Flint, diversity in the population and the wide diffusion of writers over a lot of land simultaneously create unique conditions for a distinctive literature and prevent its coalescing. Western writers "are spread over such an immense surface, and separated from each other by such wide distances, that, probably, the information contained in the following article will be as new to many of the Western, as to most of the Atlantic people" (2:11). He acknowledges that in comparison to the universally recognized national character of the "Yankee," the "Southerner," the character of the westerner is therefore elusive. This piece and, indeed, his entire review, attempts to save the idea of a unified Western literary character from what he sees as excessive competitiveness between Western writers that threatens to doom the

very idea of a coherent Western character: “We in the West, have the reputation, too, of nationality. But we have no claims to it; and none of the reality, or advantage of it” Though there was once a stronger sense of a Western national character, which he describes in “The National Character of the Western People,” (1826) he argues that by 1828, “We have given ourselves up to the leading, the interests and passions of others. We are too intently engaged in decrying and undermining each other, to have community of interest, feeling, or purpose.” The envy between Western writers, he argues, attenuates the sectional literary character. Unlike writers who can benefit from “the grand levelling intercourse of large cities, which brings aspiring minds in daily intercourse and collision; which presents varied aspects of talents, honors, acquisitions, and views of things, which distract the gaze of envy, and blunt its edge, by rendering it uncertain, upon what object or person to fix,” the writer from the comparatively rural West “kindles his solitary light, and it gleams far away through the woods, and renders him a conspicuous object in the anonymous darkness. Scores of envious minds aim at him in concealment from behind the logs” (2:13). Yet even as he argues that writers that are geographically distant from each other, which contributes to a professional jealousy that prevents the formation of as strong as sectional character as he sees in New England and the South, Flint concludes by arguing that there nonetheless remain traits that readers will perceive as distinctive in Western literary production: “Whoever is extensively acquainted with our public speakers and writers, perceives a vigor, an energy, a recklessness of manner and form, but a racy freshness of matter, which smacks strongly of our peculiar character and position” (2:21). The particular traits that Flint ascribes to Western literature are not really important at this stage of the argument; as I will show, distinctively Western literary traits and literary traits positioned as distinctively American will become increasingly difficult to disentangle. What I mean to emphasize is how Flint uses the

idea of the West and a distinctively Western literature to apply sectional pressure to the idea of a coherent national literature.

The remainder of this chapter examines Flint's career from 1826 and 1830. His first novel *Francis Berrian* is published in 1826, a period of intense literary nationalism. The next section explores the literary discourse against that Flint is writing against when he publishes his sectional polemic in the *Western Monthly Review*. Rather than naming Flint's project "mere" regionalism and taxonomizing it as epiphenomenal to a nationalist discourse in New England that purports to represent the whole nation to tastemakers in England, I propose that Flint's Western transnationalism constitutes a genuine alternative to the articulations of transnational American literature emanating from the metropolitan East Coast and concerned primarily with producing a national literature that could compete with European national literature traditions. Flint's transnationalism that revises the relationship between Western regionalism and literary nationalism by reimagining the literary and political place of the United States within hemispheric networks of influence. Before turning to Flint's challenge to the dominant nationalist discourse, it will be necessary to first describe the dominant discourse that he challenges.

1.2 Kettell, Knapp, and the Atlantic Country Origins of American Literary Nationalism

Flint's *Review* is published from 1827-1830, the very years in which American writers in New England promulgate a version of American literary nationalism with a sense of pride and defiance occasioned by a fresh victory over the British in the War of 1812. Though Samuel Kettell's account of what counts as American literature encompasses Anglophone literature since colonial times, he argues that there is something in the zeitgeist of the late 1820s that prompts him to advocate the distinctiveness of American literature when he does. He announces to his

fellow Americans, "We are now becoming a literary people, and are already inquisitive upon all matters connected with our character and prospects in that relation" (v). Kettell's *Specimens of American Poetry* and Samuel Lorenzo Knapp's *Lectures on American Literature*, both published in 1829, are among the first texts to promulgate this version of a distinctively American literature. The *Oxford Handbook of Early American Literature* identifies these two texts as the most significant contributions to American literary history, not only since the American Revolution, but since White Kennett's 1731 *Bibliothecæ Americanæ Primordia* (6). However, Kettell and Knapp are both New Englanders and their attempts to establish a national literary identity are preoccupied with producing a sense of distinction between New England and Europe. Even at the time in which Kettell and Knapp published these works, Americans outside New England notice this sectional bias. A piece in the *Southern Review* that examines both Kettell's and Knapp's literary histories questions their conclusion that the United States needs a distinctive national literature at all. On behalf of the South, the reviewer opts out of the whole project. But supposing that a national literature must be identified and promoted, the he sniffs, Kettell's and Knapp's version hardly merits the descriptor "national" (436). Though Kettell's and Knapp's literary histories are published too late to be the direct targets of Flint's earliest complaints against New England literary elitism, they exemplify a version of literary nationalism inextricable from New England's own sectional literary culture, its indebtedness to European antecedents, and its ambition to produce an account of American literature that is defined in contradistinction to established European national literary traditions.

Although the idea of a distinctively American literature significantly predates the 1820s, well into the 19th century, writers from both sides of the Atlantic maintain that the United States lacks a discernable national literature. The condescension of British writers in this period bears a

striking resemblance to Flint's lip-curling, nose-crooking Atlantic critic, down to the use of rhetorical questions to convey bemused indignation. Sydney Smith notoriously attacks the notion that the United States possessed any artistic accomplishments at all in an 1820 edition of the *Edinburgh Review*: "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?" (79). Though he delivers it with less snark, Alexis de Tocqueville makes the similar argument in *Democracy in America*: "The inhabitants of the United States have then at present, properly speaking, no literature" and that whatever literature they might believe themselves to have is British literature transplanted onto American soil (2:66). Kettell and Knapp see themselves as participants in a transnational discourse that attempts to find a place for American literature defined in relation to European national literatures and the transatlantic rivalries.

Kettell and Knapp's reasons for building up the idea of a distinctively American literature are not much different from Flint's. According to all of them, a great nation must have a great literature, and since it is obvious, in this moment of patriotic ardor, that America is great, it must have a great literature. If there does not appear to be one, they claim, it's only because it hasn't been adequately excavated by literary historians. This retrospective finding of a great national literature is the impetus behind Kettell and Knapp's national literary histories. But the greatness of American literature, for Kettell and Knapp, is only legible in terms of its similarity to European literatures. In the introduction to *Specimens*, Kettell reflects on the question of his nation's literary merit in terms of comparison to Europe's greatest writers: "What though our early literature cannot boast of a Dante or a Chaucer, it can furnish such testimonials of talent and mental cultivation as are highly creditable to the country, and of sufficient interest to call upon the attention of those who are desirous of tracing the general history of letters" (1:iv).

Knapp offers a more pointed a defense of the idea that America possesses a distinctive literature, but one still focused on European perceptions of American literature. In his dedication of the *Lectures* to the lawyer William Austin Seely, Knapp writes: "The work I now present you and the publick, is only offered as the opening argument of junior counsel, in the great cause instituted to establish the claims of the United States to that intellectual, literary, and scientifick eminence, which we say, she deserves to have, and ought to maintain" (3). He goes on to defiantly declare in the preface: "you are aware that it has been said by foreigners, and often repeated, that there was no such thing as American literature." Knapp reads this assessment as an affront to national pride. Regardless of whether or American literature actually is on par with its European counterpart, he sees it as a matter of patriotic principle to advocate American literature simply because it is American and "No people, who do not love themselves better than all others, can ever be prosperous and great" (4). He urges his readers to not let the "libel," perpetuated by "foreigners" like Smith and, later, Tocqueville, go uncontested because it damages the nation's love of itself, and therefore its potential for greatness.

Flint's attacks on this version of American literary nationalism from the "Atlantic country" does not stem from any particular objection to the idea of a national literature. For him, there need not be conflict between Western sectionalism and patriotic feeling toward the nation as a whole: "As regards our sectional feeling, of which we hear so much said abroad, and in Congress, we remark that so far as such feeling includes *amor patriae*, and is not narrow, but loves the whole country, and looks with singleness of eye and affection to the whole Union, and only retains the natural and instinctive affection for the natal spot, and that portion of the country, which is invested with the associations of home, that feeling, which is always deepest and strongest in the best of minds, it is a noble and generous one" (2:12). Flint's enemy is not

literary nationalism, but rather the form of it that sneers at a particular section. Surprisingly, for the editor of a literary review so proud of its Western sectional identity, he laments in its pages, "the most material impediment in the way of American talent," which is that the Americans "have no literary metropolis; but instead of it, ten or fifteen provincial capitals" (3:485). He goes as far as to fantasize about a national congress of writers and editors representing "the different states and divisions of our country," who might direct literary taste on the level of a national discourse and thereby "do something towards breaking down sectional [sic], and building up in its stead a national literature" (4:486). Flint's objection to "Atlantic country" calls for an American literature are not related to the project of a national literature in itself so much as to the pursuit of this goal in such a way that marginalizes most of the nation's vast geographic space to the benefit of a literary elite concentrated in New England. The reviewers of the Atlantic country are right to desire and promote a national literature, but they are wrong to exclude the literature of other sections from this national project.

According to Flint, Kettell and Knapp's version of an American nationalist discourse promotes literary patriotism under a unified banner, but it does so at the cost of eliding sectional differences and resentments. In the 1820s, the promulgations of a distinctively American literature are generated in the centers of refined transatlantic culture on the East Coast. The New England literati's methods of developing a distinctively American literature in a global context look to Britain for approval, even as it chafes at the condescension of British critics. This is a version of American literary nationalism linking Boston and New York to London and Edinburgh in an attempt to produce an avowedly national literature, not one that concedes to be

distinctive to the "Atlantic country."[4] But while the idea of a national literature prominent in New England circles elides the differences between America's "Atlantic" and "Western" parts, Flint's *Review* insists upon it. Flint sees himself as responding to the same attacks on the nation's literary reputation as Kettell and Knapp. In *Francis Berrian*, Flint's protagonist laments, "We are reputed, beyond the seas, and by many of the bigoted and prejudiced of the parent country, to be destitute of all taste for the fine arts and for literature, and even the dawning of patronage and literary munificence" (1:106). Flint's biographers further note that he considered American literature's reliance on British models to be a serious threat to its greatness and a serious problem for Americans wanting to culturally legitimate their patriotism (Kirkpatrick 251, Folsom 62). But to the problem of the poor reputation of American literature abroad and its excessive fealty to its British literary heritage, Flint has a very different solution from his counterparts in New England.

As Kettell and Knapp protest the Atlantic country's marginalization at the hands of the English, Flint argues that they perpetuate the same crimes upon the literary West. Their version of American literature has no space for Western American literary texts like Flint's 1826 historical novel *Francis Berrian*. Just before explicitly arguing against New England's dominance on the national literary scene in the *Western Monthly Review*, Flint offers a novel that opens up alternative geographies to an American reading public eager to define their national literature's place in the world. *Francis Berrian* is published in Boston, but most critics recognize its geographical significance as the first novel written by an American to be set in Mexico. The

[4] This version of what constitutes American literature lingers throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. What scholars identified as the American Renaissance consisted overwhelmingly of writing from New England and surveys of American literature even now tend to focus on New England and ignore the West. See also F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* and Blake Allmendinger's critique of bias against the literary West in favor of New England in *Ten Most Wanted: The New Western Literature*.

next part of the chapter argues that *Francis Berrian* offers a transnational geography of American literature centered on the nation's frontier and oriented towards Mexico that diverges from discourses emanating from New England that place their conception of American literature in a geographic context primarily oriented towards Europe.

1.3 *Francis Berrian*'s Sectional Geography

Because *Francis Berrian* canonical status has fluctuated over the years, I will briefly summarize its plot here.[5] An unnamed narrator bearing a striking resemblance to Flint himself meets the eponymous Francis as they travel by boat down the Ohio River. As they travel, he tells Flint's narrator an extraordinary tale of his experiences during the Mexican War of Independence. Francis is a Yankee who follows his romantic notions to the American Southwest and rescues Doña Martha, daughter of a Spanish count, from a group of Indians. He attaches himself to the household of Martha's father the Conde de Alvaro as an English tutor, but the cowardly soldier Don Pedro, a Spanish Mexican of equal rank to Martha proves a treacherous romantic rival. Pedro's ally, the corrupt Catholic priest Father Josephus, schemes against the Protestant Francis at every turn. After the Mexican War of Independence begins, Francis eventually flees with the friendly German Benvelt family into the Mexican wilderness. But after Mr. Benvelt and two of his three lovely daughters die there, the heroic Francis, with the help of his faithful Irish servant Bryan, pursue Martha to Mexico City. At the novel's climax, Don Pedro, who rises to the office of Minister of War in Augustín de Iturbide's government, almost marries Martha against her will, but Francis, leading an army of patriots under Guadalupe Victoria and Santa Anna, again rescues Martha from Don Pedro, finally earns the love and

[5] The novel's dedication reveals the life of Henry Bullard, a fellow alumnus of Harvard and a close friend of Flint's in Alexandria, Louisiana as the key source for the story. Folsom explores other likely sources for the novel in his biography of Flint (107-118).

respect of her family, despite their Catholicism and initial royalism, and Francis helps Mexico establish a republican government. For his efforts, he is awarded a pension and a Mexican country estate. Francis and Martha have a happy and fruitful marriage. They split their time between New England and California, and their joyous union and healthy son symbolize a harmonious political marriage between the republican nations of the United States and Mexico.

Recent critical accounts of *Francis Berrian* tend to focus on the harmonious transnational hybridity of the novel's happy ending. Literary critic Keri Holt argues that the figure of Francis, the border-crossing republican subject whose transnational republicanism, revises "American-ness" into a hemispheric political project (314). For Holt, Francis becomes a figure of remarkable transnational mobility, shedding with surprising ease his sense of geographic identity; indeed, by the end of the novel, he is content to spend half his life in Mexico. Similarly, literary critic Andy Doolen labels the War of Mexican Independence as described in the novel as Flint's "Happy Revolution" (123-150), as Francis's Anglo-Saxon racial characteristics enable the couple to articulate a new version of relations between the United States and Mexico that recasts American filibusters as vanguards of liberty rather than avaricious thugs. Rather than focusing on the happy transnationalism of the Berrian marriage or the revision of international relations between the United States and Mexico that Flint's novel proposes, I offer a reading of the novel attentive to the sectional tensions roiling beneath its optimistic surface. I also argue that an item of what Flint calls "Correspondence" in the first issue of the *Western Monthly Review* necessitates a new understanding of the novel's ending and suggests that Flint understands the novel's geographic terms to be as deeply concerned with American sectionalism as with the circulation of republican values between the United States and Mexico. But even within the novel itself, Flint invokes the idea of sectional distinctiveness by opposing Western romance to

New England pragmatic commercialism and also by contrasting a cosmopolitan West with a monolingual and surprisingly provincial New England.

One of the salient themes in the novel is Francis's valorization of what Flint calls "romance" over financial concerns. Though romance becomes an important term for Flint through Francis, I do not mean to make any general claims about romance as a genre or mode. I mean only to trace what it means for Flint and his protagonist in the context of the novel and how it contributes to a sectionalist reading of the novel. For Francis, the term "romance" is linked to the imagination, and it is positioned in opposition to economic security and predictable, ordinary life. Flint codes Francis's choice between staying in New England and traveling to the West as a choice between and dull but prosperous security in the land of the Yankees and romance and adventure out West. In the rare instances that writers from the "Atlantic country" think of the continent's interior at all in the 1820s, they do so as a place strictly for making money. It is a place where a young man might profit handsomely from Mexican political turmoil or die trying, but far removed from the centers of American cultural production in Boston and New York. In this period, between the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806) and the California Gold Rush (1849), New Englanders found it hard to see how the West offered much in cultural terms. Its sole cultural advantage over New England that one might weigh against its low population and lack of an apparent Anglophone traditions was its sublime natural beauty, which is a perfect object onto which romantic ideas might be projected. Indeed, the novel is full of descriptions of nature. The New England reviews find this to be the novel's only real strength.[6] But Flint argues that what differentiates the West from New England is not cultural

[6] The *North American Review* remarks that Flint's "principal and only very striking merit, is his talent for description…We recollect no author, except Irving, who has painted American scenery with equal power. The descriptions of the Ohio and Mississippi, of the valley of the

provinciality or a distasteful passion for money, but rather a sense of romance. He even inverts these stereotypes by making New England a place of economic activity and the West a place that stirs imagination and romance, which have the potential to inspire creative excellence impossible in workaday New England. While he depicts New England as a comfortable, prosperous place to live, Francis describes how as a young man, "A native and strong propensity inclined me to visionary musings, and dreaming with my eyes open. I theorized, and speculated, and doubted, and tasked my thoughts to penetrate the nature of mind, and the region of possibilities" (1:17). He never loses this romantic orientation.

As an adult, Francis, who lives half of each year in Mexico, comes to regard his erstwhile countrymen as a foreign people pitiably lacking in romance and caring too much for commerce. After marveling at the improbability of his own life, he muses to the narrator, "You matter-of-fact people here in the States, are, I am sensible, inclined either to ridicule romantic feeling and adventure, or, still worse, to view it as having immoral tendencies, and tending to unnerve the mind, and unfit for the severer and more important duties of life" (1:12).This comment is aimed not at the filibusters and transnational subjects that share his adventures, but the people back home in New England. Here, Flint throws into sharp relief a change in Francis's opinions of the American attitude towards money between the events of his youth and the time in which Flint sets the frame narrative. When Father Josephus, attempting to convert Francis to Catholicism, disparages Protestant American values, the young Francis bristles and delivers an oration in defense of his country. Francis argues that a Spaniard in Mexico like Josephus would only encounter those Americans most likely to be desirous of wealth (1:104). Americans on the

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Commanches, and many other passages of the same kind, are such as would do honor to any author" (24:212).

whole, Francis claims, actually care nothing of money. Citing the selflessness of American sailors in the War of 1812 and their "striking contempt of money, and of every thing but glory" he argues that "There is…no country where a miser is regarded with more contempt, and a rich man, merely as such, with less respect. Nothing blasts the reputation sooner, than to be reputed the slave of avarice" (1:106). But by the point in his life in which he has married Martha and lives a transnational life, spending half the year on his Mexican estate and half the year back in New England, Francis regards Americans as excessively commercially inclined. Martha uses an avian metaphor to describe their lives as wholly natural, transcending human concerns like money and power: "We are thus to migrate with the autumnal birds and the swans. In the autumn we fly to the south, and in the spring return to the north" (2:227). The newly transnational Francis seems to adopt the view he criticizes as common among the Spaniards in Mexico, who see Americans "as a nation of pedlars and sharpers, immoderately addicted to gain, and sordid in the last degree…a kind of atheistic *canaille*, on an entire level, without models of noble and chivalrous feeling; in short, a kind of fierce and polished savages, whose laws and institutions were graduated solely with a view to gain" (1:103).

Flint's novel, in associating the West with romance and New England with practical commerce, makes a sectional claim that he derives from European stereotypes about the American national character. In accusing "people here in the States" of being too "matter-of-fact" and lacking in the capacity for "romantic feeling" and "adventure," Francis takes up an argument that is common in the transatlantic American nationalist literary discourse, both on the American side and on the British side. The national character of the United States, according to this point of view, not only fails to appreciate the crucial importance of romance and adventure to the development of a highly refined culture, but it outright discourages these violations of the

pragmatic mindset closely associated with Protestant religiosity. The older, wiser Francis fears the consequences of linking romance with immorality. Kettell, even in arguing that the United States finally has a literature worth of the attention of literary historians, admits that American literary progress had been slow because Americans created literature only in "casual moments" snatched from the "seriousness business of life" (1:xlvii). Tocqueville, however, sees the deeper ideological roots of this problem, attributing what he sees as the United States' failure to develop its own literature to cultural habits originating in New England: "Their strictly Puritanical origin—their exclusively commercial habits—even the country they inhabit…seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts" (2:42). Though the Spaniards link immoderate addiction to gain to "atheism," Tocqueville sees it as a function of American Puritanism. Francis is certainly religious and his moral conduct is, accordingly, unimpeachable, but the novel is critical of some religious institutions and the hypocrisy of their attitudes toward money. Flint exempts the West from this national stereotype by associating the West with disdain for money.

In contrast to the practical, thrifty Yankees of New England, the transnational Westerner Francis consistently refuses opportunities to make quick fortunes in favor of pursuing romance and adventure. Inverting stereotypes about how people from particular parts of the country prioritize money, religion, and romance, the New Englander who transforms himself into a Westerner turns down a fortune for rescuing Martha from the Comanches, rejects the proposal of the wealthy Spaniard Dorothea, and refuses to take his share of the German Benvelt's legacy from his surviving daughter. Money, he tells Wilhelmine Benvelt, is of no use to him: "to a soldier of fortune, rushing into the contest, in a revolution so full of danger and uncertainty, money, beyond my immediate wants, was of no use" (2:145). He sees himself as living out the

romantic fantasies of his childhood and youth, abandoning a practical, comfortable life for an opportunity in order to take part in a quintessentially Western adventure. Flint uses romance and commerce as ways of differentiating Western culture from the national literature culture he sees developing in New England.

In addition to using the dichotomy between romance and commerce to generate a sense of sectional distinction in the novel, Flint codes the West as more diverse than New England. In the Conde de Alvaro's household in Durango, a location that Bostonians might suppose to be a cultural backwater, one might expect to find Spaniards of all origins, including the "Gauchupine" Dorothea (1:157), as well as Spaniards born in the New World.[7] But one also finds the Irish servant Bryan, "one of those ten thousand poor Catholic adventurers, who are seeking bread and employment more especially in the Catholic countries" (1:156). The Benvelt family hails from Saxony, and Martha and Francis enjoy their first opportunity to talk alone since her rescue from Indians at the home of an English mine worker (1:178). Likewise, the expedition of patriots that Francis joins is strikingly diverse: "There were children, servants, negroes, mulattoes, samboes, Indians, domestics, and wives, of all nations and colours" (1:258). New England literally pales in comparison. In describing Martha and Francis's experiences together, the novel offers a mixture of characters from all over the world that implies a complex system of translation and bilingualism characteristic of Flint's version of a transnational western sectionalism. Flint emphasizes diversity and bilingualism thematically, but as critics have noted, he does so formally as well. Holt convincingly argues that the prevalence of untranslated Spanish in *Francis Berrian*, both in epigraphs and in the body of the text, indicates that Flint anticipates an at least

[7] The term "Gauchupine" or "gachupin" refers to a Mexican who immigrates from Spain, that is, not a "Criollo," a person of Spanish descent born in Spanish America.

partially bilingual readership. She further argues, "Rather than using Spanish simply as a means of exoticizing Mexican speech—as a marker of difference—Flint's use of Spanish here and throughout the novel suggests that the Spanish language has a vital role to play within US literature and culture" (332). Yet in the novel, Martha's arrival in New England causes something of a stir (2:276). If, as Holt argues, Martha's presence "Mexicanizes" New England, then New England is not very cosmopolitan in the first place. Unlike other parts of the country, where one might expect some familiarity with the Spanish language and customs, Martha is a novelty in New England. Francis's ironically monikered Aunt Charity goes as far as to shun Martha's Catholicism, which aligns Charity with the xenophobic and bigoted Father Josephus. Through Aunt Charity, Flint portrays the prejudices that Francis and Martha conquer, but still hold some sway in New England.

Flint also showcases the West's diversity through the way Francis emphasizes language acquisition and the transnational political and cultural exchanges that bilingualism mediates as crucial to Francis's success in the West. While Francis's education in New England might theoretically prepare him for his multilingual adventuring, it is in the West that he actually has to use it. Francis's rescue of Martha hinges upon his ability to communicate with the Comanches, which he does with the help of an interpreter who can translate to French. It is foreign language that proves to be the most useful thing he learns at Harvard, and it facilitates contacts otherwise unavailable to him: "I felt thankful that, among some useful acquirements at college, I had gained the mastery of [French], so generally understood abroad. I entered into the speech with intense interest, for I had heard much of Indian eloquence" (1:56). His linguistic skill later makes him useful to the household of Martha's father, where he becomes an English teacher, and his rapid acquisition of Spanish and Martha's equally impressive acquisition of English cement their

relationship. When circumstances force Francis to leave, they exchange gifts. Martha offers Francis sumptuous clothing and equipment that will be useful in his military campaigning, and in return, Francis offers literature: "neat stereotype editions, in duodecimo, of our first poets, the same which I brought with me from New England" (1:234). It is this gift of English literature transported from New England to the West that prompts Martha's conversion to the republican cause. Exchange across boundaries of language figures a salubrious transnational republicanism. In contrast, Don Pedro's inability to learn English emblematizes his imperial politics.

This is not to say that all languages are equal for Flint. When Francis encounters a Guadalupe Victoria living in exile in the jungle, the patriot leader tells Francis: "I love even the language in which Washington and his great compatriots spoke. That dialect is the consecrated idiom of freedom, and of independent and noble thinking. The day will come, when over the globe, he, who shall speak that language, will claim the same exemptions and immunities, in consequence, which he demanded in the ancient days, who said, 'I am a Roman citizen'" (2:99). The allusion to the global spread of English and the comparison of speaking English to the privileges of Roman citizenship is both remarkably prescient and an incongruous moment in a novel that claims to eschew the politics of empire in favor of republicanism. However, this moment shows how Flint argues on the one hand that bilingualism is crucial to the transnational republican ideology undergirding the West he imagines, but, on the other hand, maintains that English's intrinsic characteristics make it the language best suited to republican political ideals that Americans claim as a central part of their national identity. In the latter argument, Flint actually comes into accord with the New Englanders attempting to develop a version of American literary nationalism apart from Europe. Francis's faith in the superiority of the English language is an important reminder that there are limits to the republican, cosmopolitan idealism

of Flint's diverse, multilingual West. Although Knapp wants to establish an American literature that stands independently from its British progenitors as the American state ensures its political independence from the British Empire, he also shares Guadalupe Victoria's enthusiasm for the manly, democratic English language: "The English language is full of strength. There are no feeble words in it, such as are often made by an effeminate people" (17). These effeminate languages for effeminate people are the languages of continental Europe, where the national language and character are shaped by "the soft air of Italy and France" (10). Spanish is likewise a Romance language and would almost certainly fall, for Knapp, in the same category. In a novel built around the triumph of an interreligious, transnational marriage, one might expect an early version of multiculturalism or pluralism reluctant to declare the superiority of one language over another, but Flint's transnationalism, which in some ways embraces other languages and cultures more than the overtly jingoistic Atlantic reviewers does not inoculate even the Western transnational subject from Anglophone supremacism. The next chapter section examines how readers of *Francis Berrian* in New England reacted and responded to the novel's sectional critique. I argue that the New England literati struggled to assimilate Flint's alternative transnational literary geographies into their narrative of American literary identity.

1.4 "Departures from Received Opinions": Atlantic Reviewers Read *Francis Berrian*

Although *Francis Berrian* proved to be a commercial success, reviews from the most prominent of the Boston reviews, the *United States Literary Gazette* and the *North American Review* were mixed.[8] This likely irritated Flint, who believed that literary reviews were an

[8] Holt claims, "Although *Francis Berrian* is little known to modern readers, the novel is a bestseller when first published in 1826 and went through several editions throughout the 1820s and 1830s. It is popular with general audiences and critics alike, drawing positive reviews from well-established magazines such as *The United States Literary Gazette* and the *North American Review*" (317). I am not sure I would agree that these reviews are "positive"; they have specific,

indispensable part of literary culture (*Western Literary Review* 2:281). While the Atlantic reviewers' critiques of *Francis Berrian* are not explicitly with a "curl of the lip" or the "crook of the nose," it's not hard to see how Flint might have read a geographic disdain in their assessments of the novel. The single most significant criticisms in both of these reviews, surprisingly, concern Flint's failure to *deviate* sufficiently from actual history. Though the novel traces a particularly turbulent period in Mexican history, it offers a fictionalized *version* of history. Many of the events and personages are historical; Iturbide, Victoria Guadalupe, and Santa Anna are among the prominent historical figures who appear as characters in the novel, and Francis participates in many real events. However, the text remains a work of fiction. According to the November 1826 review in the *United States Literary Gazette*, the novel hews close enough to reality that it generates expectations of verisimilitude that it does not fulfill: "It is difficult to estimate exactly the value of this work as a book of authority, if we are to regard it as a near view of the public transactions of which it treats. We have alluded to some of its violations of probability; and there are divers [sic] departures from received opinions, which are rather startling." The reviewer anticipates the counterargument that it makes little sense to evaluate the historical accuracy of works of fiction, or that there is no reason to assume that Flint means to offer a "near view" of any "public transactions." But for the reviewer, the text even "considered merely as a novel, although it exhibits proof of some of the qualifications necessary to succeed in this kind of writing, is nevertheless a failure. It is in very bad taste, and destructive to the interest of the story, to violate probability so remorselessly" (1:98). Because the historical events the novel describes are so well known to readers, the reviewer claims, it is easy for those

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pointed criticisms of Flint's novel and, as I will show later in this chapter, Flint himself regards them as attacks on his characters and himself.

readers to compare the novel to their own sense of historical events. The discrepancies between the novel and actual history strain the reader's credulity. Readers of the novel from New England prove anxious about the novel's relationship to history, claiming, strangely, that *Francis Berrian* traffics in historical events that are too familiar to constitute good fiction.

The complaint that the novel suffers from a lack of distance from its historical sources cannot be attributed to the idiosyncratic tastes of the *United States Literary Gazette* reviewer because the critic in a January 1827 issue of the *North American Review* makes a similar argument. After complaining that the frame narrative gives away the novel's happy ending, the reviewer reports: "Our author has made a mistake of much greater consequence, in fixing the period of his story so near our own times…We shall not go into any difficult questions respecting the kind and degree of illusion, produced by a well wrought fiction in the reader's mind. But some illusion there certainly must be, and everything of the kind is effectually precluded in the present case, by the notoriety, as well as the recent date, of every material event connected with the Mexican revolution [sic]" (24:211). The *North American Review* critic similarly feels the oppressive intimacy of history preventing the reader from being consumed in the author's "illusion." Nathaniel Lewis argues in *Unsettling the American West* that Western writing has always been evaluated in terms of authenticity—that is, its facility in describing the historical West (10). However, this review finds fault in the novel not for failing to capture the authentic West, but rather for not being different *enough* from real history. Describing the perils of writing historical fiction about events that are too recent, the reviewer from the *North American Review* does not confine himself to Western writers, but also criticizes British writers for making the same mistake. Flint's is "a blunder of the same kind with that committed by Miss Edgeworth, in making Lord Oldborough prime minister of Great Britain in 1808" and the

reviewer also complains that "The author of Waverley is notoriously careless in this respect, and we find inferior authors availing themselves rapidly of the authority of his example" (24:211-212).[9] As a result of a failure to distance his work sufficiently from real events, the critic reports, "our thoughts are driven in spite of ourselves, from the tale before us to actual history, and we are compelled at every step to recollect the discrepancy between them" (24:211). This reviewer does not chide any New England authors for this error, despite the popularity of novels and poetry celebrating the American Revolution at the time (Holt 313, Doolen 123). The reason for this apparent hypocrisy is that these reviewers assume a readership with the knowledge and assumptions endemic to New England. It is writing from elsewhere that will strain their readers' credulity. Accordingly, one of the commonalities between the two major criticisms of the novel that I've described here—that the reception of Francis back in the United States would be much more elaborate and that the behavior of the filibusters is too noble to be believable—are couched in terms of probability rather than historical accuracy. One might well imagine these reviewers, irritated by Flint's "divers departures from received opinions," arguing that he lacks fidelity to historical fact and then marshalling historical evidence to contradict the events of the novel. However, they choose instead to speak in terms of "violations of probability." What is important to them is not whether or not Flint's purportedly historical novel hews to or departs from actual history, but how a New England readership might react to "divers departures from received

[9] "Miss Edgeworth" refers to Maria Edgeworth and her 1814 novel *Patronage*. In fact, the Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1808 is William Cavendish-Bentinck, not the fictional "Lord Oldborough." The "author of Waverley" is Sir Walter Scott, who achieved fame as author of this 1814 historical novel. If the reviewer wishes to chide authors for writing historical novels after too short an interval from their historical sources, though, *Waverley* is an odd choice. It is set in 1745, making the gap between the historical events and the publication of the novel almost 70 years, whereas *Patronage* and *Francis Berrian* take up historical events that occurred less than a decade before their publication.

opinions." While not specifying the etiology of these "received opinions," it is evident that they don't believe that Flint shares them.

Of all the plausible criticisms of *Francis Berrian* that reviewers from the major East Coast periodicals might have written, excessive familiarity with the historical source material is a surprising choice. Throughout the novel, which is set in the early 1820s, Francis suggests that the West is unknown and unexplored, a fitting vessel for his fantasies of adventure and romance, which wouldn't make sense if the history of the Mexican War of Independence were widely known and thoroughly incorporated into political and ideological discourses on the East Coast. The young Francis describes a comfortable Yankee youth "not far from Boston" (14), but after graduating from Harvard, he tells the narrator, "I became extravagantly fond of books of voyages and travels. I became dissatisfied with cities and crowded resorts, and the haunts and the bustle of the multitude. I fancied myself on a floating island, and wafted into the depths of unknown oceans. I delighted in the position of Robinson Crusoe and his Friday in their lonely isle. At another time I imagined myself situated with my father's family in one of the boundless prairies of the West" (20). The comparison of life in the comparatively unpopulated and undeveloped West to life on Robinson Crusoe's island reemerges several times in the novel, and it emblematizes Flint's use of setting to generate a sense of romance and distance in the text. Remote and unfamiliar as the western frontier and Mexican politics might have been when the novel is set in 1821 or 1822, however, the critics from the Bostonian reviews claim that by 1826, the novel's readers would have known enough about the historical events that the insertion of a fictional character into them would have been jarring. The critic from the *North American Review* refers to the "notoriety, as well as the recent date, of every material event connected with the Mexican Revolution" (24:211). The reviewer's purported intimate familiarity with Western

events attempts to assimilate and subordinate Western knowledge and authority to national systems of knowledge based in New England. In addition to claiming mastery over the events of the war, this reviewer expresses confidence that he knows better than Flint how Westerners would hail a returning hero like Francis. Though Flint had traveled extensively in the West and even published a memoir about it, the reviewer sees it fit to correct Flint's description of the Western Americans' reaction to Francis's deeds. Surely, the critic supposes, "if any citizen of Massachusetts had performed, in any part of Mexico, one half the military achievements of Francis Berrian, and then returned homeward through our Western country, all the inhabitants of the states through which he passed would have been thoroughly acquainted with his story, and eager to manifest their sense of his historic valor" (24:211). For this critic, what rankles about Flint's novel is its failure to conform to the tastes, expectations, and political opinions of the New England literary elite. *Francis Berrian* challenges the credibility of a New England system of knowledge and authority that claims the entire nation as its proprietary subject.

The Atlantic country reviewers are right that Flint does not shrink from the literary challenges that attend combining history and fiction. He knows that readers will struggle to reconcile the story to their preconceptions about history. Even as he remarks in the dedicatory letter to Henry A. Bullard that "as a patriot soldier of fortune, you surveyed the region over which my hero travels, and became familiar with the country, its language, and manners. You well know, that no inconsiderable portion of these adventures is any thing, rather than fiction" (1:iii), Flint's protagonist admits that his story strains belief: "If I really describe myself as I am and have been, and my adventures as they occurred, this true history will seem to you little short of a romance" (1:12). It is somewhat strange that the critics from the major Boston reviews would seize so vehemently on this "problem," especially when the novel itself so explicitly

acknowledges its debts to history as well as the extraordinariness of its plot. Flint's deployment of the frame narrative discloses his reluctance to make verifiable claims, even in fiction. What these New England reviewers find so objectionable is Flint's unwillingness to play along with their understanding of how Western material should or should not fit into a national literary identity that they consider to be based in New England.

Critics of Flint's historical accuracy are particularly irked by his portrayal of American filibusters in Mexico. The critic from the *United States Literary Gazette* is skeptical of the idea that Americans should interfere in Mexican politics at all. This reviewer rolls his eyes at the idea that Francis's political cause is noble. The republican "patriots" challenging what Flint characterizes as royalist tyranny appear in the review as a "rebellion, —or, rather, revolution, as it was successful" (1:97). The reviewer also cites the idea that a filibuster could be a hero as evidence for his claim that the historical aspect of the novel is simply unbelievable. As he points out, Francis offers a rosy view of the American filibusters: "Our Spanish allies were too much inclined to cruelty, and to the exercise of all the dreadful rights of conquest. I felt proud to see how different a spirit was manifested by my own countrymen…Wherever I went, I saw them sheltering the aged, protecting the women and children, and performing the noblest offices of humanity. Wherever an American went, the Spanish women flew to him, as to an asylum from their own countrymen" (2:13). The reviewer is disinclined to believe this account of Americans lifting Mexico from barbarism, saving its women from its men. It would be far more believable, he argues, if Francis had represented the avarice of the American filibusters, who, he does not believe, "could have overcome the feelings of distrust and dislike which were very generally felt toward the interlopers, who crossed their frontiers for what was to be got; which feelings, we believe, were…but too well justified by the principles and conduct of many, if not most of those,

who went out from among us to speculate upon the troubles and convulsions of our Mexican neighbours" (98). The disagreement between author and reviewer about the novel's model of the political relationship between the United States in Mexico is symptomatic of their disagreement about the justification for and effects of American intervention in Mexico during this period. This novel could only have been written during a relatively brief window of time, during which Flint might plausibly have described a republican spirit pervading the continent linking the United States with Mexico in a shared opposition to European imperialism and tyranny. By the 1840s, the vibrant transnational republicanism celebrated in Flint's novel is replaced by open war between a United States thrumming with imperialist ambition and a Mexico unable to exert political control over its vast territory.[10] Flint attempts to establish a narrative of the Mexican War of Independence that celebrates it, like the War of 1812, as reenactment of the American Revolution. For him, the Americans who go to the western frontier and participate in the Mexican War of Independence embody the values of 1776. However, the reviewer from the *United States Literary Gazette* sees Flint's project as an impermissible violation of history. For him, the American filibusters are avaricious thugs who violate the national sovereignty of a neighboring country in hopes of rapidly acquiring personal wealth.

The dim view that reviewers take of historical romances of the West is not reserved for Flint. Even Cooper, whose work is among the first by an American to earn acclaim in England, is subject to similar attacks. It is no coincidence that Cooper should be vulnerable to these criticisms and that the novels he writes in this period are set on the western frontier. In a review of *The Last of the Mohicans* in the *United States Literary Gazette*, the critic uses remarkably

[10] See Andy Doolen's chapter "Timothy Flint's 'Happy Revolution' in Mexico" in *Territories of Empire*.

similar language to undermine Cooper's grasp of what is and is not plausible to a reader on the East Coast.[11] The unrelenting action and excitement of the novel wears on this reader, and, it becomes clear, that this criticism of excessive action and too little ordinariness is problematic because it is improbable: "Another fault we find is with the improbability of most of the principal events, and, in fact, of the whole course of the story." He admits that it is unfair to hold a writer of fiction to strict standards of probability, since "He may avail himself not only of all probable, but even of all possible combinations. But in using this liberty he is to be upon his guard, lest he crowd these extraordinary, though possible combinations, too closely together and in too great numbers. For although singly the mind may admit them to be possible; in conjunction they become incredible" (4:89). Again, this criticism is consistent across the two major Boston reviews. The critic from the *North American Review*, after summarizing the novel's plot, remarks, "we cannot forbear to express our astonishment, that our author, who has exhibited so much ingenuity and invention in the interior conduct of the piece, should have suffered its claim to regard as a 'narrative' to rest on such a wretchedly improbable foundation" (23:158). Even Cooper, whom the reviewers accept, if not revere, as a writer of "American novels" (*North American Review* 23:150), is not immune to a version of criticism that the excellence of writing hinges upon how it fits the expectations of a New England readership about what is and is not plausible. Even if Cooper is an American more than a Western writer and even if his stories are set close to New England in geographic terms in the era in which Cooper writes, the Atlantic reviewers vet them for authenticity and plausibility. These reviewers are explicit in

[11] The review of *Francis Berrian* appears in the November 1826 *United States Review and Literary Gazette*, a publication that is the result of a merger the month before between the *United States Review* and the *United States Literary Gazette*. This review is from the *United States Literary Gazette* from May 1826, before the October merger.

claiming this critique as an exercise of power in determining the national taste. In apologizing for dwelling upon the faults in Cooper's work, the reviewer from the *United States Literary Gazette* points out the stakes in critiquing Cooper: "it is still very desirable that it should be done, for the sake of its influence upon the public taste. By the critical and candid discussion of the merits of works generally read, the public is to be aided in settling the standard of taste,—in forming an opinion not merely of this or that particular work, but upon the merits of literary performances in general" (4:93). For the Atlantic reviewers, Western writing, even by a national figure as venerated as Cooper, must be disciplined by and subordinated to a national regime of taste based in Boston.

The critics for the *United States Literary Gazette* and *North American Review* react to the ways that Western writing poses a challenge to their vision of a national literary culture based in New England that only allows the West to emerge in limited ways. When Flint describes a transnational republican coalition between Mexicans and Americans on the frontier, it's hard to see how his story fits into a narrative about a newly confident, urban and refined American literature competing with its European erstwhile colonizers. Reconciling the Western settings and use of Spanish in Flint's work with a discourse highlighting a highly cultivated, sophisticated transatlantic literary discourse is too difficult for the Atlantic reviewers. Flint offers more than just a critique of New England literary elitism; he offers a different kind of challenge to the allegation that the Americans have no literature. Rather than arguing for the merits of the literary production of New England purportedly representative of the national literature like Kettell and Knapp, he promulgates a Western literature as distinct from the literary production of New England as it is from England. Flint's is an alternative transnationalism that sets up a literary geography incommensurably different from the coeval New England literary nationalist

discourse. The next part of this chapter shows how Flint responds to these attacks in his own journal: *The Western Monthly Review*. Understanding the Western sectionalism and anxieties about the future of his version of western transnational literature in Flint's periodical requires understanding the sectionally riven literary context in which he writes and responds to his critics.

1.5 "Female Correspondence": "Martha Berrian" Addresses the Atlantic Country Reviews

In *Francis Berrian*, Flint uses several characters to critique the "Atlantic country" version of American literary nationalism. Towards the end of the novel, Flint changes the novel's framing conceit and switches voices. The majority of the text is presented as an oral history of Francis's experiences, but when Francis and Bryan go to Mexico City to rescue Martha from Iturbide's imperial government, Flint jarringly switches from Francis's voice to Martha's letters. Before exploring the content of Martha's letters in *Francis Berrian* and another letter that appears in her name in the first issue of the *Western Monthly Review*, it is important to consider the geographic implications of Flint's masquerade and to consider Martha's geographic imaginary, which is different from one might imagine Francis's to be. After showing how Martha and Francis's Western world is as cosmopolitan as urban New England, albeit in different ways, I will return to Martha's letters and her direct engagement with the Atlantic reviewers so critical of Flint's novel. I will argue that Martha's letter in the *Western Monthly Review* does two related things. First, it curbs the optimistic tone of the novel's end and takes a position more anxious about the future of relations between the United States and Mexico. Second, it expresses Flint's fear that the version of American literary nationalism emanating from New England will overpower his vision of an American literature that looks primarily westward. The erasure of Martha from literature and history becomes a figure for the elision of his version of an American literature emanating from the West.

Women have long been associated with local color and regional writing. Their subordinate position in patriarchal societies offers a formal explanation for the minor status assigned to their work. Women "are always understood to be a subset of a larger category labeled 'people' or 'humans' or 'the world' and are thus in effect conceptually regionalized—situated, located, accorded geography" (Fetterley and Pryse 36). For this reason, readers might expect a woman writer to offer, say, a keen ear for local dialect and minutely observed ordinary life, but not a serious engagement with public life, including questions of national identity or international geopolitics. But a reader might well expect Martha's writings in *Francis Berrian* to diverge from what one might expect from a typical woman local colorist, first because her "authorship" is actually Flint's and second because her correspondence, even within the novel's reality, is edited by a man's pen. In accordance with the frame narrative of this part of the novel, the note "*In continuation*" indicates to the reader where a passage of Martha's writing has been excised by the narrator. If this is a woman's writing, it is a woman's writing shaped by the narrative needs of Francis's story. Yet, as I will show later, this configuration changes outside the confines of the novel. In the *Western Monthly Review*, it is not Martha who is edited and elided, it is Francis who becomes absent and Martha's womanly pen accordingly takes on a sense of geography as interested in American sectionalism as it is transnationalism between the United States and Mexico.

In the novel, Martha writes from within an imperial, Catholic network of textual circulation that is oppressive to individual freedom. For this reason, this network is repugnant to people with Francis's republic sympathies, even though it is robustly transnational. The letters that Francis shares with the novel's narrator are addressed to a childhood friend whom Martha knows from a convent in Spain, which draws the reader's attention to the movement of

correspondence throughout the Spanish Empire that these letters imply. But as much as Martha's letters help readers read *Francis Berrian* in the context of the hemispheric circulation of texts spanning the Atlantic Ocean, her writings also prompt readers to think in sectional terms. Nowhere is this clearer than in "her" response to the sharp criticism of her letters in the *North American Review*. Writing in Martha's voice as he does in the novel, Flint defends Martha, his novel, and the geography of American sectionalism they generate together. The reviewer from the *North American Review* singles out Flint's switch to Martha's authorial voice as a disastrous choice for the novel and reads Martha's letters "as singularly unfortunate specimens of epistolary composition" (24:212). It might have surprised the reviewer to hear back from the fictional character Martha, who reads the unfavorable characterization of her correspondence in the *North American Review* and, with the help of her "friend" Flint, responds in the pages of his Western periodical. This is a remarkable case of a literary character stepping outside the boundaries of her home text and writing in the real world. Martha winks at the unreliability of the veil between fiction and reality. She invokes Bishop Berkeley, who, she reports, "almost convinced me, that flesh and blood had no actual existence" (1:29). As an idea without substance herself, it's easy to see how Berkeley's immaterialist ideas would be attractive to her.

If in *Francis Berrian* Martha is often concerned with geographical differences on the scale of the nation, such as the differences in national affiliation that threatens to prove such an obstacle to the happiness of Flint's protagonists, the geographic scope of Martha's letter in the *Review* is primarily concerned with sectional differences within the United States, specifically between Boston and what she terms the South, which the reader understands to refer to the Berrians' estate in Mexico. Flint uses Martha to articulate the literary incommensurability of the West and the cities of the East Coast. The signs of this incommensurability are literary; Western

reviews enjoy Martha's work, while the Bostonian ones do not. Her letter to the editor in the *Western Monthly Review* exposes the ways in which the optimistic, transnational pan-republicanism of the novel must be revised by the failure of the national literary culture based in New England to metabolize events in Mexico and literary representations of them. Attempting to bridge the novel's political vision and the competitive literary scene he observes in the late 1820s, Flint's Martha forces readers to reconsider the conclusions of the novel. Rather than luxuriating in the glow of a bilingual, transnational unity that reiterates the republicanism of the French and American Revolutions transplanted to the American West, Flint attacks the pernicious influence of regional differences with the United States and the corrosive effects of New England literary elitism on the transnational world that Francis and his wife attempt to build. In this piece of "Correspondence," Flint decries the harm done by the preeminence of the Bostonian reviews. These New England elites are literally writing Martha and Francis and the alternative transnationalism that they represent out of existence.

Martha writes this piece under the heading of "Correspondence," and Flint, her "friend" and editor appends a note that explains, "Gallantry impels us to exclude another article, intended for this place, in order to insert a letter from our fair correspondent, of whose letters we think very differently from the Boston reviewers.[12] We shall be delighted to hear from her again" (1:28). The occasion for Martha's letter in the *Review* is her "consternation" at the unfavorable assessment of *Francis Berrian* in the *North American Review* (1:28). She reports, after receiving a fresh batch of the Boston reviews, "I began to turn them over with very little interest, having

[12] This piece appears under the heading "Correspondence" (1:28) and it's listed as "Female Correspondence" in the index to the first volume of the *Western Monthly Review* (1:vi). I am unable to find any evidence, however, that "Martha" writes any texts aside from *Francis Berrian* and the first issue of the *Western Monthly Review*.

found them for a considerable time past, particularly dull" (1:29). However, she is shocked and upset to read what she sees as harsh reviews of *Francis Berrian*. She argues that the criticisms are repetitive and unsubstantial: "Take away from these famous reviewers the words, 'he has but one merit; and he is following the example of other inferior authors, in copying Waverly;' take away these two sentences, and in regard to the review of all American works of fiction, they would be obliged to shut up shop" (1:31). The specificity of this attack, mocking the reviewers for leaning on comparisons with Scott, suggests that "Martha" writes with this particular review in mind. Meeting the Atlantic reviewers at the house of a "Mrs. C***" does little to improve Martha's opinion of them. She describes the New England "literati…tall, grim, bolt personages, whose thin, long visages evidenced, that they lived upon sharp diet, such as vinegar and toast. While they eyed me, they shifted from side to side, as if they were undergoing the operation of the spit." Though Flint attempts to caricature the reviewers in a humorous fashion, Martha's bodily disgust at the Atlantic reviewers recalls the "curl of the lip" and the "crook of the nose" that so annoy Flint. Through Martha, he takes his revenge.

Martha pokes particular fun at the poor French of one young gentleman who recognizes her as a foreigner and attempts to address her in French. However, Martha reports, this young man "made my husband a female, and me a male, half a dozen times, and because they could not determine our sex in French, they have ended by making us both nonentities" (1:30). This linguistic failure inverts the stereotype of the cosmopolitan Bostonian and the western provincial. Martha's contrasting linguistic facility puts her in position to look down upon the stumbling efforts of her critics to appear sophisticated participants of transnational discourses. Yet her choice to describe the misapplication of the French grammatical gender as "making us both

nonentities" reveals her rising anxiety about being written out of existence.[13] She tells Flint that she fears the consequences of showing these reviews to her husband, since he is down in Mexico, which Martha believes has enlivened his character: "By living in the South he has lost something of that meekness of the Yankees, which the southerners charge them with having in excess to a fault." She concludes her letter by exhorting Flint to visit her and her family in Mexico: "Since the yankees treat us so harshly, we ought to prefer the south. Only come, and we will set reviewers, and the 'foul fiend' at defiance, and we will be so happy, that their very envy shall compel them to admit, that we are actual and happy personages of flesh and blood, though we are growing old in a bad world" (1:31). Flint and his Western review represent Martha's best chance at staving off the efforts of the Atlantic reviewers to erase her from literary history.

Martha's final letter revises the novel's happy ending. She and Francis do not live happily ever after, their son emblematizing a happy transnational republican union of the United States and Mexico, as Holt and Doolen suggest. She reports that New England in 1827 is not nearly as welcoming as it appears at the beginning of the 1820s. When she first arrives at Flint's home at the end of *Francis Berrian*, the Yankees allow her retain a distinctive cultural identity. Indeed, she initiates a small fad in Spanish "air, walk and manner" (2:276). Holt argues that by the novel's end, Martha "Mexicanizes" New England, rendering it a more cosmopolitan place (330). Her reading suggests that Aunt Charity's Protestant bigotry, which recapitulates in more benign form the anti-Protestant discrimination Francis faces at the hands of Don Pedro and Father Josephus, cannot persist in an increasingly tolerant atmosphere. But in this letter, Martha complains of shabby treatment by Boston society, again playing on the idea that a literary character might or might not be a real person: "Not one of those civil friends is now ready to

[13] French nouns are masculine or feminine; there is not a grammatical neuter.

vouch even for our existence" (1:29). Far from "Mexicanizing" New England, or, alternatively becoming a Yankee herself, Martha finds herself increasingly erased from existence. This process angers her, but it also frightens her. She checks the mirror to verify that she still exists (1:29). Though Flint undertakes this literary experiment with tongue firmly in cheek, Martha's behavior alludes to the concerns that Flint expresses in more serious form elsewhere in his periodical. Indeed, relations between the United States and Mexico would deteriorate in the coming years and the happy transnational life that Martha and Francis build, migrating back and forth between their two home regions "with the autumnal birds and the swans" becomes impossible, wiped out by an aggressively expansionist version of American nationalism undergirded by the very forces Martha identifies and fears (*Francis Berrian* 2:226-227). What Martha might not expect are the ways in which Flint's alternative transnationalism is not an adequate defense against the depredations of an American culture intent on assimilating regional difference.

1.6 Conclusion

Even in a historical moment in which American patriotism is intense and the literati of the nation's literary and publishing epicenters desperately hope to produce a national literature that can both prove the nation's historical greatness and spur it to new heights, Flint's writings show how literary geographies are shaped by literary sectionalism. On the Western frontier, Flint writes a historical novel and edits a literary review that limn a Western literature every bit as engaged in transnational engagement as his rivals in New England. This Western literature advocates republican politics, decries regional literary elitism, and describes circulations of people, languages, and cultural influence that link the United States to transnationalisms in visible or unimportant to the literati of what Flint calls the "Atlantic country." It might be

simpler if Flint's Western sectionalism and the New England literary "nationalism" of these Atlantic reviewers produced their own distinctive spaces and their work did not come into substantial intertextual contact with each other. The version of American literature issuing from New England could leave the West as a marginal space onto which it can offload unsavory stereotypes of the national character such as greed and provinciality while reserving for itself a genuinely national reputation for increasing cosmopolitanism and cultural refinement. In turn, Flint's Western literature could provide a critique of the dominant discourse of the national literature and remain content with its lot as a minor regionalism. But these two discourses do not remain in separate channels; they speak directly to each other and struggle openly to play determinative roles in the way that Americans understand their literature in the world.

This engagement, however, is not necessarily one that entails assimilation, syncretism, or hybridity between the two discourses, but rather a paradoxical coincidence of the traits that define Western literature and the traits that define American literature. What might initially be legible as a distinctive trait of Western writing easily becomes a trait of American literature at large. Paradoxically, though, these avowedly national traits do not lose their recognizably Western character. Examples of such traits legible in this chapter include attitudes towards commerce, romance, and language as a political medium that become emblematic of both the West and the nation. The direct confrontation between Martha and Timothy Flint's Atlantic reviewers in the pages of Flint's *Western Monthly Review* dramatizes the stakes of this clash. These two alternative transnationalisms imply different political orientations for American geographic imaginaries towards rivals abroad. The fierce desire for recognition from European cultures in New England and the Western impulse to pursue a transnational republicanism linking the United State with Mexico limn divergent pictures of what the geography of American

literature looks like in the late 1820s and add sectional shades of detail to conventional literary critical narratives describing the development of American literary transnationalisms in the 19th century.

In the coming chapter, I examine ongoing tensions and entanglements between traits that are imagined as distinctive to the West and those that are imagined to be characteristic of the nation as a whole. If this first chapter is about an alternative literary transnationalism doomed by the emergence of a muscular American imperialist impulse, the second chapter examines the surprising endurance of ideological formations resistant to American imperialism, or at least American imperialism *as such*. I show how a version of American manliness that looks rather different from that lionized in *Francis Berrian* has surprising staying power. Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, a text that a reader might assume to perpetuate the emphasis on physical action of *Francis Berrian* if not that novel's idealistic republicanism, places a surprising influence on aesthetic vision, a quality that readers might associate more readily with the reedy New England literati that Martha decries in her "correspondence." These chapters examine two moments in which American elites seek articulations of American cultural identity that address specific crises—a lack of the national literature in this chapter and flagging manliness in the next—to expose the role of the West as both an alarming sectional challenge to and an indispensable source of American identity.

Chapter 2: Frontier Manliness: Francis Parkman, Jr., the West, and *The Knickerbocker*

2.0 Introduction: Seeing and Doing

This chapter argues that one of Western American literature's most canonical texts actually reinscribes the national forms of manliness it purports to supplant.[1] Critics and historians have long read Francis Parkman, Jr.'s *The Oregon Trail* as an East Coast reader's window out to a frontier space that holds the promise of reinvigorating the nation's embattled sense of its own manliness.[2] This text, these critics argue, introduces its readers to a region both geographically and culturally distant from the genteel urban centers of American culture. Out West, manliness revels in imperial violence and physical action rather than succumbing to degeneracy caused by rationalization and feminization as it is back East. Parkman's work must produce a sharp regional break from the national culture. Only by being distinctively Western can it perform the ideological work on manliness so desperately needed by flagging American elites. But this

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[1] Gail Bederman offers a relevant history of the term "manliness" as distinct from "masculinity" in *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1995). "Masculinity" does not become a common term until around 1890, well after the publication of *The Oregon Trail.* The two terms have different connotations. Manliness, according to Bederman, "comprised all the worthy, moral attributes which the Victorian middle class admired in a man," while "masculinity" referred to "any characteristics, good or bad, that all men had" (18). While, as Bederman points out, "historians usually use the terms 'manly' and 'masculine' interchangeably, as if they were synonymous," and, indeed, "masculinity" is frequently a term that Parkman scholars use in their work on *The Oregon Trail* (see, for example, Frank Meola's article, "A Passage Through 'Indians': Masculinity and Violence in Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*"), I prefer "manliness" and "manly" for this chapter for two reasons. First, Parkman would have been much more familiar with these terms, and indeed Parkman uses the term "manly" but not "masculine" in *The Oregon Trail*. Invoking "masculinity" would be unfaithful to Parkman's own language. Second, I wish to leverage the moral and prescriptive dimensions of "manliness," as my argument is less about Parkman's description of how men *actually* behave than his regionally inflected claims about how men *ought to* behave.

[2] Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*) and Michael Warner (*The Letters of the Republic*) offer influential accounts of how the circulation of print objects mediates the production of nationalism and national ideologies.

chapter argues that *The Oregon Trail* is not a window but rather a mirror, a reflection and ultimately a reaffirmation of the version of manliness and that Parkman and his contemporary readers claim to abhor. Since the text's initial publication, readers have argued that it produces a regionally distinctive version of manliness that prizes imperial violence and indifference to aesthetics, but I will offer readings of *The Oregon Trail* and Parkman's earlier periodical writings that undermine this account. Parkman, even as he attempts to make the West the place from which a new American manliness can issue, actually reproduces the gendered performance endemic to his elite Bostonian upbringing. As a result, we see another instance of the paradox this dissertation describes: the entangling, overlapping, and eventual congruence of distinctively Western regional and American national identities.

Since its initial serial publication in *The Knickerbocker*, the critical significance of *The Oregon Trail* has always come from its supposed break from a version of East Coast manliness polluted by Europe and its offering of a more physically vigorous Western alternative.[3] However, this chapter argues that rather than producing a distinctively Western model of manliness suited to the promulgation of imperial conquest, Parkman actually reproduces the form of manliness characterized by perception, consumption, and discriminating taste endemic to the East Coast. This is not to say that vision and acquisitiveness are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, critics like Edward Said and Mary Louise Pratt show how the possessive or acquisitive gaze is central to the imperial project.[4] But this chapter argues that Parkman makes the appreciative gaze an indispensable measure of manliness in *The Oregon Trail*, which is

[3] For an account of textual differences between the *Knickerbocker* and Putnam editions, see Feltskog 64a-67a.
[4] See Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979 and Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge, 2008.

surprising both because, as this chapter will show, the predominant accounts of gender in this text downplay the significance of vision as opposed to action and accounts of the imperial gaze have downplayed the significance of *aesthetic* appreciation as opposed to acquisitiveness and possession. Vision is a key term for this chapter. I use it in the commonplace sense of the word to refer to the capacity to see. But in this chapter, I also use it to describe the socially informed judgment that the capacity to see makes possible and for which vision acts as a metaphor.[5]

My interest in vision is inspired by Parkman's own claim that the purpose of his trip is to observe Indians and also his preoccupation with visual detail in the text of *The Oregon Trail*. But it it's also a function of Pratt's usage of the figure of the "seeing-man" in *Imperial Eyes* (1992). Pratt argues that European travel writing constitutes part of a process she terms "anti-conquest," a term she uses to describe "a Utopian, innocent vision of European global authority" in contradistinction to conquest, which is an "earlier imperial, and prebourgeois, European expansionist presence" (38). For Pratt, vision is a crucial concept in anti-conquest because "The main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the 'seeing-man,' an admittedly unfriendly label for the white male subject of European landscape discourse—he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess" (9). Pratt's use of the term "passively" is striking, since it suggests that while seeing and possession are linked in anti-conquest, seeing can be understood as inactive in important ways. The distinction between passivity and activity is part of how she constructs the difference between conquest and anti-conquest: if conquest is active, anti-conquest

[5] As Pierre Bourdieu argues in "Outline of a Sociological Theory of Art Perception," the capacity to experience meaning in a work of art or any other object, what Bourdieu calls "artistic competence" is predicated on the beholder and the object's originator being of the same culture—which is not only to say that they are of the same culture in terms of race or nation so much as of the same class. Bourdieu provides a theory of the gaze that highlights the significance of taste as derived from social advantage. This aesthetic taste is what Parkman polices in his production of manliness in *The Oregon Trail*.

is passive. If the archetypal figure of the conquest is the soldier, the archetypal figure of the anti-conquest is a seeing-man, who performs his manliness in a very different way. In this chapter, I suggest that class plays a crucial role in the differences in gender performance between the conquering soldier and the anti-conquering seeing-man. Though Pratt shows how the seeing-man belongs to a particular social class, she is less explicit about the ways in which questions of social class shape the way that writers represent vision.[6] Parkman is an archetypical seeing-man, as he frames his possessive attitude toward the West not in the overtly acquisitive terms of conquest, but rather in the passive idiom of anti-conquest; he makes the journey not to acquire land, but rather to observe the Indians. But it would seem odd, especially to scholars who focus on Parkman's efforts to become a Western action hero, to term him a passive seeing-man. How can we reconcile the seeing-man's passivity with the desperately active man described by most Parkman scholars? This chapter argues that scholars investigating Parkman's production of manliness in *The Oregon Trail* and its significance to the regeneration of national models of gender performance have historically understated Parkman's preoccupation with aesthetic vision.

Pratt usefully points how vision is a tool of anti-conquest, but this chapter attempts to use the figure of the seeing-man to reframe Parkman's *Oregon Trail* and its significance in the development of an American national character. I argue that a form of manliness predicated on aesthetic vision in the service of anti-conquest looks different from a manliness predicated on action and indifferent to questions of aesthetic vision. Using the seeing-man in this way both offers a more complicated reading of manliness in 19th century expansionism and it also, in turn,

[6] The creators of the anti-conquest, Pratt writes, are "a network of literate Northern Europeans, mainly men from the lower levels of the aristocracy and the middle and upper levels of the bourgeoisie" (37). Anti-conquest, like conquest, is a classed project. The observation and writing that constitute the anti-conquest can only be performed by individuals without prohibitive constraints on time or money or classed behavioral expectations.

complicates the figure of the seeing-man by placing pressure on his gaze's passivity and the relationship between appreciation and acquisition.[7] But this chapter's aims are not limited to a fresh examination of the development of 19th century American manliness or refining methods for theorizing political or cultural imperialism. Rather, this chapter revises the relationship between the American West and the nation in this period. I claim that even the text that most insists upon association with a distinctive American West and which appears to offer, through this association, an opportunity to reshape national identity actually advances a model of manliness that is not regionally distinctive to the West and thereby indexes the phenomenon that is the subject of this dissertation: the paradoxical entanglement and conflation of the distinctively western and the national.

Parkman publishes *The Oregon Trail* serially in *The Knickerbocker*, a New York magazine established in 1833 by Charles Fenno Hoffman. By publishing in this particular periodical, Parkman finds a readership that sees itself as the elite caste entrusted with defining and defending the national culture of the United States.[8] The periodical's name alludes to

[7] Aesthetic appreciation, which I suggest is crucial to the way Parkman thinks about vision, requires the production of knowledge. He claims that the collection of knowledge about Indians is the motive for his travels. As Said points out in *Orientalism*, the possessive imperial project is crucially a system of (always already political) knowledge. The entanglement of ostensibly objective or scientific knowledge in imperial knowledge systems makes the distinction between aesthetic appreciation and possessive gazing difficult, but I would argue that the two modes of seeing are meaningfully different, at least the context of debates about both the expansion of the United States in the 19th century and the concurrent productions of raced and classed standards of gender performance.

[8] The February 1838 "Editor's Table" begs care and deliberation of its correspondents. Contributors to the magazine are reminded that they write to "at least fifty thousand readers per month, of the most discriminating class; and not only to readers at home, but to large numbers in European towns and cities" (11:192). This elite class has a taste for art. Literary critic James T. Callow summarizes: "literature was the main course; painting, sculpture, architecture, and engraving were served as side dishes. Readers therefore had ample time to cultivate a taste for the fine arts, and the magazine to make its influence important" (107).

Washington Irving's beloved Diedrich Knickerbocker, a fictional historian of Dutch colonial New York whose name Irving had invented in order to promote an earlier book.[9] Knickerbocker himself serves quite literally as a spiritual guiding force for the magazine, as the editors explain in the very first piece in the first issue. Even this early in the magazine's history, the tension between the national culture and regional distinctiveness is evident. The first issue begins with a return to a past obliterated first by conflict between the Dutch and the British and then again by the American Revolution. The contradictory impulses in this prospectus, which combines yearning for the mature national traditions associated with Europe and desire for distinctiveness and novelty only possible in an exceptional new nation, resembles Parkman's own characteristic contradiction in *The Oregon Trail*: his snobbish valorization of aesthetic taste and his simultaneous desire for a distinctively vigorous and active American manliness. The editors and Parkman alike seek to harness the prestige attached to Europe but fear its supposedly unmanly qualities.

This prospectus in the form of a short story describes a spiritual visitation by the "Dutch Herodotus." Though it is published fifteen years before Parkman published *The Oregon Trail*, it's a useful text for understanding *The Knickerbocker* and its readership. A magical transformation of the editor's sitting room heralds Knickerbocker's arrival, the furniture and design of the room drifting backward into New York's Dutch history (1:3). Though the periodical's editors claim Knickerbocker's name for their publication, there initially appears to be little in common between their views and those of their fictional patron spirit. Like the East Coast anthologists and periodical writers featured in this dissertation's previous chapter, the editors of the Knickerbocker are nonplussed by what they see as American imitation of a more

[9] Irving creates Knickerbocker to promote *A History of New York* (1809).

sophisticated European literary tradition. This sense of rivalry impresses a sense of urgency upon the writer of the piece. Knickerbocker's ghost assesses the state of American literature as "young, fresh, and unhacknied" but attenuated by a "sickly longing for all the absurd trash of driveling sentimentality and pseudo-fashion, with which the shelves of our circulating libraries are filled from the London press." As a result of this taste for a sentimental literature, which he links to the British national literary character, the editors claim that "our writings and our approval of writings are both second-hand. We imitate the most flimsy productions which appear abroad, and then approve of these imitations as 'American,' while critics, afraid to be accused of a want of patriotism, sanction where they despise and approve when they ought to condemn." By invoking sentimental literature, a genre associated with women and domestic life and "fashion," a preoccupation that, as I will show, also becomes associated with unmanliness, Knickerbocker diagnoses the trouble with American literature as a failure of gender performance. According to the ghost, effeminate, European taste begets effeminate, European literature, which then begets effeminate, European criticism. This effeminacy has disastrous effects on American literature. The wrong figures secure advancement, which erodes the national literary reputation: "The names of people, clever enough in their way, but by no means more deserving of distinction than hundreds of others equally accomplished, are trumpeted abroad with those of which the country has most reason to be proud, and our national standard of merit is brought into disgrace by having these raw conscripts reviewed side by side with the few tried warriors, who alone we are willing should challenge European criticism, as the champions of our new literature" (1:11). The editor of *The Knickerbocker* tasks the magazine with correcting this problem; by exercising "as much discrimination as possible," in their work, they hope to encourage a non-imitative, national literature that is free from European "sentimentality" and "pseudo-fashion."

This agenda has implications not only for the editor's aesthetic choices, but for the periodical's approach to American regionalism. On the one hand, New York might have been expected to be the cultural capital of the young nation, as it is at this time the most populous urban area in the United States.[10] On the other hand, however, the invocation of the apparition of Knickerbocker alludes to the ways in which the nation's largest metropolis is "haunted" by its European histories. An American culture free from the European taste and the critical practices that lead to imitation of Europe literature can arise only in the American West, far from sentimental European influences. Regionalism therefore poses a quandary to the editors of *The Knickerbocker*. They attempt to walk a fine line, acknowledging the natural tendency of literary talent to concentrate in New York "… as the rest of the country naturally looked to this metropolis for the mart of intelligence, as well as that of business, each organ that aided the emanation of literature hence, would tend also to concentrate it here," while at the same time remaining open to talent and financial support from the country at large: "…while our pages were open to the contribution of talent generally, when presented in a concise and animated form, provided only that sectarian discussion and party politics were not ingredients—we therefore expected to enlist ability, and consequently patronage, from every part of the country" (1:6). The editors also hope to elicit of the work "of scattered, obscure, and disunited talents—and our chiefest task will be to gather in some of these from their manifold dispersion; and to invent, if possible, some new divining rod, wherewith to bring out upon the surface of our society, the thousand springs of its own fresh and latent talent" (1:8). The editors decry regional biases as a form of literary tyranny that must be vanquished in the name of what they call

[10] According to the United States Census, in 1830, New York's population exceeds 200,000, and the next two largest urban areas by population—Baltimore and Philadelphia—each have about 80,000 residents.

"republicanism": "The time has long gone by, at least in the civilized world, when the might of one man's hand could govern, or the abundance of one man's intellect could nourish the strength and thoughts of many. Literature is tending like civil polity to republicanism and distribution: to a distribution which enriches the many without impoverishing the few" (1:8). This avowedly impartial, "republican" editorial strategy creates a paradox. On the one hand, the editors aver that the magazine has no program at all; it will reflect rather than prescribe literary taste in accordance with its "republican" politics. Yet this ostentatious lack of a program is itself a program. Pieces must be carefully chosen and developed to maintain the appearance of having not been chosen and developed in accordance with ideological and aesthetic standards to suit the magazine's elite audience of men concerned with the degeneration and feminization of American manly culture.[11]

This chapter questions the critical consensus that Parkman plays a central role in producing a regionally distinctive frontier manliness that reshapes the "American intellect." Instead, I argue, Parkman reproduces and reaffirms manly values that are already imagined as

[11] Complicating my reading of *The Knickerbocker* as a magazine for elite East Coast men insecure in their manliness, this prospectus closes with an abrupt and awkward turn to the direct address of the magazine's women readers, written in flowery prose that highlights the performativity of gender: "To thee, fair and gentle one, shall we delight here often to address ourselves. For thee shall the realms of taste and invention be ransacked, and many a gem of mind be garnered here. For thee shall wit and whim and fancy revel, and austere learning move in lively measure; proud science throw her pompous robes aside, and sober truth herself be gaily dressed in fiction" (1:14). The archaic and ostentatiously figurative language places emphasis on the magazine's aesthetic qualities. "Often" including material suitable for women, recognizable through its deployment of "wit and whim and fancy," is a surprising choice for a magazine ostensibly concerned with preserving the manliness of American literature. This surprising appeal to women readers discloses the magazine's lingering desire to preserve certain feminized aspects of American culture, even as *The Knickerbocker* searches beyond the metropolis for distinctively American writing that eschews forms of aestheticism associated with an East Coast culture tainted by feminine European influences.

national. It shows how even in a moment in which anxieties about American manliness produce strong desires to create regional distinctions that could serve as ideological resources, one of the texts most closely associated with this project actual fails in its task. Parkman's frontier manliness is not in accord with, but rather strikingly at odds with Frederick Jackson Turner's vision of an American character shaped by the frontier. I begin by offering historical and theoretical context for this chapter's arguments. I describe how far from substantiating the dominant, Turnerian account of the significance of the frontier to the American national character, Parkman and Turner are actually at odds. To explain the significance of this argument to American cultural identity, I offer a gendered history of American exceptionalism that emphasizes the role of male work. I then turn to Parkman's text itself, showing how Parkman develops a frontier manliness more interested in vision and aesthetics than in dominant accounts, before finally arguing that this chapter's claims about gender and nationalism force us to read the text's engagement with American imperialism in a new way. I argue that Parkman's ostensible boosterism of the Mexican-American War is more ambivalent than most critics have assumed, that this ambivalence is evident in his representations of class and gender, and that Parkman's imperialism is further diluted for his first readers by other pieces that appear alongside *The Oregon Trail* in the pages of *The Knickerbocker*.

2.1 "Lacking in the Artistic but Powerful to Effect Great Ends": Vision, Aesthetics, and the Figure of the American Frontiersman

The conventional reading of *The Oregon Trail* allows it to serve as an example of the ways that the nation is constituted through and by the American West. In this case, Parkman's text promulgates a version of manliness that takes the rugged frontiersman as its paragon and used this figure to promote nationalism and empire. The idea of the West provides the source

material for a reformation of American manliness. The West provides the scenes and scenarios that make it necessary and permissible for men to behave and succeed in ways that are unavailable elsewhere. This reading of Parkman, which I will challenge in this chapter, contributes to a strain of thought linking manliness to the frontier that finds its clearest expression in Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." For Turner, the frontiersman is the archetypical American man and he is defined by his capacity for action, not his aesthetic sense. Turner even goes so far as to say that the frontiersman is defined by what he *fails* to see, which produces a sharp contrast between frontier manliness and earlier constructions of manliness, like dandyism. Dandyism is a form of gender performance popular among social elites in late 18th and early 19th century England. The European, feminine dandy represents the kind of dangerous European taste that so horrifies the editors of *The Knickerbocker*. If dandyism epitomizes a manliness characterized by obsession with aesthetics, Turner's frontiersman is partly characterized by inattentiveness to them. In the famous conclusion of Turner's essay, which constitutes one of the most influential definitions the national character of the United States in the 19th century, the historian comes to a breathless and enthusiastic crescendo:

> …to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier. Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the

> New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. (37)

Turner offers a litany of characteristics of what he calls "the American intellect" that are engendered by or through the frontier. But the phrase "lacking in the artistic" is salient. It is the only quality that Turner describes in the negative. Turner allows that "dominant individualism" is both "good and evil," but in the famous stifling room at the meeting of the American Historical Society in Chicago during the Columbian Exposition in which Turner first presents this paper, it is easy to imagine that the audience's ears would be drawn to the way that Turner interrupts himself in this moment, highlighting a deficiency in the American character, both as a failure and as an absence amidst a stream of affirmative virtues.[12] Turner's list of virtues is dominated by words that lean towards doing rather than seeing—"strength," "grasp," and "energy." The only descriptor that indicates excellence in perception is "acuteness," but this term certainly does not carry a connotation of artistic or aesthetic judgment; it invokes a piercing sharpness to stand in for an acute sense of perception. Deploying this metaphor is the most active metaphor he can use to speak of perception. Turner's invocation of "coarseness" is also striking; it enhances his reference to physical strength, but it also connotes cultural incapacities. Overall, the description makes it clear that American frontier manliness, for Turner, is very different from the British forms of manliness of a past era: dandies and Pre-Raphaelites, who frame manly life

[12] When Turner uses the word "artistic," he almost certainly means in the sense of fine art rather than in the sense of artisan craftsmanship. Given that the American intellect is characterized by a "masterful grasp of material things," lacking in "the artistic," does not connote a lack of artisanal skill. "Lacking in the artistic," in this context, means that the American intellect may not have the facility of the European one in creating, recognizing, and appreciating fine art.

in terms of its engagement with art and consider aesthetic taste an indispensable virtue in the performance of their gender.[13]

Though Turner does not cite Parkman by name, the resonance and significance of figures like Parkman and the heroic frontiersman Henry Chatillon to Parkman's readers implicitly support Turner's claim that the frontier has always shaped American identity. The usual reading of Parkman places Turner's frontier manliness at the center of Parkman's account. But this chapter offers an alternative reading of Parkman that argues that Parkman's model of frontier manliness is strikingly different from Turner's and that Parkman's reflects the longstanding aesthetic inclinations and preoccupations of his elite class. Perhaps the strongest clue that Turner actually writes in a different tradition of manliness from Parkman is Turner's invocation of "opportunity." Turner proudly invokes the republican ideals of the United States, especially highlighting the equality of all its citizens. The "opportunity" Turner invokes here is the opportunity to rise in social and economic status. It is especially likely that Turner references the capacity to transcend one's place in society, given that he delivers this paper at the Columbian Exposition, when thousands of visitors from every social class and ethnic background descend upon Chicago in a chaotic sea of patriots eager to celebrate the nation's exceptional history and identity. However, it is hard to imagine that Parkman would have approved of the idea of the idea of America as "another name for opportunity," given the rigidness of his ideas about class and the importance of social hierarchy to good governance. His elitism is particularly on display in his 1878 essay "The Failure of Universal Suffrage" in which he sneers:

[13] This is not to say that Victorian manliness in England is not without its complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions; I only mean to suggest that "the artistic" is central to it in ways that it is not important to Turner's version of frontier manliness. For more on Victorian manliness, see the essay collection edited by Amelia Yeates and Serena Trowbridge *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities: Constructions of Manliness in Art and Literature* (2014).

> Vaguely and half unconsciously, but every day more and more, the masses hug the flattering illusion that one man is essentially about as good as another. They will not deny that there is great difference in the quality of horses or dogs, but they refuse to see it in their own genus. A jockey may be a democrat in the street, but he is sure to be an aristocrat in the stable. And yet the essential difference between man and man is incomparably greater than that between horse and horse, or dog and dog; though, being chiefly below the surface, the general eye can hardly see it. (5)

This position is entirely consistent with Parkman's embrace of racial hierarchy in *The Oregon Trail*.[14] For him, the prospect of universal suffrage is horrifying because the promise of American democracy is built on a lie, namely the "the flattering illusion that one man is essentially about as good as another." Here, I wish to draw special attention to Parkman's figurative deployment of vision, especially evaluative vision, as the measure of a man. The "general eye" might appreciate the differences between such commonplace things as horses and dogs, but Americans, Parkman suggests, have blinded themselves to the same kinds of differences between "one man" and "another." The truly discerning observer, the man with something better than "the general eye" can metaphorically "see" the differences between the better and the worse man, even if such sights are "below the surface." And it is Parkman's elite group of people who can really see who ought to be in positions of political power. This vision is literal, as it confers the capacity to take in the information one needs to make evaluations, and it

[14] See Nicholas Lawrence's essay "Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* and the US-Mexican War: Appropriations of Counter-Imperial Dissent" for a description of Parkman's racial views and a discussion of how they fit into his engagement with imperialist and counter-imperialist discourses.

is also figurative, inasmuch as this eye takes in not only what is visible on the surface, but combines this information with judgment only available to certain social classes.

As historian Nicholas Carr points out, what might appear as Parkman's disdain is actually his fear about social changes in which people of Parkman's class are bound to lose economic, political, and cultural capital.[15] For Parkman, the consequences of universal suffrage, that is—letting everyone and anyone vote, especially those American intellects that Turner might say are "lacking in the artistic," are dire. This would not be true democracy, but rather an especially insidious sort of despotism. In "The Failure of Universal Suffrage," he argues that the United States' ostensibly exceptional republicanism is more fragile than it might appear. In America, he writes, "no royalty is left to fear, except the many-headed one that bears the name of Demos, with its portentous concourse of courtiers, sycophants, and panders." And according to Parkman, Demos has been perversely empowered by social and economic changes that have disenfranchised the elite class of which Parkman is himself a member. Democracy might have worked in a time before immigration and industrialization, but now it is too late for it to engender good governance. According to Parkman, Demos once "was a reasonable and sensible monarch, who had a notion of good government, and ruled himself and his realm with wisdom and moderation; but prosperity has a little turned his head, and hordes of native and foreign barbarians, all armed with the ballot, have so bewildered him" (3). Now that any man can be rich and any man can vote, people like Parkman have come down in the world. Turner may well be right that the best of the American character comes from the frontier, but for Parkman, this has nothing to do with the glowing portrait of the frontiersman that Turner paints. According to

[15] Carr argues that "…Parkman's fear of the Irish grew with their influx in greater numbers and the urbanizing, industrializing, and, ultimately, democratizing effect that this had on the city" (3).

Parkman, writing as an elite, the American intellect—or any version of it worth setting down on paper—is not so much a matter of action as a matter of class, and the most important capacity that the elites possess is their vision. For Parkman, unlike Turner, the American character and the forms of salubrious manliness that constitute it come not from the frontier, but from cultural backgrounds that are antithetical to frontier: a sense of aesthetic capacity and appreciation defined by social class that can only come from associating with elites. The archetype of the American character is not the active frontiersman in the West but the discerning jockey, the man who is not lacking in the artistic, and he lives in the metropolis. This is a surprising finding that runs against the grain of how scholars have understood Parkman's role in the evolution of American manliness and the significance of regionalism in American history.

I take up the question of manliness in *The Oregon Trail* not only because the history of American manliness entwines characteristics that are purportedly Western and avowedly national at a crisis point in the history of American identity. I also do so because frontier manliness and its implications for the national culture are precisely the salient preoccupation of *The Oregon Trail* and its author. Critics have long cogently argued that *The Oregon Trail* emblematizes the racialized frontier violence that lies at the core of American manly identity. Literary scholar Frank Meola succinctly summarizes this point of view, arguing that the text "can be read, in its obsessions and its evasions, as one of the best examples of the male Anglo-American ego confronting an environment that threatens to break it part, but that also gives it a space in which to act out its masculinity" (5). Accordingly, Blake Allmendinger cites Parkman as a quintessential example of "white western manhood," listing him among other writers—Richard Henry Dana, Owen Wister, and Theodore Roosevelt—"who treated the West as a testing ground" (28). Parkman's fascination with manliness underpins the critical significance of *The*

Oregon Trail because many critics see manliness as the key to understanding Parkman's later scholarly work upon which his fame as a historian rests. Nicholas Carr argues that Parkman's "obsession with manliness" motivates his "historical vision" (1). Carr furthermore argues that the reason the idea of testing and regenerating manliness is so important to Parkman is that Parkman sees a reformation of American manliness as crucial to the United States' very survival. Frontier manliness, for him, serves as an antidote to the racial and political contagion afflicting the caste of Americans providing political and cultural leadership: "Fearing national emasculation, Parkman devoted himself to depicting a healthier past in which great men, heroic deeds, and moral grandeur held their rightful place at the center of American life" (7). Understanding what underlies Parkman's fears of national emasculation requires stepping back from the text itself and framing it in terms of a long-running discourse about the role and usefulness of manliness in American culture.

The textual production of a gendered, racialized national character is a major theme in American political ideology and identity and it has a history stretching back to the nation's founding. The frontier myth and the imperial impulse that grows out of it can be traced to the sort of pragmatic, violent, action-oriented manly identity that scholars like Meola, Allmendinger, and Carr read in Parkman. I will reexamine Parkman's text in light of this historical reframing that considers imperialism as an expression of American manliness, rather than reading manliness as something created to fit the ideological needs of imperialism. The question of what white American manliness ought to look like has origins in the nation's founders' attempts to establish the United States' exceptional character. The figure of the yeoman farmer—the independent, virtuous farmer who owns his land—is central to the Jeffersonian vision for the fledging nation. This idea of a democracy of yeoman farmers, Jefferson and the Democratic-

Republicans hope, would set the United States apart from European nations in which political power is concentrated in imperialist monarchies. In European nations, crowded with people and short on land, citizens are forced to abandon the farm for the workshop, but the ability to expand westward gives the United States a chance to transmute its geopolitical circumstances into virtuous national characteristics. As Thomas Jefferson writes the chapter on "Manufactures" in his 1787 *Notes on the State of Virginia*, "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue," so he tells his countrymen, "While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a workbench, or twirling a distaff…let our workshops remain in Europe. It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles. The loss by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government" (164-165). Anticipating Turner, Jefferson claims that it is the frontier that separates Americans from Europeans and offers an opportunity to instill unique virtues in its citizenry.[16]

I do not mean to simply equate the land necessary to sustain a nation of yeoman farmers with the frontier or the American West, but it is clear that Jefferson sees American exceptionalism as reliant upon westward expansion to keep pace with the nation's growing population. Though many historians focus on the Louisiana Purchase as a matter of securing New Orleans and its port in order to secure and promote international trade, the vast amount of

[16] See R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955) for a description of the myth of the newness and innocence in a frontier wilderness and the exceptional national character it produces in the American Renaissance.

land included in the purchase makes Jefferson's dream of a nation of yeoman farmers possible. It is therefore not Jefferson's intentions or ideology so much as the fact of the land itself that locates yeoman virtues in the West. Turner's account of the American intellect underscores the significance of the frontier and historical and geographic circumstances link the frontier with westward expansion. Literary critic Myra Jehlen theorizes this intertwining of exceptional forms of work, the land of the continental interior, and a distinctive national character in the term "incarnation—the idea that the ethos of liberal individualism inheres in the American continent" (43). She argues that liberalism in itself is not uniquely American, but rather that "Americans saw themselves as building their civilization out of nature itself, as neither the analogue nor the translation of Natural Law but its direct expression" (3).[17] She is careful to point out that incarnation is not "the content of their thinking" but "rather that an idea of incarnation can be seen to organize American self-consciousness as grammar organizes speech, without specifying its content" (21). Incarnation names the link the Jefferson sees between economic activity on the frontier and American exceptionalism.

At the same time that Jefferson urges Americans to leave workshops to the Europeans and to cultivate the land and with it a distinctive national character, Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists promulgate a nation not of economically independent yeoman farmers, but also Americans working in diverse industries as part of a sophisticated, interconnected commercial system reliant on the rapid circulation of currency. In Federalist Number 12, published in 1787,

[17] As Jehlen points out, American exceptionalism cannot rest upon republicanism or liberalism: "In themselves, [the United States'] originating ideas were neither original nor exceptional; they derived from the essential principles of the European Reformation and Enlightenment. These principles—notions of individual autonomy defended by natural inalienable rights, of the sanctity of private property as it fulfills individual self-possession, and of representative government as an ideal social order implied by such self-possessive individualism—bespoke another liberal nation, not a new world" (3).

the same year as Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Hamilton claims that a healthy national economy is crucial to the ongoing union and independence of the United States and that political leaders should encourage both agriculture and artisanal work rather than endorsing one form of economic activity over the other. He warns Americans of the perils of working the land without developing a robust financial system and rapidly moving money.[18] For Hamilton, "a nation cannot long exist without revenue," (64) and he argues that landowners will object to land taxes and the national sentiment precludes taxes on imports (the excise), so what funds the nation will need will have to come from taxes on consumption. Collecting a tax on consumption, he argues, would be a challenging even in a nation of urbanites, but it would be utterly impossible in a nation of geographically spread out yeoman farmers. Hamilton is less fearful than Jefferson of the supposed moral risks presented by urbanization, but what is clear between the conflict between Jefferson's Democratic-Republicans and Hamilton's Federalists is that political elites see westward expansion as a determinative force in the development of the national character. Though Hamilton's side is the triumphant one in this contest of visions, as the United States became an increasingly urban and commercially sophisticated nation and as the distribution of work shifted from subsistence agriculture toward wage labor in the 19th century, the West and the economic opportunities it represents remain a crucial ideological force as the national economy and the national character emerge together. The history of the first half of the 19th

[18] According to Hamilton, the consequences of neglecting the development of more sophisticated financial institutions and practices are dire. He cites "The hereditary dominions of the Emperor of Germany" as a region in which there is ample agricultural production and even mines for precious metals to facilitate coin production, and yet opportunities to raise revenues are wasted by a lack of commerce: "The ability of a country to pay taxes must always be proportioned, in a great degree, to the quantity of money in circulation, and to the celerity with which it circulates. Commerce, contributing to both these objects, must of necessity render the payment of taxes easier, and facilitate the requisite supplies to the treasury" (61). America must separate itself from Europe by finding a better way to fund the government.

century can thus be read through the question of the nature of men's work: should it be on the farm or in the city? Interconnected with other forms of work by national and transnational networks of trade or largely autonomous? At stake in these kinds of questions, men like Jefferson and Hamilton suggest and historians would later corroborate, is not only the economic survival but also the *character* of the nation.

By the beginning of Francis Parkman's literary career in the early 1840s, two interconnected processes are concluding, both of which shaped the nature of work and manliness in this period. The economic changes between 1815 and 1846 that Charles Sellers terms the "market revolution" are nearing completion and westward expansion no longer seems indefinitely sustainable. In 1803, Jefferson completes the Louisiana Purchase, which secures the land necessary to create the conditions for a nation of yeoman farmers, but the early part of the 19th century sees an explosion of technology related to industrial production and transportation that shifts the locus of the national character from the country to the city and permanently alters the nature of work in America. The market revolution is the triumph of the Hamiltonian vision for the nation over the Jeffersonian one. Sellers's description of widespread subsistence farming in the United States before 1815 resembles Jeffersonian dream of the yeoman farmer: "Surplus produce had no abstract or money value, and wealth could not be accumulated. Therefore the subsistence culture fostered family obligation, communal cooperation, and reproduction over generations of a modest comfort…Despite contradictions of patriarchy, racism, and fee-simple property, they rallied around enduring human values of family, trust, cooperation, love, and equality" (5-6). But starting around 1815, capitalist enterprise increasingly supplants subsistence agriculture throughout the nation. Even in the South, where commercial networks are less developed than in the North, raising cotton as a cash crop to sell in distant markets becomes

more profitable than raising necessities in isolated autonomy. As Sellers points out, these changes aren't only economic; one of the most important consequences of the market revolution is that individualism suited to the newly interconnected and entrepreneurial economic reality rapidly supplants these older values better suited to an economic world dominated by yeoman farming. If before the market revolution families work together at home or on a farm, now work outside the home is commonplace. Where once noneconomic social values help communities cohere, now individual capitalist enterprise become the dominant model of manly behavior. After the market revolution, men are expected to work outside the home for a wage and, increasingly, to engage in entrepreneurial behavior.

One of the major causes of the market revolution is the beginning of the closing of the frontier. By the 1840s, the frontier no longer seems limitless. According to Richard Slotkin's classic work of cultural history *The Fatal Environment* (1985), the myth of the frontier had served as a "safety valve" for economic competition; if ever it appears that the city cannot provide enough resources for its jostling, sharp-elbowed male citizenry, the frontier promises endless economic opportunities, limiting the intensity of class conflict. With the closing of the frontier becoming a possibility, the market revolution changes the locus of the nation's cultural center of gravity from the frontier to the polis: "the city was to be seen as the place in which America's future was being created" (138). Slotkin argues that literary responses to urbanization expresses pressing fears about a shift in the character of American men: "The fictions of an idealized Metropolis reject the nation of land-hungry and ambitious men-on-the-make conceived in the Myth of the Frontier, and present instead a citizenry whose essential instincts are docile, dependent, and domestic." Slotkin argues that these undesirable, effeminate characteristics "were projected onto subordinate races, classes, and sexes—Indians, blacks, women, and children.

These were precisely the classes who were the first targets of the aggressive expansionism of the Jacksonian period, and of the industrialization that followed it" (139). Ultimately, Slotkin claims, urbanization, industrialization, and unskilled European immigration prompt writers to create a "literary mythology of the Jacksonian period…which juxtaposes 'masculine and 'feminine' worlds. In the opposition of the virile Frontier and the effeminate Metropolis, this dualism finds its largest expression" (140). Literature constructs the West as a mythic place where American men can prove their manliness in order to maintain the existing class hierarchy in a nation whose Western economic "safety valve" can no longer be relied upon. For this reason, men like Parkman—the elites of a disappearing era—need new ways to think about their manliness as they face threats from within and without. These elites of a disappearing era face unprecedented economic and social competition from a new class of tasteless upstart entrepreneurs, and at the same time, the broader citizenry of the nation is rotting from within, made docile and effeminate by urbanization.[19] These changes in American culture, which occur rapidly in the cities of the

[19] Like Slotkin, David Leverenz identifies social pressures related to class as responsible for changing ideologies of manliness, which he believes is articulated through work, and in *Manhood and the American Renaissance*, he traces the effects of these economic changes on socially elite men. He observes, "…as the male workplace became quite separate from the home, competition intensified, and men defined manhood much more exclusively through their work. Beneath a greater preoccupation with manhood and competition, for artisans and entrepreneurs alike, lies a greater fear of humiliation" (72). Leverenz suggests that this fear of humiliation becomes a driving force behind imperial expansionism: "Manhood functions to preserve self-control and, more profoundly, to transform fears of vulnerability into a desire for dominance" (73). He sketches out a system of manly "paradigms," including a "patrician paradigm, which helped sustain a relatively small colonial elite composed of merchants, lawyers, and landed gentry," which "expresses manhood as property ownership, patriarchy, and republican ideals of citizenship." He juxtaposes this patrician paradigm with an "artisan paradigm," which articulates manliness as "freedom, pride of craft and, to a lesser degree, citizenship, along with a good deal of ambivalence about patriarchal deference" (74). The emergence of a third version of manliness, developed by a new "middle class," produced manliness through individualism and entrepreneurialism, make patricians fearful of humiliation. According to Leverenz, it is not only the economic supremacy of this elite class that came under threat; it is their identity as men as well: "The conflict had not become a class war…Instead, it became an ideological tension felt in

East Coast, disturb elites like Parkman. In a passage that appears in the periodical edition of *The Oregon Trail* but is excised from the book, he remarks, "…never have I seen in any Indian village on the remote prairies such depravity, such utter abasement and prostitution of every nobler part of humanity, as I have seen in great cities, the centres of the world's wisdom and refinement" (30:484). E. N. Feltskog, the editor of the predominant scholarly edition of *The Oregon Trail*, interprets this passage to mean that "civilization—in the most oversimplified sense of that much-abused term—has torn them from a natural context and replaced the crude vigor of blood and soil with a spurious and destructive refinement" (578). While this passage laments the ways in which civilization strips Americans of natural virtues, it also suggests that what passes for civilization in "great cities" is not really civilized. Feltskog focuses on the natural state of the Indian as the other for "civilization," but Parkman is also interested in a better form of civilization than what anyone in the United States has to offer at this time. For example, in his essay "The Failure of Universal Suffrage," he focuses not on "the crude vigor of blood and soil" as the panacea for a culture stricken with "spurious and destructive refinement," but on what he calls "broad and manly education." Parkman does not suggest that the American cultural and political elite return to nature, but rather that they supplement their innate refinement with more

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terms more of gender than of class. What did it mean to be manly? Was manliness the independence self-respect of the craftsman or the ability of an entrepreneur to best his competitors and exploit resources, human as well as material? Did a man's self-respect depend on a sense of being free and equal to any other man or a struggle to be dominant?" (78). The patrician paradigm of manliness "worked well with mercantile capitalism, which depended for its raw materials on independent yeoman farmers and whose characteristic mode of production was the small patriarchal village shop" (78). But Leverenz ultimate finds that "The older ideologies of genteel patriarchy and artisan independence were being challenged by a new middle-class ideology of competitive individualism…The new middle class won, and its ideology of manhood as competitive individualism still pervades American life" (3). The patrician Parkman has reason to worry.

vigorous forms of manliness. This way, Americans can have the best of all worlds: manly vigor and manly refinement. Parkman's readers have tended to focus exclusively on only part of the equation, paying close attention to moments when Parkman downplays the importance of aesthetics and the other trappings of refinement and civilization. In the aftermath of the market revolution, writing against the ascent of the American commercial middle class, Parkman concedes in "The Failure of Universal Suffrage" that "Literature, scholarship, and physical science," while "all of importance…cannot alone meet the requirements of the times." An education focused on such rarefied pursuits risk becoming relegated to "merely aesthetic, literary, or scholastic culture," which stands apart from American culture at large (18-19). This might appear to suggest that Parkman advocates a different, Western manliness emblematized by the demands of the frontier and that has no space for aesthetics. But what Parkman argues here is less that these cornerstones of elite education are not *necessary*, than that they are not *sufficient*. It is not that literature, scholarship, and physical science cannot meet the requirements of the times, but that they can't do so "alone." For cultivated elites on the East Coast, a life in pursuit of aesthetics, literature, and scholarship is a given. What they lack is a capacity for action. For the vast majority of Americans, however, especially the ascendant entrepreneurial class that threatens to permanently unseat Parkman's elite class, vision, including vision in the aesthetic sense, cannot be taken for granted. Each class has only part of what is needed to revive American culture: the crumbling aristocracy has vision and taste but lacks physical vigor and the surging entrepreneurial class lacks vision and aesthetic taste. Reading the passage from the periodical version of *The Oregon Trail* that compares American cities unfavorably to Indian villages suggests not only a failure of so-called civilization to improve upon nature, but also the failure of American cities to develop a complete version of manliness that unites the vigor of the middle

class to the refined tastes and aesthetic vision of elites. The following section shows how, contrary to conventional readings of these texts, Parkman highlights the importance of visual manliness in *The Oregon Trail* and in his earlier periodical writing.

2.2 Frontier Manliness as Aesthetic Vision in *The Oregon Trail*

Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, there has been substantial agreement about the nature of the manliness that Parkman produces in *The Oregon Trail*: it is physical, imperial, and violent. This manliness is closely associated with the idea of the American West as a testing ground for the performance of violent manliness. There has also been substantial critical agreement about the significance of this form of manliness regarding its crucial role in producing a distinctive national character. Critics read this manliness as not only extraordinarily violent and imperial, but also exceptionally American. Meola argues that Parkman's West gives the "male Anglo-American ego" a "space in which to act out its masculinity," and he claims, "The means of doing so involve two major activities: searching for Native Americans on whom to project the unacknowledged 'savagery' of the narrator and his culture, and committing violent acts against 'nature' in the form of large animals. Or, to be more accurate, observing violent acts as a form of entertainment and as vicarious participation in rituals of masculine reinforcement…" (5). Kim Townsend argues that Parkman's framework of "efforts to establish authority in violent reaction to what he imagined to be threatening, savage forms of being—establish him firmly in the tradition Richard Slotkin explored in his study of the mythology of the American Frontier" (103-104). Accordingly, historian Amy Greenberg points out that while westward expansion is often cast in terms of the domestication of wilderness, "many American justified territorial expansionism precisely because it was *not* domesticated. Potential new American territories were embraced by some American men because they offered opportunities for individual heroic

initiative and for success in love and war, which seemed to be fading at home" (3). Though their areas of emphasis diverge, Meola, Townsend, and Greenberg can agree that the form of manliness that Parkman attempts to build is violent, aggressive, and desperate to stamp out its others: femininity, physical weakness, and citification. Further, they argue that the significance of Parkman's frontier manliness lies in its potential to inject regionally distinctive virtues into a form of manliness imagined as American. Westward expansion reforms manliness not just in the West; it transforms the whole national character. This chapter section shows how Parkman's frontier manliness, which these critics think of as so crucial to reforming or regenerating forms of national manliness imagined as undesirable, actually reinforces rather than challenges the significance of vision and aesthetics.

For Parkman, frontier manliness is as much a matter of seeing as it is of doing. I agree with scholars like Meola, Townsend, and Greenberg that the Western quest for manliness is central to *The Oregon Trail* and that it shows how the development of this regionally inflected manliness has enormous stakes not only for the West and its purportedly distinctive culture, but also for the nation in a time in which questions of national character are being taken up by political elites. However, I move laterally from these arguments in arguing that Parkman is less interested in what Meola calls "acting out" or what Allmendinger describes as using the West as a "testing ground" than he is in emphasizing the significance of vision, including aesthetic vision, even in a place that would seem to reward activity over observation. Meola usefully calls attention to Parkman's interest in vision: "*The Oregon Trail* is an obsessively vision-oriented work, in which vision stands for what Richard Poirier has called the 'visionary possession' of the land, representing other types of appropriating power…However, the transcendent vision of expansion and power, as we know all too well from our own bloody century, has strong fascist

and violent implications" (20-21). In this chapter section, however, I will show how Parkman's vision is more appreciative than appropriative. My characterization of Parkman's representation of frontier manliness, which focuses on observation and aesthetics, sits awkwardly alongside the physically robust constructions of manliness that most of Parkman's post-Turner readers might expect from a frontier narrative, and explicitly contradictory to Turner's definition of a frontier American intellect characterized by "lacking in the artistic" or a Western mythology reliant on action heroes.[20]

Despite writing a popular text about the American West, Parkman is no Westerner. In a memorable scene in *The Oregon Trail*, a group of emigrants wonder why Boston Brahmins like Parkman and his cousin Quincy Adams Shaw would be out in the dangerous Western wilderness. Parkman finds himself at something of a loss as to explain his presence to them: "They demanded our names, where we came from, where we were going, and what was our business. The last query was particularly embarrassing; since traveling in that country, or indeed anywhere, from any other motive than gain, was an idea of which they took no cognizance" (30:231-232). If the emigrants find Parkman's presence in the West perplexing, Parkman is equally mystified by the emigrants. He remarks that while some emigrants are "sober-looking"

[20] In addition to the idea that Parkman travels to the American West with the purpose of testing his manliness, critics read a sense of nostalgia for the disappearing frontier in *The Oregon Trail*. The idea of a national character shaped by the frontier elevates the figure of the frontiersman, which is a very specific kind of manly figure. As Kent Ladd Steckmesser writes in *The Western Hero in History and Legend*, "Typically they were men who had actually performed some notable and verifiable exploit. Then through literary elaboration and the workings of the folk imagination, their deeds were expanded to epic proportions, and new exploits and traits were added to their names" (3). In short, he suggests, the frontier heroes that set the standard for what Western manliness should look like are created on the basis of their capacity for action. From the examples that Steckmesser selects—Kit Carson, Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickok, and George Armstrong Custer, these actions are of a type: violent ones against Indians and against nature. This argument is entirely consistent with the claim that Parkman develops an action-oriented model of western manliness in *The Oregon Trail*.

people, "Among them are some of the vilest outcasts in the country." (29:163). He finds it impossible to empathize with them, reflecting, "I have often perplexed myself to divine the various motives that give impulse to this strange migration; but whatever they may be, whether an insane hope of a better condition in life, or a desire of shaking off restraints of law and society, or mere restlessness; certain it is, that multitudes bitterly repent the journey, and after they have reached the land of promise, are happy enough to escape from it" (29:163). The gulf of class prevents Parkman and the emigrants from understanding each other. What sets Parkman and his traveling companions apart from the other people traveling the West is that they are rich, so their motives are not to make money. For Parkman, unlike the emigrants, the West is not a place for entrepreneurship, but rather for forms of fulfillment and expression that have little to do with financial gain. He seeks a way of affirming his manliness, but I will argue that he does not do so by rewriting the rules of what counts as manliness—substituting an active, conquering version for the troublesomely feminized one on the East Coast. Rather, Parkman makes the West a new staging ground for the same forms of manliness that had always been practiced and valorized on the East Coast. Inasmuch as the performance of manliness changes in the second half of the 19th century, it is not due to the influence texts like *The Oregon Trail*.[21]

It is fitting that the word Parkman uses to paraphrase the emigrants' questions about his purpose is "business," since, lacking economic motives, it is the precisely his lack of "business" out West that is so "embarrassing." Indeed, when he attempts to describe his motivations in other parts of the text, he is remarkably vague and unconvincing. In the first installment of *The Oregon*

[21] This is not to say, however, that the social, economic, and technological developments that drive changes in the theory and practice of American manliness can be teased apart from Westward expansion in general. My narrow claim in this chapter is that Parkman's text is not symptomatic of nor an impetus for these changes. His views on gender, like class, are as conservative as one would expect for a person of his social class.

Trail, he describes his journey as a "tour of curiosity and amusement" (29:160) and in the second installment, he elaborates, "The restlessness, the love of wilds and hatred of cities, natural perhaps in early years to every unperverted son of Adam, was not our only motive for undertaking the present journey. My companion hoped to shake off the effects of a disorder that had impaired a constitution originally hardy and robust; and I was anxious to pursue some inquiries relative to the character and usages of the remote Indian nations, being already familiar with many of the border tribes" (29:310). It's true that Parkman spends much of his time in the West searching for Indians and that he describes them when he finds them. But it would be inaccurate to characterize Parkman's adventure as a research trip. While Parkman would go on to become a renowned historian, *The Oregon Trail* is no scholarly examination of Indians. Herman Melville's unsigned review of the book edition in *The Literary World* argues, "It is too often the case, that civilized beings sojourning among savages soon come to regard them with disdain and contempt. But though in many cases this feeling is almost natural, it is not defensible; and it is wholly wrong" (291).[22] Indeed, there is little to suggest that Parkman's claim that he hopes to learn about Indians is genuine. As literary critic Frank Meola observes, Parkman's "language is

[22] Despite quibbling that the title of the first book edition *The California and Oregon Trail* is misleading, since the text has very little to do with California (the publisher of the first book edition George P. Putnam also saw this as a problem; see Putnam to Parkman, 25 November 1851) and this complaint about Parkman's attitude towards Indians, Melville's review is positive. Melville argues that as a work of entertaining adventure, the text is highly successful: "We cannot attempt to follow the friends through all their wild rovings. But he who desires to throw himself unreservedly into all the perilous charms of prairie life; to camp out by night in the wilderness, standing guard against prowling Indians and wolves; to ford rivers and creeks; to hunt buffalo, and kill them at full gallop in the saddle, and afterwards banquet on delectable roasted 'hump-ribs;' to lodge with Indian warriors in their villages, and receive the hospitalities of polite squaws in brass and vermilion; to hear of wars and rumors of wars among the hostile tribes of savages; to listen to the wildest and most romantic little tales of border and wilderness life; in short, he who desires to quit Broadway and the Bowery—through only in fancy—for the region of wampum and calumet, the land of beavers and buffaloes, birch canoes and 'smoked buckskin shirts,' will do well to read Mr. Parkman's book" (292).

not the language of exploration, and there is no true engagement with the cultures and environments he encounters" (6).[23] While would be unfair to hold Parkman's attempts at ethnography to modern methodological standards, he concedes that his work might not appear to be purely observational. In the 1872 preface to the fourth edition of *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman continues to maintain the polite fiction of a research trip, but he acknowledges that readers wouldn't necessarily know it from his writing: "As regards the motives which sent us to the mountains, our liking for them would have sufficed; but in my case, another incentive was added. I went in great measure as a student, to prepare for a literary undertaking of which the plan was already formed…It was this that prompted some proceedings on my part which, without a fixed purpose in view, might be charged with youthful rashness. My business was observation, and I was willing to pay dearly for the opportunity of exercising it" (xii-xiii). He claims he needs no justification beyond "liking" to travel, but Parkman, in retrospect, evidently seeks an excuse for his apparent "rashness."

What exactly Parkman means by his apparent "rashness" is not explicit here, but the treatment of Indians to which Melville objects and his generally violent and profligate behavior while hunting buffalo might not be so much rashness as desperate attempts to establish his manliness, or perhaps better, attempts to establish his manliness by behaving rashly. Indeed, critics have argued that Parkman's "rash" behavior is less an embarrassing blemish on a research trip than the primary purpose of his journey to the West and that rather than being caused by youthful waywardness or a desire for experiences to turn into literature, it is caused by a crisis of

[23] Meola's claim doesn't necessarily contradict the idea that Parkman's travel writing participates in what Pratt calls the "anti-conquest." Meola makes an interpretive argument about how Parkman's writing actually functions, while Pratt is more concerned with the way that he imagines his own attitude toward his subjects.

manliness afflicting men of his elite class that had been building since the origins of the republic. As a result, Parkman's "rash" behavior is actually an attempt at inventing a more active American manliness to save the nation from the rationalization and feminization of its culture. However, I would argue that the reparative or prophylactic action Parkman takes does not rehearse what Slotkin has called the myth of regeneration through violence. Rather, it is better understood as a reaffirmation of the significance of aesthetic vision, which is a manifestation of his elite East Coast habitus. Understanding these motivations requires constructing a brief cultural history of manliness and its articulation with the politics of land use, and it will also lay the groundwork for readings of his short periodical pieces in *The Knickerbocker* in the chapter's next section that substantiate the case for my claims about Parkman's construction of manliness.

My characterization of Parkman as a writer extraordinarily preoccupied with vision and aesthetics directly impinges upon a growing scholarly discussion concerning visual and literary histories of the American West and their relationship to the idea of a distinctive American culture. Many readers have noted the significance of vision and visual art in *The Oregon Trail*. Literary critic Beth Lueck interprets the text as a version of the European grand tour narrative common in the 19th century. She shows how Parkman fills *The Oregon Trail* with detailed visual description. Lueck's observations are confirmed by 19th century reviewers who praise the book edition for its excellent handling of visual description. An approving review in the *Boston Daily Atlas* praises how this "exceedingly pleasant and instructive book is written in a gentlemanly and scholarlike style and abounds in highly picturesque descriptions." The reviewer claims it "should be read by every one who desires to have a clear idea of life amidst these wild scenes." He specifically praises Parkman's "description of natural scenery, buffalo hunts, and prairie life generally." Even in a retrospective account of Parkman's whole career, the visual description in

this text stands out. In the December 1880 issue of *The Dial*, Edward G. Mason notes that *The Oregon Trail* "attracted then the attention due to a very graphic account of the great plains and mountains of our Western territories, of the experience of the frontier man and the hunter there, and of the traits and customs of the red men who roamed over that vast region in all their savage glory…a photographic record of a state of things which has passed away never to return" (149). Like the reviewer from the *Boston Daily Atlas*, Mason identifies Parkman's eye as his most notable asset. The book's chief virtue derived from the author's capacity to first see with great perceptiveness and then reproduce the effect on the page—to see and through this seeing allow his reader to see the same through exceptionally accurate and comprehensive description of visual information.[24]

[24] Parkman is evidently aware of the importance of visual images in his work upon its publication in book form. In a letter to Norton, he happily notes that the 1849 Putnam edition will be illustrated by Felix O. C. Darley, the artist who also created the famous image of Diedrich Knickerbocker for Washington Irving's *History of New York*.

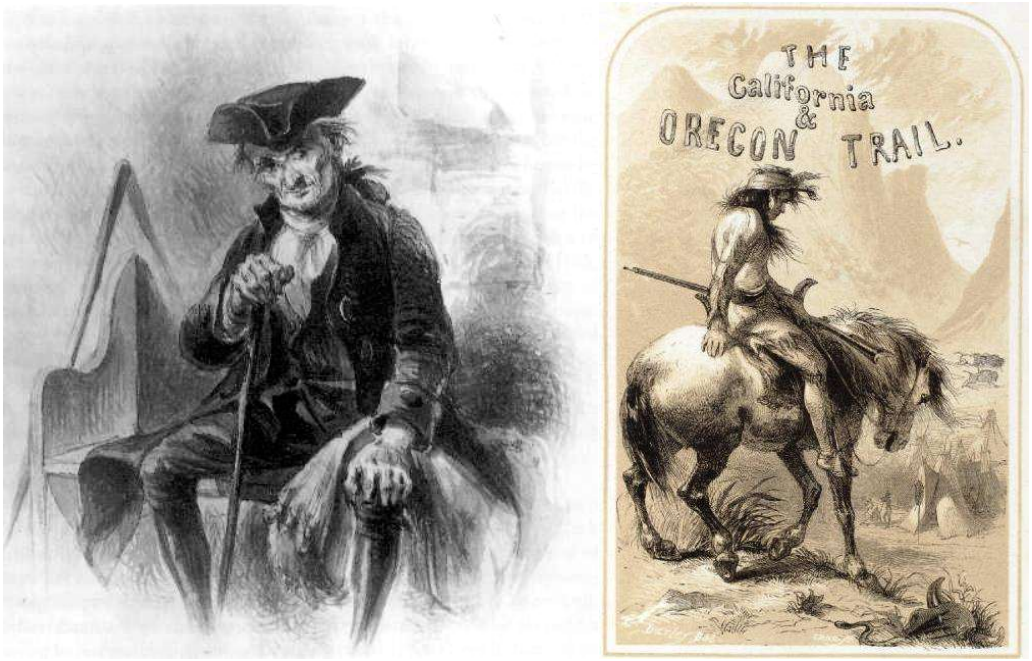

Fig. 2.1 Felix O. C. Darley Illustrations: Knickerbocker (left) from Washington Irving, *A History of New York*, George P. Putnam, 1860, p. 16 and Indian on horseback (right) from Francis Parkman, Jr., *The California and Oregon Trail*, George P. Putnam, 1849, title page.

create “highly picturesque descriptions” of the West and the “savage glory” of Indians.

What is particularly interesting about Lueck’s argument for my purposes is its implications for how American exceptionalism is visually constructed. Parkman’s tour could not be a picturesque one in the same sense as European grand tours, as the American landscape, especially in the West, is characterized by natural sublimity rather than ruins.[25] Lueck ties her claims about Parkman’s interest in the picturesque to a claim about nationalism and manliness. She argues that the search for the picturesque that typifies this travel writing genre takes on an additional dimension of manly self-cultivation. She identifies passages in the text in which it appears that Parkman seeks out picturesque scenes to describe to the readers and ultimately concludes that both Parkman’s *Oregon Trail* and Washington Irving’s *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835) “read like conventional picturesque tours, expanding the geographic territory for picturesque travel in the United States, but at the same time the authors’ search for manliness in the American West, particularly for Parkman, transforms the tour into something more than a quest for beauty. For these writers the western tour becomes an opportunity to fulfill a quest for renewed physical and spiritual strength” (91). Parkman’s quest for physical and spiritual

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Darley’s images do much to justify the book’s price of $1.25, or around $40.00 accounting for inflation from 1849 to the 21st century. Illustration continues to be a crucial supplement to the text, as Frederic Remington is later commissioned to work on the 1892 “illustrated edition” that featured many more images than any prior version of the text (Feltskog 55a). These would not be confined to the front matter of the book as in earlier editions produced by Putnam, but rather interspersed throughout the text. This lavish praise of Parkman’s visual sense refers not to the practical vision that contributed to Parkman’s survival in a dangerous environment. Though this sort of vision is crucial to the travel that inspired the text and useful for readers desiring accurate information: what the *Atlas* reviewer calls “a clear idea of life amidst these wild scenes,” the critics praising *The Oregon Trail* emphasize a different sort of seeing that is more closely tied to art and aesthetics. It is this sort of seeing that allows Parkman to create “highly picturesque descriptions” of the West and the “savage glory” of Indians.

[25] See Larzer Ziff’s *Writing in the New Nation: Prose, Print, and Politics in the Early United States*, especially the chapter “Realizing the Landscape.”

strength, Lueck claims, is closely tied to the development of national culture. Lueck argues, "In writing this kind of book Parkman transforms the picturesque tour and makes a significant contribution to American culture by demonstrating the important gains to be made on such a tour both for the individual and the nation" (112-113). Where I part ways with Lueck's account is that I claim that quest for beauty *is* the test for manhood, not a supplement, excess, or happy accident epiphenomenal to the main thing. Rather than seeing Parkman's ideological work on manliness as something "more than a quest for beauty," I argue that the quest for beauty lies at the heart of Parkman's quest for manliness for both himself as an individual and for a nation in need of gendered regeneration. I argue that the kind of manliness that Parkman discovers and prizes in this text is a visual manliness that includes such qualities as an eye skilled at identifying and representing the picturesque. In addition to claiming that readers have understated Parkman's belief in the importance of vision and aesthetics to frontier manliness, I also show how they might overstate the role of physical vigor and activity.

Critics are quick to point out the significance of physical hardiness in the text, and their claims tend to rely on Parkman's complicated medical history. For example, literary critic Kim Townsend observes that Parkman's physical infirmities dominated the story of his life and work: "Those who know of Francis Parkman know that he was one of our most esteemed historians in the nineteenth century (one of our most esteemed writers, really), and that he was a very sick man" (98). Indeed, Parkman's claim that it is Shaw who hopes some travel would improve his "constitution" seems to be a case of projection. Throughout *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman constantly refers to his own physical infirmities. Confined to a bed of buffalo blankets and limited to no more strenuous activity than reading after "A renewed attack of my disorder" (31:485), Parkman bemoans his emasculation by "a debilitating and somewhat critical illness"

(31:492). Shaw hands him Shakespeare, Byron, and an Old Testament and Parkman writes, "I chose the worst of the three, and for the greater part of that day I lay on the buffalo-robes, fairly reveling in the creations of that resplendent genius which has achieved no more signal triumph than that of half beguiling us to forget the pitiful and unmanly character of its possessor" (31:493). As Feltskog points out, Parkman refers here to Byron: "Parkman's ambivalent feelings at enjoying Byron typically reflect the nineteenth century's appreciation of the poet's genius and its equally characteristic detestation of what it considered his lurid personal life" (634). It is striking that the term that Parkman uses to denounce Byron's personal life is "unmanly," a criticism that Feltskog claims typifies the era's attitudes towards one of the emblematic figures of British Romanticism. But even as Parkman rails against his own infirmities and attacks Byron's manliness, the way he recovers from his emasculating illness is a turn towards high culture in the form of literature, which sets him and Shaw above and apart from Indians and Americans of a lower class alike. Injured by the frontier's unforgiving conditions, Parkman retreats to the sanctum of aesthetic taste to regenerate his capacity to perform frontier manliness. This is not Slotkin's "regeneration through violence," but rather something that might more accurately be called "regeneration through aesthetics." Interestingly, Parkman never spells out to the reader why he chooses Byron over Shakespeare and the Old Testament. This might be a matter of his own physical vulnerability, as greater writers might make correspondingly greater demands on his mind and body. Another possibility is that Parkman not only projects his infirmities onto Shaw, he also projects his own doubts about his fitness as a manly specimen onto Byron. By selecting Byron, Parkman sets forth his aspiration that his readers will come to view him the same way he views the romantic poet. His lack of manliness can be forgiven if his

writing is sufficiently beguiling. Here, he argues that facility with writing can compensate, at least temporarily, for other kinds of unmanliness.

In addition to examining how Parkman constructs his own manliness in the face of his infirmity, it is also instructive to examine the cast of characters that Parkman encounters in his journey for indications of how he constructs manliness. Perhaps the most obvious example of ideal frontier manliness is the trapper Henry Chatillon. But Chatillon, as perfect a manly example as he initially appears to be, might fail to embody Parkman's ideal owing to his irreconcilability with the nation's exceptional culture. One of the first things Parkman notices about Chatillon in his fashion sense; he is a "tall and exceedingly well-dressed man." That he is "exceedingly" well-dressed suggests both that the frontier is an unsuitable place for sophisticated apparel and that a paragon of manliness really shouldn't dress too well. Chatillon's body and face signal enormous physical capability: "…six feet high, and very powerfully and gracefully moulded…His manly face was a perfect mirror of uprightness, simplicity and kindness of heart…No better evidence of the intrepidity of his temper could be wished, than the common report that he had killed more than thirty grizzly bears." These virtues are sufficient to let Parkman conclude his description with the claim, "I have never, in the city or in the wilderness, met a better man than my noble and true-hearted friend, Henry Chatillon" (29:312). Yet Chatillon also offers surprising other virtues that might not be purely attributable to his exemplary manliness: "…he had a natural refinement and delicacy of mind, such as is very rarely found, even in women." In addition to not being quite purely manly enough, Chatillon shows signs of being not American enough. He "had not the restless energy of an Anglo-American. He was content to take things as he found them; and his chief fault arose from an excess of easy generosity, impelling him to give away too profusely ever to thrive in the world" (29:312).

Meola sees Parkman's Chatillon as a "a portrait of a mythic, higher-evolved being…combining…the best elements of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine'…[he] represents the type of man the American land might produce, but it is noteworthy that this paragon is illiterate and asocial—nothing in a surrounding culture can produce such a being" (22). In other words, Meola suggests, he appears to be the incarnation of incarnation: the manifestation of what Jehlen reads as the link between the American continent and its exceptional character. But Parkman ultimate finds Chatillon lacking for his inability to be sufficiently manly and American. Meola speculates that "Chatillon might be seen as the benign result of the horrific violence America would endure as it went through inevitable cultural transformations, including those involving the meaning of 'masculine and 'feminine' in relation to an emerging industrial order" (23). Chatillon, therefore, might not be so much a paragon of Western manliness so much as a cautionary tale about the dilution of manliness and Anglo-American racial virtue. This is Meola's reading, but what I would suggest is that Parkman's critique is less of Chatillon himself than of the dubious culture that is incapable of recognizing Chatillon's greatness.

Just as instructive as figures like Chatillon that at least initially appear to be paragons of manliness are Parkman's representations of obvious failures of manliness. Military figures are targets of particular ridicule: the man Parkman calls "Captain C., of the British army" and the deserter he names Tête Rouge (29:162).[26] One might expect the military to be a particularly revered institution in any assessment of frontier manliness, as at its best, it would seem to emblematize pragmatism, action, and orderly violence. As T. J. Jackson Lears argues, "…among

[26] The appellation "Tête Rouge" is Henri Chatillon's name for the feckless volunteer. It is also, presumably, a strategy for decorously concealing the identity of the unfortunate subject of this portrait. Feltskog identifies Captain C as Bill Chandler (434) and Tête Rouge as H. C. Hodgman (663).

the educated and affluent, militarism seemed more than a solvent for social unrest. War promised reestablished social dominance not just because it distracted populists and socialists from their grievances but also because it offered a stronger, purer sense of selfhood to a flaccid urban bourgeoisie…Imperialist adventures offered a chance for enervated young men to follow Francis Parkman's prescription: 'to realize a certain ideal of manhood—a little medieval'" (112).[27] Yet these military figures are buffoonish in comparison to Chatillon. The captain is preoccupied with elaborate but superficial performances of muscular manliness and military order. Like Parkman, Captain C. travels to the West not out of economic necessity but rather to give his manliness a venue to express itself: "The Captain's imagination was inflamed by the pictures of a hunter's paradise that his guest held forth; he conceived an ambition to add to his other trophies the horns of a buffalo and the claws of a grizzly bear…" (29:506). For all his supposedly relevant military experience and expertise, however, he proves a woeful frontiersman. At the root of his struggles is a reliance on ritual rather than common sense and pragmatism. He tries to develop ever more onerous and ineffectual schemes to perform his military competence—setting watches, posting scouts, and so on, but "The persecuted Captain seeming wholly at a loss as to the course of conduct that he should pursue, we recommended him to adopt prompt and energetic measures; but all his military experience had failed to teach him the indispensable lesson to be 'hard' when the emergency required it" (29:505). This question of hardness amounts to one of active manliness; it is a failure to act in the necessary manner. But Captain C. is also a failure in terms of visual manliness. One of his first embarrassing foibles is that despite sending scouts ahead to

[27] Lears quotes an autobiographical letter to Martin Brimmer in which he describes his dual ambitions as a historian of America: "One was to paint the forest and its tenants in true and vivid colors; the other was to realize a certain ideal of manhood, a little medieval, but nevertheless good." See Parkman to Brimmer 28 October 1886.

look for danger, he fails to notice that his brother Mr. R— has set them of the wrong path, causing an annoying delay in an early part of the journey (29:398). Not only does he fail to see in this pragmatic sense, his aesthetic choices fail to show the markers of elite class that constitute manliness for Parkman. Though wealthy, he has poor taste. In sketching the Captain's background, Parkman describes, with obvious disdain, how the captain's "paternal halls" are decorated with "trophies of his rod and gun; the walls were plentifully garnished, he told us, with moose- horns and deer-horns, bear-skins, and fox-tails" (29:506). For Captain C, the trip is a hunting expedition. By his own reckoning, Parkman is a gentleman scholar, while the Captain is both a bore and a boor.

As absurd a figure as Captain C. cuts in *The Oregon Trail*, the true model of exactly what frontier manliness *doesn't* look like is the incompetent volunteer that Chatillon names Tête Rouge. Meola's reading of the character is that he represents Parkman's worst nightmare of degeneration in the elite class: "Tête Rouge represents everything the narrator fears about himself: that he might become seriously ill again and therefore weak, that he might lose his gun and his horse, and that in general he is really an East Coast sissy playing at being a frontiersman" (18). Tête Rouge proved to be an enormous hit with readers. An 1877 *Literary News* review notes the reprinting of *The Oregon Trail* by Little, Brown, and Co., and when choosing a passage to represent and promote the title, the editors make a beeline for Tête Rouge. They set up this object of derision as a crucial part of the text's enduring value: "Here is a portrait of one of the author's travelling companions, who is responsible for much of the fun of the book" (189). The

secret of his popularity with readers, perhaps, is the way that he manifests their deepest anxieties.[28] Naturally, Tête Rouge suffers in direct comparison with Chatillon:

> Henry Chatillon and Tête Rouge were of the same age; that is, about thirty. Henry was twice as large and fully six times as strong as Tête Rouge. Henry's face was roughened by winds and storms; Tête Rouge's was bloated by sherry-cobblers and brandy-toddy. Henry talked of Indians and buffalo; Tête Rouge of theatres and oyster-cellars. Henry had led a life of hardship and privation; Tête Rouge never had a whim which he would not gratify at the first moment he was able. Henry moreover was the most disinterested man I ever saw; while Tête Rouge, though equally good-natured in his way, cared for nobody but himself. Yet we would not have lost him on any account; he admirably served the purpose of a jester in a feudal castle; our camp would have been lifeless without him. (32:511-512).

Is this contrast between Chatillon and Tête Rouge simply a pedagogical moment in which Parkman instructs the reader on what frontier manliness ought to look like? Perhaps, but its' remarkable that the very defect that prevents Chatillon from being a truly ideal figure of Anglo-Saxon manliness—his inability to "thrive in the world" due to his excessive easygoingness and generosity—is precisely the one virtue that Tête Rogue actually happens to possess. Though Parkman presents it in gustatory rather than visual terms, one cannot deny that Tête Rouge has taste. What's more, he has a strong drive to acquire and enjoy the finer things in life, even resorting to stealing food. While he is a "jester," a piece of diction that highlights Tête Rouge's

[28] For an account of how popular circulating texts address and manage a society's anxieties, see Frederic Jameson's "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture."

capacity to recall a bygone social order, Tête Rogue also helps Parkman illustrate important aspects of frontier manliness that even Chatillon cannot embody: an insatiable drive to acquire and consume and sophisticated taste. This is not to say, of course, that Parkman thinks that Tête Rouge is a worthy exemplar of Anglo-American manliness. To remove any doubt of Tête Rouge's unsuitability in this regard, he describes a scene in which the volunteer attempts to shoot down an eagle. Parkman deems this an "unpatriotic mission" (32:514). Yet Tête Rogue actually presents manly qualities that even the redoubtable Chatillon cannot.

As Henry Chatillon, Captain C., and Tête Rouge all come up short in various ways, the exemplar of Anglo-Saxon manliness on this journey is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Parkman himself. The key to his excellence is his vision and his capabilities much more representative of his elite Boston upbringing than his attempts at playing frontiersman. In contrast to the stunted visual capacities of the Captain, who can't figure out what trail to take and Tête Rouge, who can't be trusted to determine when the camp is under Indian attack, Parkman displays a virtuosic eye, especially when it comes to aesthetics. Parkman's description of Tête Rouge is particularly memorable: "In a few minutes we saw an extraordinary little figure approach us in a military dress. He had a small, round countenance, garnished about the eyes with the kind of wrinkles commonly known as crow's feet, and surmounted by an abundant crop of red curls, with a little cap resting on the top of them. Altogether, he had the look of a man more conversant with mint-juleps and oyster suppers than with the hardship of prairie-service" (32:100). Tête Rouge goes on to quite literarily makes a spectacle of himself, as his ridiculous appearance prompts Parkman to describe him in explicitly picturesque terms: "He made a figure worthy of a painter as he paced along before us, perched on the back of his mule, and enveloped in a huge buffalo-robe coat" (32:310-311). Though they might be paragons of various aspects of frontier manliness, Captain

C., Tête Rogue, and even Chatillon would be totally unsuited to rescuing American manliness from its crisis.

One might imagine other others of Anglo-American manliness in *The Oregon Trail* in addition to such failures, such as white womanliness or Indian manliness. There is a notable absence of white women in *The Oregon Trail*. The unsuitability of the frontier for white womanliness stems from its danger and wildness, the very qualities that make it an idea setting for proving white manliness. While Parkman has relatively little to say about white womanliness, he has much to say of the gender performance and character of Indians. Of the Arapahoes, he writes, "I looked in vain among this multitude of faces to discover one manly or generous expression; all were wolfish, sinister and malignant…" (32:314). Though in general, Indians are too poor and savage to be examples of true manliness, there are a few individual Indians that Parkman mentions by name. Their manly virtues merit some consideration. The Indian called Mahto-Tatonka is one of the most memorable nonwhite characters in the text, and Parkman at times appears to suggest that he possesses significant manly virtues: "Mahto-Tatonka, in his rude way, was a hero. No chief could vie with him in warlike renown, or in power over his people. He had a fearless spirit, and a most impetuous and inflexible resolution. His will was law. He was politic and sagacious, and with true Indian craft he always befriended the whites, well knowing that he might thus reap great advantages for himself and his adherents." (30:481). Parkman's obvious subject appears to be Mahto-Tatonka, who he faintly praises with a description that conforms well to new models of manliness: inflexible resolution and economic calculation. I would suggest, though, that rather than reading this passage as praise of Mahto-Tatonka, Parkman uses the Indian to attack his real object, which is the new, active masculinity. Rather

predictably, Mahto-Tatonka comes to an early death, as his obnoxiousness earns him many enemies (30:482).

The Indian man that Parkman most respects is actually Mahto-Tatonka's son also named Mahto-Tatonka, who Parkman praises for his aesthetic taste in a passage rich in which Parkman demonstrates for the reader his own aesthetic eye:

> Though he found such favor in the eyes of the fair, he was no dandy. As among us, those of highest worth and breeding are most simple in manner and attire, so our aspiring young friend was indifferent to the gaudy trappings and ornaments of his companions. He was content to rest his chances of success upon his own warlike merits. He never arrayed himself in gaudy blanket and glittering necklaces, but left his statue-like form, limbed like an Apollo of bronze, to win its way to favor. His voice was singularly deep and strong. It sounded from his chest like the deep notes of an organ. Yet after all, he was but an Indian. (30:483)[29]

Unlike the Captain and Tête Rouge, who are vulgar in taste and appearance and the elder Mahto-Tatonka, who is willful, crafty, and pragmatic rather than tasteful, the younger Mahto-Tatonka

[29] The passage, full of lyrical visual images, continues: "See him as he lies there in the sun before our tent, kicking his heels in the air and cracking jokes with his brother. Does he look like a hero? See him now in the hour of his glory, when at sunset the whole village empties itself to behold him, for to- morrow their favorite young partisan goes out against the enemy. His superb headdress is adorned with a crest of the war eagle's feathers, rising in a waving ridge above his brow, and sweeping far behind him. His round white shield hangs at his breast, with feathers radiating from the center like a star. His quiver is at his back; his tall lance in his hand, the iron point flashing against the declining sun, while the long scalp-locks of his enemies flutter from the shaft. Thus, gorgeous as a champion in his panoply, he rides round and round within the great circle of lodges, balancing with a graceful buoyancy to the free movements of his war horse, while with a sedate brow he sings his song to the Great Spirit. Young rival warriors look askance at him; vermilion-cheeked girls gaze in admiration, boys whoop and scream in a thrill of delight, and old women yell forth his name and proclaim his praises from lodge to lodge" (30:483-484). It seems likely that this description of the young Mahto-Tatonka inspires Darley's image for the 1849 Putnam edition's title page (see Fig. 2.1).

exhibits a keen sense of visual aesthetics. Parkman's allusion to his resemblance to Apollo suggests a connection with classical beauty and aesthetic ideals unencumbered by excessive refinement. However, Parkman undercuts all this praise as he concludes the description, "Yet after all, he was but an Indian." This sentence discloses the conflicting impulses within Parkman, who both desires to extol the younger Mahto-Tatonka as a fine example of the version of manliness that Parkman supports and at the same time desires to police the line of racial and social class eligibility for this version of manliness. Indians are ineligible, even when their virtues and behavior offer perhaps the best chance at describing the gender performance that Parkman longs to promote.

Though the text is preoccupied with the question of what a new better of American manliness ought to look like, there are more examples of failed than of successful manliness in *The Oregon Trail*. If these are failures of manliness, the question arises of what a good version would look like, and for that, readers must look beyond the text itself. Parkman's development of a distinctively western manliness that is characterized by capacity for vision rather than action is hard to discern in the text of *The Oregon Trail*. The next sections show how *The Oregon Trail*'s relationship to nationalist discourses can be complicated even further by looking beyond the text itself and engaging with two kinds of periodical context. First, I examine Parkman's earlier *Knickerbocker* writings to argue that long before writing *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman had been making claims about the significance of vision in manliness that subvert the critical consensus about the impact of the West on the national character. Then, I examine other items published alongside installments of *The Oregon Trail* in the same issues of *The Knickerbocker* might have shaped how Parkman's readership initially read the narrative.

2.3 Frontier Manliness in Parkman's Early Ranger Sketches

In this section, I show how Parkman's earliest writing, a series of sketches of frontier adventure that appear in *The Knickerbocker* several years before *The Oregon Trail*, establish a consistent definition of ideal manliness.[30] These early works show how even at the beginning of his career, Parkman understands manliness to be a matter of keen vision rather than bold action. It would be enough to establish a pattern of work concerned with the performance of manliness through vision for Parkman to have published these texts in any medium or in any publication, but I argue that by choosing to publish these texts within the same periodical, Parkman builds a reading public benefiting from an accumulation of examples of manliness. Rather than reading stories atomized in a crowded literary marketplace, subscribers read many stories by the same authors under the same editorial guidance and are therefore subject to more ideologically consistent pressures and influences. This section explores Parkman's little-studied early work to argue that they promulgate a common manly ideal that forms the basis of Parkman's construction of manliness in *The Oregon Trail*. These stories being in the same periodical both enhances their influence on a common readership and it also, in turn, suggests some of that readership's features. Just as Parkman describes a version of manliness defined by vision in these stories, these stories hail an elite social class of readers inclined to favor this kind of manly performance.

[30] It might not be obvious to casual readers that all these pieces share a common author. However, "The Ranger's Adventure" is attributed to "A New Contributor," and "The Scalp-Hunter" has no byline. The third of these pieces, "A Fragment of Family History," which explicitly deploys the name "Carver" is attributed to "the author of "The Scalp-Hunter," which links the second and third texts. The poem "The New Hampshire Ranger" and the last of the pre-*Oregon Trail* texts "Satan and Dr. carver" are published in *The Knickerbocker* are attributed to "Capt. Jonathan Carver, Jr." Thus, all except the first text can be linked together through these bylines, and a clear overarching theme of frontier adventure and common stock characters link all the pieces.

Captain Jonathan Carver is an alter ego that embodies Parkman's manly fantasy of himself.[31] Parkman borrows the pseudonym from the ranger and explorer Jonathan Carver (1710-1780). This historical Carver lived a life that Parkman would have admired: he is born in colonial Massachusetts and serves a militiaman during the French and Indian War. His journey to the West (1766-1768) bears many similarities to the journey Parkman would undertake nearly a century later. Carver travelled with a military party to the upper Mississippi River valley as a draftsman and recorded his observations of both the land and of Indians, which he published in 1778 in London as the bestselling *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, 1768*.[32] The choice of Carver as a draftsman and as an observer of Indians suggests that Parkman might have been interested in emphasizing vision and description in his manly idea a decade before *The Oregon Trail*.

The first item that Parkman publishes is a short sketch "The Ranger's Adventure" that appears in the March 1845 issue of *The Knickerbocker*. This piece shares *The Oregon Trail*'s interest in coming of age and the development of manliness. The narrator visits with "Dr. Blank" while on a summer vacation from college when he accepts an invitation from a classmate to take a summer in "the west of Massachusetts, to help him catch trout and get up pic-nics; both amusements equally novel and agreeable to a raw Boston boy" (25:198). The young men

[31] "Jonathan Carver" is an obvious pseudonym, however, as Parkman literally can't even spell "Captain Jonathan Carver." In an early piece of correspondence between Lewis Gaylord Clark and his newest author, the editor of *The Knickerbocker* teases him: "Is 'Capt. Jonathan Carver' a *nom de plume*? I partly suspect so, since probability seems rather to favor the conclusion that a gentleman tolerably familiar with his own name wouldn't be very apt to make a mistake in spelling it. I observe you subscribe yourself Captain 'Jo~~h~~nathan' Carver!" Clark also suggests that Parkman can pick up Carver's mail (Clark to Parkman 18 February 1845 and Clark to Parkman 10 March 1845).

[32] For more details about Carver's biography, see the introductory essay in *Jonathan Carver's Travels Through America, 1766-1768: An Eighteenth-Century Explorer's Account of Uncharted America* edited by Norman Gelb for Wiley.

carelessly read fashionable novels and agree to visit the doctor the "oldest man in town" only as a means of "killing time" (25:199). But upon speaking with the old man, the contrast between his military toughness and the waywardness of the narrator and his friend make visible what Parkman sees as the rapid degeneration of elite manliness. This doctor was once a soldier in the French and Indian War, and he relates a vivid and gory tale of an Indian ambush. He defends himself with "admirable coolness" and raises his gun "with a steady hand" (25:201). He escapes death only by athletically vaulting a tree that impales a pursuing Indian through the chest. Rather than reveling in the action and violence of the episode, the doctor turns away from soldiering begins a career in medicine instead: "This taste of war was enough for the doctor's martial zeal. He did not take the field again till twenty years afterward, when he came to Washington's camp at Cambridge, armed with probe and balsam, instead of musket and powder" (25:202). There is no sense in which Parkman suggests the transition from ranger to doctor is dishonorable or unmanly. On the contrary, linking it to the Revolutionary War lends this career change an aura of nationalist heroism.

The old doctor demonstrates his manliness not only by strength and fearlessness, but by his senses. He is offended when his visitors assume him to be hard of hearing (25:199) and his survival is less a matter of courage than of his quickness in discerning danger and ability to avoid the tree that penetrates the body of the Indian. This phallic penetration suggests the failure of the Indian's manliness, which is based on action rather than observation. It's not that the Indian lacks the strength, cunning, or will to kill the doctor, but he falls short in his vision. Parkman emphasizes the significance of the vision in his description of the scene and he takes special care to describe the Indian's eyes: "The daring savage had leaped like him, but had not succeeded so well; he had tripped, and one of the broken branches had caught and impaled him on its upright

point passing upward into the cavity of his chest! He saw the starting eye-balls, and the painted features hideously distorted, and paused to see no more" (25:201). The impaled Indian inspires a striking illustration by William Croome when the sketch is collected in John Frost's *Thrilling Adventures Among the Indians* (1850).

Fig. 2.2 "The Ranger's Pursuer Impaled," William Croome's illustration of "The Ranger's Adventure" from John Frost, *Thrilling Adventures Among the Indians*, J. W. Bradley, 1850, p. 39.

This story provides an early indication of Parkman's virtuosity as the creator of striking images through vivid textual description, which reinforces the reader's sense that Parkman places a high priority on vision. This story also demonstrates a keen sense of generational difference and anxieties related to degeneration, as well as a degree of self-awareness and self-deprecation that is surprising in an author who had only recently graduated from college. The events described in the "Ranger's Adventure" are represented to take place when "Dr. Blank" is 19 years old, about

the same age as the narrator and his friends, but while historical and political circumstances dictate that "Dr. Blank" prove his mettle in frontier confrontations with Indians, Parkman and his friend are free to go fishing and picnicking.

Parkman's next piece for *The Knickerbocker* appears in following number under the title "The Scalp-Hunter: A Semi-Historical Sketch." Both thematically and formally, this "sketch" has much in common with "The Ranger's Adventure," but "The Scalp-Hunter" more effectively attacks the reader's sympathetic nervous system. Lewis Gaylord Clark, the publisher of the *Knickerbocker,* immediately recognizes the talent on display in the piece. He praises the sketch because it excites not only his mind but also his body. In a letter to the young writer, Clark approvingly notes, "I am an 'old stager' in matters of the sort; and it must be something *really* 'thrilling' to keep me awake at night, after reading a proof sheet" (Clark to Parkman 10 March 1845). This description of writing's capacity to invoke the sympathetic nervous system is typical of the sensation novels that explode in popularity in England starting in the 1830s. In producing this thrilling story, Parkman offers his readers a chance to test their manly self-restraint.[33] A bestselling sensation novel of this period, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, for example, produces a manly typology contrasting the delicate aesthete Frederick Fairlie with the villainous Count Fosco, who threatens a woman in writing, "Do not, I implore you, force me into action—

[33] Parkman's interest in producing suspense in the reader is also evident in the composition and serialization of *The Oregon Trail*. As Feltskog observes, even while noting that *The Oregon Trail* "does not greatly differ in content and emphasis from the notebooks, the author nonetheless "took considerable liberties with the day-to-day chronology of his Oregon Trail trip in order to heighten suspense and to exaggerate the dangers he had faced in the Oglala village" (39a). Unlike "The Scalp-Hunter" which appears only in a single installment, serial publication help produce a sense of anticipation in the reader, as suspense is produced not only during the reading session, but in the month (or more) between published installments. See a contemporary reviewer's reference to the "violent stimulant of serial publication" in *Blackwood's* 90 (May 1862): 565-74.

ME, the Man of Action—when it is the cherished object of my ambition to be passive, to restrict the vast reach of my energies and my combinations" (457-458). For readers of Collins's sensation fiction, action is a mark of manliness, but one that brings with it moral dangers. *The Knickerbocker* in this period is also full of sensation fiction. One notable example that shares the frontier theme with the "Carver" sketches and *The Oregon Trail* is "Mr. Manning's Ramble: An Authentic Narrative" (29:60-67). In this short story, a surveyor looking for a place to spend the night in the wilderness stumbles upon a violent crime and he must avoid meeting the same fate as the victims he discovers. It features horrific revelations and hairsbreadths escapes in a story that directly addresses the theme of the encroachment of civilization into the wilderness. Like Collins's novel, this sensational story calls upon readers to control their emotions and thus exercise their own manly self-control.[34]

"The Scalp-Hunter" provides its thrills predominantly through its deployment of gendered forms of violence. Though concerned that his "semi-historical sketch" will erode the nation's pride in the behavior of its colonial ancestors, Parkman proceeds to describe a story full of suspense and ultimately surprise. Neatly inverting the premise of "The Ranger's Adventure," which depicts the sole white survivor of an Indian attack, "The Scalp-Hunter" describes an American frontiersman who becomes murderously obsessed with killing the sole Indian to escape a group of rangers. This is not a story in which the colonial frontiersman enjoys unquestionable moral authority, nor does he ultimately triumph over his Indian enemy. The white protagonist is no dashing hero: "The most prominent figure in the group was an old man, who sat on a log, leaning lazily forward, with his elbows on his knees, while he extracted the rich

[34] For an account of the importance of self-control and emotional self-regulation in English manliness, see Joseph Valente's *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922*.

marrow from a thigh-bone of moose with his jack-knife." His lack of self-control manifests itself in his body: he hunches "lazily," more predatory animal than man. He evokes the entrepreneurial middle class that Parkman finds so threatening. Guided by bestial desires, "This old reprobate was eager for gain; he had a keen relish for the chase; and was desirous, moreover, to exhibit his superiority to his fellow sportsmen" (25:299). Here, Parkman subtly adds another layer to his linkage of seeing and manliness. The man is in many ways an ideal frontiersman: "His hardened muscles were never fatigued, though he struggled from sunrise to sunset through tangled brushwood and obscure ravines…" However, he fails to appreciate the intense beauty of his environment. Parkman takes great pains to describe the sublime beauty of the place, "the broad stony bed of the Saco, just where it emerges from the North of the White Mountains." Here, "It was a wild and beautiful scene…the great pile of granite crags that rose from the woods, bristling with firs, three thousand feet sheer upward; all were tinged with the crimson of approaching evening; all lay in the quiet of the wilderness, which the ripple and murmur of the stream only made more impressive." However, "The old man did not trouble himself with the scenery." Blinded be a desire to find and kill the Indian, the "human bloodhound" ignores his surroundings (25:300). This is not merely an aesthetic failure to note the beauty around him, but a practical one as well. Had he paid closer attention to "the scenery," he might have noticed the trap he enters before it is too late. It is ultimately his inability to see and his eagerness to use his physicality to prove his worth to other men that proves his undoing. He is finds himself stuck in a ravine with impassable stone walls before and behind him as the Indian he pursued peers at him over the ravine's edge like visitor to a zoo. The balance of power so central to this text shifts at the precise moment that the scalp-hunter becomes the observed rather than the observer. Parkman claims to base this work on "an ancient manuscript diary, kept by the Rev. Phineas W.

Stone, of Portsmouth," who speaks of the ranger's actions "with high praise, as an act of eminent service to God and man," but Parkman's own description lards Stone's assessment with irony (25:297, 299). In this story, there are no actions worthy of "high praise." Though the band of frontiersmen is justified in its pursuit of dangerous Indians, the ranger who exhibits an individualistic and entrepreneurial spirit that Parkman links to the undesirable classes is punished for his failures of vision and judgment. He fails to see the danger he gets himself in until it is too late, and Parkman deploys the Indian's gaze to emblematize his triumph.

Parkman is keenly aware that his story deviates from his reader's expectations about how he will represent the American frontiersman. He is acutely familiar with the version of American patriotism that relies on a stock figure of action-oriented manly virtue, and he at least initially shies away from challenging it directly: "Far be it from me to detract from the fair fame of our ancestors. Least of all, would I cast any reflection on those frontier heroes…Yet…The backwoodsmen of a century since sometimes hunted Indians from the same motive that urges those of our time to hunt wolves; viz., the bounty on scalps" (25:297). This criticism is double-edged. On the one hand, he acknowledges that to treat America's founding frontiersmen as little more than sportsmen borders on sacrilege. But this metaphor correspondingly reduces to the Indians to mere wolves. Parkman likens the men to wolf hunters, making the Indians wolves, the "destined prey" of the superior species. At times, however, Parkman uses the word "victim" rather than "prey" (25:298), which makes the bloody work of men like the scalp-hunter more morally problematic.

These stories, Parkman biographer Howard Doughty argues, share an interest in what he calls "passion and engagement" and argues that they foreshadow Parkman's interest in the figure of the "Western man in the splendor and the tragedy of his unresting activism," which is most

fully expressed in the histories he would publish much later in his career (101). But what I want to emphasize here is how in addition to the splendid and tragic "activism" of the "Western man" in these stories, Parkman shows the pivotal importance of vision. These episodes are not tests of manliness if manliness is defined by "activism" as manifestations of courage, strength, or passion.[35] Rather, for Parkman, the visual faculty is the ultimate measure of manly excellence. He represents this both through the successes and failures of his characters to exhibit their visual

[35] The *Knickerbocker* sketch "A Fragment of Family History," recapitulates the theme of the significance of observation as described in "The Ranger's Adventure" and "The Scalp-Hunter." The byline cites "the Author of 'The Scalp-Hunter," and readers of that piece eager for more frontier Indian violence would surely not be disappointed. This is the first of Parkman's works to allude to his pseudonym Jonathan Carver. The somewhat predictable plot describes his ancestor Endicott Carver who rescues a beautiful woman from a band of Indians, again against the backdrop of the French and Indian War. Endicott is a hero with much of the same problematic excess of action-orientation as the protagonist of "The Scalp-Hunter": "My ancestor had at the bottom of his character, a spirit of adventure which would sometimes be exalted to a height that made him perfectly reckless of dangers and obstacles" (25:511). What saves him, though, is his ability to see clearly. This adventure begins when the men of a frontier village fail their women and children not through want of bravery but through want of vigilance; the men had gone into the forest to build a house for a newlywed couple and, having finished their work, stayed to celebrate, leaving only a few back to keep watch on the village (25:510). Carver's relative, in contrast, shows the merit of his visual "faculties" by carefully observing the grisly, charred aftermath of the Indian attack to see that his beloved's parents, but not his beloved Sarah are among the dead: "His quick eye discerned among the charred timbers, the relics of the old man and his wife—a sight I will not dwell upon…it was long before he could collect his faculties so far as to satisfy himself that only two of the inmates of the house lay among its ruins" (25:509). When the band of vengeful settlers finally confronts the Indians, they prevail even though they are outnumbered through the use of their self-restraint and careful observation: "the deep Anglo-Saxon passion mounted higher in the breasts of the whites. Not that they gave vent to it, but it burned intensely within, rousing and concentrating all the faculties, and giving double strength and alertness to mind and sense. With foreheads knit and lips pressed close together, they calculated the effect of every shot, and seized every advantage that offered." The Indians strive to goad them into imprudent action through taunts and one attempts to bate his enemy by "displaying the scalp of a woman on his ramrod," but the frontiersman does not rise to this sexually charged bait, which alludes to the inability of the men to protect their women from bodily violation, but rather focuses on using his capacity for vision: "he noticed a spot in the pile of logs behind which he knew the savage lay, where the wood seemed to his eye sufficiently decayed to allow the passage of the bullet; at this place he fired his rifle" (25:515).

prowess and thereby their manliness, but also through his own virtuosic use of observation and description.

The last of Parkman's early sketches in issues of *The Knickerbocker* from 1845 and the general and tonal exceptional case is the comedic "Satan and Dr. Carver," which not only points out the deficiencies of the version of western manliness that prizes action over observation but singles it out for ridicule. The protagonist of this story, again a relation of "Jonathan Carver," is a doctor who longs for military action. He tricks the village idiot Eben Chipmunk into thinking that there is an imminent Indian attack, which sets in motion a panic throughout the settlement. Dr. Carver falls victim to his own prank when villagers alarmed by Chipmunk subsequently alarm Dr. Carver in turn. Spoiling for action, Jonathan Carver's ancestor grabs his gun and races to the village patriarch's house to secure the safety of his beautiful daughter. This sets into motion a comedy of errors in which the villagers mistake Dr. Carver's violent and enthusiastic response to the imagined Indian attack for the attack itself. All ends well when after a series of mishaps and misunderstandings the villages capture their "Indian"—Dr. Carver himself astride a notoriously wild horse named Satan— and the squire's daughter appreciates the doctor's courage and gallantry enough to forgive his hastiness and poor judgment. This story evokes Parkman's nostalgia for a relatively isolated social world in which accidents like these can happen and cause amusement but no serious damage. The warm and intimate interpersonal relations in this story would be impossible in the anonymity of the metropolis.

Doughty argues that "Satan and Dr. Carver" is an important text in for demonstrating Parkman's intense focus on action: "there is a particular kind of sensory effect we notice in [Parkman's sketches] that is not common in literature and is perhaps Parkman's most characteristic trait. This is the extraordinary degree of motor-mindedness his writing reveals, its

uncanny sympathy with all forms of physical movement" (97). He cites the galloping of the horse Satan as a particularly excellent example of what he sees as an exceptional interest in physical action: "…the writing constantly suggests this quality of seeming itself to *be* the action it describes, from the full-arm downsweep of the Doctor's gun on Satan's flank at the start to the climax of runaway speed in the descent of the gulley, with its take-off in a whirl of unaccented syllables, its moment of galloping anapests, and its whirl of unaccented syllables again at the close" (97). Embedded the very meter of Parkman's writing, Doughty suggests, is a preoccupation with physical action. However, the plot is a warning against excessive paranoia about Indian attacks and an admonition that action should be prudent and should only come after close observation. Dr. Carver's desire for action before observation causes him to make the same sort of error that Tête Rouge would later make in *The Oregon Trail*: seeing an Indian attack where one does not exist (32:317). In this section, I argue that *The Oregon Trail* and its representation of frontier manliness appear different in light of Parkman's earlier work in *The Knickerbocker*. "The Ranger's Adventure" reveals Parkman's anxiety about degeneration over time in the elite classes and the importance of vision. "The Scalp-Hunter" attacks the individualistic and aesthetically indifferent values of the rising entrepreneurial class. Finally, "Satan and Doctor Carver" lampoons excessive activity in the performance of manliness and argues for the importance of careful observation.

These stories make visual manliness more legible in *The Oregon Trail.* But representations of manliness also appear different in light of the institutional history and biases of the magazine itself. Critics have long been interested in the political stances of *The Oregon*

Trail, especially in relation to westward expansion.[36] Questions of manliness are crucial to the expansion of American imperialism and the Mexican-American War and considering the role of *The Knickerbocker* in the initial publication of *The Oregon Trail* offers a fresh way of thinking through the text's politics.

2.4 *The Knickerbocker* and the Politics of the Mexican-American War

Critics have long been interested in the potential for *The Oregon Trail* to illuminate Parkman's politics with regard to American imperial expansion, especially in its frequent but oblique references to the Mexican-American War. As patrician political elites consider the merits of an expansionist war with a newly independent Mexico and Parkman begins to publish his work in *The Knickerbocker*, westward expansion plays a significant role in the national identity crisis plaguing the nation's political elites. According to historian David Wrobel, this moment is best understood in terms of "tension between exceptionalism and empire" (*Global West, American Frontier* 22). As is often the case, disagreements about policy and disagreements about identity become hard to distinguish. Since principled action can only stem from the American national character, answering the question of whether or not the United States should invade Mexico requires asking whether or not the United States is the kind of nation that would invade Mexico: Would the nation's avowedly republican political ideals restrain the United States from committing the same violence and exploitation that characterizes European imperialism? Or would it project power beyond its current borders with a rapacious acquisitiveness to match France and Spain? Would the nation's destiny be determined by its exceptional political ideologies or its imperial hunger for land? As the United States grows in its capacity to enforce

[36] For a recapitulation of part of this dispute, see Harold Beaver's "Parkman's Crack-Up: A Bostonian on the Oregon Trail."

its political will on the continent—and, ultimately, the planet—these political questions become increasingly pressing.[37] Since imperial war in this period is most directly conducted by soldiers who are men, it might be intuitive to read expansionism as the expression of a manly identity and exception as an expression of a womanly one. However, exception is frequently articulated in terms of manliness: a commitment to republican idealism defined, as I have shown earlier, by manly work and manly virtue. And, conversely, Amy Kaplan has shown how women and the domestic sphere play crucial roles in articulations of American expansionism.[38] Regardless of how gender is mapped onto exceptionalism and empire, however, the West is central to the nation's attempts to define itself and to find the appropriate course of action. For this reason, a major part of this text's critical significance lies in how it articulates the relationship between Western manliness and national character, and its engagement with the politics of the Mexican-American War is the most salient expression of this articulation. In this chapter section, I argue that reading the material appearing alongside *The Oregon Trail* in addition to the text itself, as its first readers might have done, likely soften those aspects of Parkman's political rhetoric that now appear most imperialist.

Historian Nicholas Lawrence argues that *The Oregon Trail* exemplifies what he calls "rhetorical double-dealing" through which Americans could support imperial expansion while at the same time register moral concerns about it. This phenomenon, he argues, is visible in popular

[37] The most trenchant version of this "tension" revolves around the spread of slavery to new parts of the union. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 prohibits slavery north of 36˚30' (the compromise being that Missouri enters the union as a slave state in 1821despite being north of 36˚30' at the same time as Maine enters the union as a free state, keeping the number of slave and free states equal). The question of the extent of slavery's spread in the West in the 1840s and 1850s, especially whether it would be permitted in violation of the Missouri Compromise, is ultimately a major cause of the Civil War.

[38] See Amy Kaplan's "Manifest Domesticity."

writing: “If the war climactically emblemized the antebellum United States’ expansionist zeal, citizens’ concurrent taste in books suggested the presence of a pervasive desire to rationalize that zeal in the most benign terms” (373). What Lawrence describes here resembles what Pratt calls “anti-conquest.” As Lawrence points out, Parkman boosts American national expansionism while at the same time undermining it with anti-imperial ideas. The text’s ambivalent stance towards the Mexican-American War, for Lawrence, is a manifestation of a broader ambivalence that plays out in the American political elite. Parkman, scion of a Boston Brahmin family, for example, is a Whig and *Knickerbocker* is a Whig publication. Accordingly, Parkman voted against Polk in the 1844 presidential election, in which Polk ran on a platform that included annexing Texas, an act that would foreseeably lead to war with Mexico. Yet at the same time, Lawrence points out that Parkman “staunchly supported the war from its outset.” He is “a unionist first” and sees opposition to the war on abolitionist grounds as a threat to the nation’s political integrity (375). This political position embodies many competing and at times contradictory political impulses: Whig northeastern elitism that shares with Hamilton’s Federalists a vision of a national economy supported by an active federal government and a federal bank, desire to see the nation fulfill its “manifest destiny” through a policy of westward expansion, faith in a racial hierarchy placing white Americans over blacks and Mexicans, and desire for the preservation of union between the states. This mélange of political opinions, as Lawrence points out, places Parkman’s *Oregon Trail* in a position of “double-dealing”: on the one hand boosting expansionism, while at the same time, in Lawrence’s words, employing “appropriations of counter-imperial dissent.” For Lawrence, the significance of the periodical publication lies in its status as a “major Whig publication.” Though Lawrence doesn’t expand on this claim, it would be unsurprising that a periodical published in New York and catering to a

class of people at leisure to consume it would lean Whig. As Parkman himself proves, though, Whig political affiliation does not guarantee opposition to the Mexican-American War. It would bolster and complicate Lawrence's claim to note that the *Knickerbocker* published several pieces critical of the Mexican-American War and the racial assumptions that various elites employ to justify it.

As I have argued earlier in this chapter, the institutional history of *The Knickerbocker* suggests that the magazine is invested in republican politics and restraint in dealing with regional difference, a particularly difficult task in a period in which tension between slave and free states is intense and sectarian feeling seriously undermines the political integrity of the nation. It is therefore surprising that Parkman appears so openly supportive of American troops fighting an imperial war and also so derogatory of the Mexicans themselves on racial grounds. These are not the unanimous position of pieces in the magazine. For example, Parkman is generally complimentary of the American fighters, especially in terms of their performance of manliness:

> No men ever embarked upon a military expedition with a greater love for the work before them than the Missourians; but if discipline and subordination be the criterion of merit, these soldiers were worthless indeed. Yet when their exploits have rung through all America it would be absurd to deny that they were excellent troops. Their victories were gained in the teeth of every established precedent of warfare; they were owing to a singular combination of military qualities in the men themselves. Without discipline or a spirit of subordination, they knew how to keep their ranks and act as one man. (33:1)

As complimentary as Parkman is here, however, he continues to police the line between the aristocrat with good taste and genteel manners and the common man who lacks "discipline and

subordination" and who runs against the conventions of military comportment. Parkman describes how "There were some ruffian faces among them, and some haggard with debauchery; but on the whole they were extremely good looking men, superior beyond measure to the ordinary rank and file of an army" (33:2) Superior as some of these men might be, though, Parkman struggles to set aside questions of class as visually articulated through style. He describes one soldier largely in terms of his failure to meet the aesthetic standards of Parkman's elite class: "He was dressed in the coarsest brown homespun cloth. His face was rather sallow from fever-and-ague, and his tall figure, though strong and sinewy, was quite thin, and had besides an angular look, which together with his boorish seat on horseback, gave him an appearance anything but graceful" (33:3) Parkman's ambivalence about these troops only becomes amplified by reading across pieces in *The Knickerbocker*. For example, the report "The Capture of Vera Cruz," submitted "By An Eye-Witness," which appears in the July 1847 issue, begins, "Mexico, poor unhappy Mexico! The iron hand of the conqueror is upon thee, and the ruthless car of war is madly driven over thy prostrate children, and crushes them to earth!" (30:1). The "eye-witness" author explicitly argues for sympathy for the Mexicans: "On they came, the poor, crest-fallen, half-starved, emaciated creatures, to the most mournful strains ear ever heard…I need not say that I sincerely sympathized with them in their deep distress; and as I looked around upon the many poor pale sorrowing faces of the females, my heart ached for them, and I involuntarily breathed forth a curse upon the inventor of war!" (30:6). Rather than focusing upon the manly qualities of the troops, the author of "The Capture of Vera Cruz" suggests that the invaders are crushers of "prostrate children."

Some pieces that do not appear to be overtly related to the Mexican-American War, such as "The Dying Soldier to His Mother," a poem by D. W. Belisle that appears immediately after

"The Capture of Veracruz" at the beginning of the July 1847 issue imply an antiwar stance. Rather than focusing on the glamorous or romantic aspects of the military or the benefits that the United States might derive from it, the poem focuses on the intimate tragedy of a soldier whose dying thoughts are of his mother and of his distant home. In lines of rhyming iambic tetrameter, it swells upon war's intimate tragedies: "The sabre-gash and bullet-wound / Are ulcerous and sore; / Their pain destroys the sweetness / Of the voice I loved of yore" (30:9). *The Oregon Trail* may portray the war and irregular troops in a more or less favorable light, but readers of *The Knickerbocker* who encountered Parkman's work as part of a periodical that loudly decries the war's cruelty might sense a greater sense of ambivalence about the Mexican-American War than readers of the book edition alone.

If readers of the periodical text might be more circumspect about the war than readers of the book edition, they might also be more skeptical of Parkman's racial views. Parkman is an unapologetic believer in racial hierarchy. He describes Indians as little better than animals: "For the most part, a civilized white man can discover but very few points of sympathy between his own nature and that of an Indian. With every disposition to do justice to their good qualities, he must still be conscious that an impassable gulf lies between him and his red brethren of the prairie. Nay, so alien to himself do they appear, that having breathed for a few months or a few weeks the magic air of this region, he begins to look upon them as a troublesome and dangerous species of wild beast, and if expedient, he could shoot them with as little compunction as they themselves would experience after performing the same office upon him" (31:484). He is similarly dismissive of Mexicans, observing on the frontier "some thirty or forty dark slavish-looking Spaniards, gazing stupidly out from beneath their broad hats" (29:161).[39] Whereas some

[39] By "Spaniards," Feltskog explains, Parkman means Mexicans (426).

individual Indians escape Parkman's grim assessment of the race, as in the case of Mahto-Tatonka and his son, there are no such worthy individual Mexicans. As uncompromising as Parkman might be in his defense of racial hierarchy and the corresponding worth of members of the races, some other pieces in *The Knickerbocker* tend to reinforce the morally equivalent status of all races at every opportunity.

The issue that includes the first section of *The Oregon Trail*, for example, also includes the short piece "The Brazilian Negresses" by Harro-Haring (Harro Paul Harring), a Danish-German writer frequently involved in leftist politics. It is difficult to say whether or not the work is fiction. Haring certainly spent some time in Brazil. But what is significant about this text is that its plot suggests that the magazine's readers are receptive to ideas of racial equality, at least in terms of capacity for moral behavior. In this story, a free black woman sees her friend's daughter amongst a shipment of slaves from Africa. She borrows money to secure the girl's freedom from her surly owner. After the transaction is complete, the owner accuses the girl of theft and a search of her luggage exonerates her from the accusation. The author is disgusted by the affair, remarking that it nonetheless

> disclosed traits of character in an oppressed race which filled me with surprise and respect. I could not resume my accustomed occupations. The hand of the author was disabled by his better thoughts. The hard fate of the colored people, eternally exposed to extreme insult, and to the white man's baseness, haunted me while my feelings were relieved by the frequent contrast presented by the good and noble acts of their black brethren. (29:133)

This is not to say that racial characteristics have no place in the author's worldview. The virtue of the titular subjects is described in racialized terms: "The features of the Cabendas indeed

resemble those of Europeans, the mouth having a grave expression and the lips being smaller than those of the Mozambique negroes. The countenance of this fine people usually indicate reflection and great calmness of temperament" (29:130). But it is striking that a black woman could stand in such favorable contrast to a white man in the pages of the same publication in which Parkman takes white superiority for granted. The same number of *The Knickerbocker* that includes the first part of *The Oregon Trail* and "The Brazilian Negresses" includes works set around the world, from China to the Middle East that portray foreigners in sympathetic terms. Reading Parkman as the sole authority on racial characteristics, as when reading the book edition, is a very different experience from reading him as one of a chorus of voices with differing ideologies about the function of race and about the superiority of the white man. With regard to both expansionist politics and race, then, reading *The Oregon Trail* in the context in which its first readers would have consumed it attenuates the authority of Parkman's political voice. This attenuation has implications for how to understand the text's significance with respect to political history.

Though critics tend to read Parkman's work as a supportive of the Mexican-American War, Lawrence usefully points out signs of ambivalence. In this chapter section, I've shown how this ambivalence is described in terms of class and aesthetics, which further buttresses my argument that Parkman's distinctively Western frontier masculinity actually reinforces the manly values of his elite Boston upbringing. I have further shown that reading the pieces that appear alongside installments of *The Oregon Trail* in *The Knickerbocker* extend and complicate Lawrence's claim that Parkman engages in "double-dealing." Not only does *The Oregon Trail* offer only ambivalent support for soldiers and the Mexican-American war, *The Knickerbocker* gives the War's anti-imperial and anti-racist critics a platform to contest the viewpoint that

historians and literary critics like Lears and Meola have long associated with Parkman's text. Rather than using the West to produce a martial manliness that reinvigorates national models of manhood, Parkman uses depictions of soldiers to reinforce regional differences in ways that police the boundary between the appearance and behavior of the rough, shabbily dressed Westerners and his own refined manly ideal. Other pieces in the same issues of *The Knickerbocker* further question the idea that the imperial Mexican-American War is in harmony with a swaggering, conquering national character.

2.5 Conclusion

This dissertation's first chapter shows how Timothy Flint's *Francis Berrian, or, the Mexican Patriot* and his Cincinnati periodical *The Western Monthly Review* expose churning sectional tensions even in a literary historical moment in which American literary elites most desire a coherent national literature to measure against European competitors. This second chapter presents another case of American elites on the urban East Coast seeking a coherent, if reformed, sense national identity based on promise of regional difference. However, in this case, I show how an avowedly distinctive Western American identity actually possesses surprising contiguities with the ways that East Coast patricians imagined American manly virtue. Together, these chapters show how periodical texts paradoxically both undermine and underwrite nationalist ideas. As nationalist American elites based in the metropolises on the East Coast attempt to forge national narratives and identities through the power of literature, periodical texts associated with the West challenge them with regionally distinctive contributions that become both the quintessence of the national character and a challenge to the very idea of it.

This chapter looks backward to the previous chapter in that both Timothy Flint and Francis Parkman use periodical writing to bring a distinctively Western point of view to a

national reading public. In Flint's case, I argue that this work imagines an alternative transnationalism that works against literary elites hoping to define a national literature based on transatlantic circulations of texts. Parkman's case is different, though, because it takes a cultural invention that is purportedly regionally distinctive—frontier manliness—but develops it in ways that shows surprising consonances with discourses about manliness long dominant amongst elites on the East Coast by focusing on the issues of vision and aesthetic taste. These two chapters together begin to trace the arc of a broader argument about what I call the paradox of Western American literature: the ways in which the idea of the West becomes both differentiated and totalizing in relation to national discourses.

I continue to explore this theme in the next chapter, which takes up the early years of the publication *Sunset*, an organ of the Southern Pacific Transportation Company. This railroad firm hopes to contest the idea that West is too dangerous for tourism, yet also hopes to capitalize upon those selfsame stereotypes to lure visitors to the West as the frontier closes and the distinction between the West and the rest of the nation becomes harder to trace than ever before. I read this boosterist periodical writing in the next chapter, but I find that this it contains surprising countercurrents of skepticism regarding the West. I show how these boosterist fictions bear the seeds of ideological resistance to the relentlessly optimistic view of the West and what it presents to be its authentic features. If the elite men on the East Coast hope and expect for the West to reinvigorate their gendered national character as early as the 1850s, boosterist discourses stoke these kinds of hopeful emotional attachments to the West into the 20th century. But here I show the ways in which the very texts mediating these attachments are full of warnings about the dangers of the West, of the claims of authenticity that underlies their power to textually produce regional difference, and indeed of the whole project of boosterist fiction.

Chapter 3: Fiction and Authenticity: Boosterist Periodical Fiction at the Closing of the Frontier

3.0 Introduction: Desire for Excitement

In her short story "The Galbraiths," published in the August 1902 issue of *Sunset*, Juliet Wilbor Tompkins describes a woman who prefers the excitement of fiction to her mundane reality. Miss Andrews is walking alone late at night when she overhears part of a conversation between the newest couple at the boarding house: the eponymous Galbraiths. It sounds to her as if the new boarders are plotting to murder their sickly infant. Misunderstandings ensue, which leave Miss Andrews with the impression that her timely intercession reforms her neighbor from a potential child murderer into a caring mother. Later, Miss Andrews's new friend Miss Wilcox tells her a story that matches some of the details of Miss Andrews's experience but provides a much less dramatic explanation. Miss Wilcox is embarrassed that Miss Andrews catches her crying over a novel, but she explains that her novel's protagonist experiences the death of her child. In fact, Miss Wilcox knows through a cousin that the novelist whose book she is reading, a certain Rose Murray, actually did have an ill child and, since she had recently converted to Christian Science, struggled with the decision of whether or not to turn the child over to a doctor's care.[1] We now realize that Miss Andrews has not met a "Mrs. Galbraith" who was plotting to murder her child but rather Rose Murray, who was trying to decide whether or not to call a doctor for her ill child. Tompkins confirms to the reader that the centerpiece of Miss Andrews's adventure and the subject of Miss Wilcox's anecdote are the same person with a letter Miss Andrews sees addressed to a "Rose Murray" that is accepted by "Mrs. Galbraith." We

[1] Christian Science was a new religious movement, established by Mary Baker Eddy in New England. In her 1875 book *Science and Health*, Baker argues that sickness should be addressed solely through prayer and that medical treatment should be eschewed.

surmise that this is the novelist's *nome de plume*, but for Miss Andrews, it is evidence that her neighbor is for some nefarious reason using an assumed name. She forcefully rejects the possibility that her dramatic rescue of the innocent child is from a woman in spiritual crisis rather than a degenerate criminal. She insists that she is privy to something far more sinister and dramatic: "It could not possibly have been the same woman. The Rose Murray I knew—that was just one of her names; she probably had a dozen...I never heard of her writing novels." Her friend blandly agrees, and the story ends with Miss Andrews repeating her denial: "'Not possibly,' said Miss Andrews, firmly" (9:268). The piece's central theme is Miss Andrews's insistence on living in a romantic fiction over accepting what appears to the reader to be the facts of the matter. The repeated denial that produces dramatic irony in the story's final line and the obvious flimsiness of her justifications for her beliefs reveals Tompkins's desire to highlight her protagonist's sense that exciting fiction is preferable to reality.

"The Galbraiths" appears in *Sunset*, a magazine established in 1898 by the Passenger Division of the Southern Pacific Company and named for the Sunset Limited, a new train route bringing passengers across the deserts of the American Southwest from New Orleans to Los Angeles.[2] The magazine is established to drum up business for the railroad, showing the West to the best possible advantage to potential tourists, who would pay to take the railroad to Western attractions and resorts, and investors who would develop the region, building farms and mines that would ensure future demand for transportation services. The magazine's account of its own purpose is frank in its economic interestedness. It describes its "creed" as "Publicity for the

[2] *Sunset* still exists today as a lifestyle magazine aimed mostly at middle class Westerners interested in home improvement and entertaining. In this chapter, I am concerned with the years from 1898-1914, which encompass the magazine's establishment up to the transfer of ownership from the Southern Pacific to a group of the magazine's employees. After this point, the magazine's economic incentives become separated from the railroad's.

attractions and advantages of the Western Empire" and its "aim" as "the presentation, in a convenient form, of information concerning the great states of California, Oregon, Nevada, Texas, Louisiana, and the territories of Arizona and New Mexico—a rich and inexhaustible field over which the dawn of future commercial and industrial importance is just breaking." If the goal is clear—more business for the Southern Pacific—the means by which *Sunset* pursues this goal is much less evident. The question facing the magazine's producers is: what would be the most effective manner in which the West could be textually produced for an elite readership outside the West? To understand the contemporary pressures that shape their rhetorical strategies, it is crucial to recall that this magazine is established at the closing of the frontier: a moment in which the way that American elites see the West is changing.

At the closing of the frontier, there are, according to literary critic Thomas J. Lyon "two Wests." The first develops at the turn of the century and is "mostly a mental place, a projection. Wild and open, this West is everything the over-civilized East, or Europe, is not." This "Wild West" is the one that "came into our consciousness just when romance and individualism were flowering, and thus it became the dominant iconic frontier for an entire culture" (1). However, there is also a "second West" that persists today. It is, like the first West, characterized by extraordinary natural beauty, but unlike the Wild West, it is developed: "there are also feedlots, gas and oil wells, open-pit mines, cities and their freeways, reservoirs, highways…" Unlike the imagined Wild West, however, this is "ordinary ground," which is to say that is exists in the world as well as in the imagination. If the first West might be called the "Wild West," the second Lyon calls the "real West" (2). The kind of reader *Sunset* hopes to attract is caught between desire for the Wild West and the real West. On the one hand, the magazine's creators wish to perpetuate the image of the Wild West because they want readers to believe that the West is an

exciting place where vast fortunes can be made practically overnight. On the other hand, they want to show that the West is a prudent investment. Though the Wild West might appeal to the most risk-hungry investors, the real West has proven its potential for economic development.

Desire for images of the Wild West among American readers living in other parts of the country runs especially high as the frontier closes near the end of the 19th century. As the regional distinctiveness of the West ebbs with the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the fading of what Frederick Jackson Turner describes as a line between civilization and barbarism, the readers of magazines like *Sunset* are still hungry for exciting representations of violence that they read as regionally distinctive. In his essay "Held Up—A Texan Tale" published in *Sunset* in 1902, the renowned Western poet Joaquin Miller ruminates on the popularity of stories that greatly exaggerate the violence and lawlessness of Texas. When he reports to his readers that he sees no evidence of the Wild West, he complains, "I was laughed at, derided, derided! Is it because I am breaking down the 'blood and thunder' dramatists and novelists, or is it because the world does not want the truth, or is the Atlantic jealous?" Miller explains that the Postmaster General of the United States once told him the mail system is put under financial strain by the expense of circulating these stories in print. When Miller asks where these stories are sent, since he knows they are not widely read in the West, the postmaster explains, "It goes to Boston...No, I don't quite mean that, but it goes to the mill hands of Fall River, Lowell and the like. Lots of it goes to the shop girls of Chicago, St. Louis, and so on" (9:142).[3] What Miller describes here is Miss Andrews's desire for excitement on a national scale.

[3] The readers Miller describes here, the fans of "blood and thunder" Westerns is not quite coterminous with the readership of *Sunset*. The readers of the violent genre Westerns are not the social, cultural, and political elites that are shaping the image of the national literature. But the genre westerns that Miller describes here only account for a small portion of the contents of

Miller claims that American readers want "blood and thunder" and what he calls "the truth" simply doesn't sell. Miller's complaint about the death of interest in "the truth" gestures to a second concern animating Western writing that might otherwise be incentivized to simply reproduce popular images of the Wild West.

If the violence and financial risk associated with the Wild West present one kind of problem for those who might otherwise be tempted to propagate such images of the region to a national readership, another kind of problem hinges upon the question of authenticity. According to Nathaniel Lewis, readers have long used authenticity as the ultimate measure of Western fiction. The representation of the West as it actually exists (or the appearance thereof) is the criterion on which Western fiction has always been adjudicated in the court of American literary public opinion. Lewis argues that the question that the American readers inevitably ask when they read Western literature is: "Is it authentic?" For this reason, he claims, realism has been the privileged mode of Western literature and "Western writers present themselves as accurate and reliable recorders of real places, histories, and cultures—but not as stylists or inventors" (3). In its first issue *Sunset* shows that authenticity is an important rhetorical strategy for its boosterism. The magazine claims to offer "publicity" and "information," not merely entertainment and certainly not "blood and thunder," which is to say that it offers an accurate description of the real West. Of course, this is corporate doublespeak; the purpose of the magazine is to maximize the railroad's business, which means presenting the West in the best possible light. At the closing of the frontier, this means that it presents a version of the West that combines the Wild West's excitement and romance with the real West's relative safety and conduciveness to prosperity.

Sunset. What I mean to emphasize here is that interest in the Wild West is strong throughout the country and that elites aren't an exception.

Miller's complaint shows how the tension between Wild West and real West might also be understood as a question of authenticity. For readers far from the American West, the measure of authenticity is conformity to existing stereotypes of the Wild West, but for a Westerner like Miller, it is conformity to the real West.

But further complicating any attempt to establish Western writing as authentic is the question of whether readers from outside the West, whose existing understanding of the region is shaped by popular images of the region, possess the knowledge necessarily to accurately assesses whether or not a Western text is authentic. Not only do they most likely not have the knowledge they would need, relying instead on what Lewis calls "culturally determined images of the West" (113) or what Miller calls "blood and thunder," there are also more fundamental problems with the idea of the West that limit the capacity of Western writing to be read as literature rather than history or reportage. As Lewis points out, Western writers need to describe in realist terms an object that is "at once America's ultimate reality and ultimate fantasy" (9). Because of the way in which the West is understood by the Americans in other parts of the country to transcend textual description, it is in some sense a structural impossibility for Western literature to present the West in a manner that strikes the reader as authentic. For Lewis, the result of the recession of the West into the realm of fantasy is that Western writers are charged with the responsibility of preserving the West by reporting accurately on its real features (or at least presenting their writing as accomplishing this work). But it also seems that if, as Lewis suggests, the West is defined by its elusiveness, its constant retreating from the frontier, the task of writing about it in a realist mode—that is, of recording it in a way that readers will judge authentic—is fundamentally impossible. In short, Western writing strives to present itself as providing an authentic account of an object that intrinsically resists the mode of realist description. The West,

according to Eastern readers, must always be more magnificent than language can capture. As a result, Western writers must represent their fiction as an authentic representation of the West and occlude their own authorial creative labor. They must claim to be reporters rather than fabulists, even as their readers demand a representation of the West that transcends the wildest of fabulations.

The readers of *Sunset* demand two images of the West that are in tension with each other: a Wild West that is romantic and exciting and a real West that is safe for visitors and investments of human and financial capital. But both of these images also have within them their own tensions related to problems of authenticity. The Wild West is romantic and exciting, as well as violent and risky. But the authenticity of such images of the Wild West are undermined in the texts I present here by the way that the authors and characters point out the absurdity and impossibility of Wild West stories as the West becomes increasingly indistinguishable from the modernizing, industrializing, rationalizing nation. Meanwhile, the real West is a safe and economically promising, but texts that produce this image of the region have shaky claims of authenticity because of two factors: first, the basis of what counts as the authentically Western still to some extent being "blood and thunder" stories of the Wild West and second, what readers imagine to be the intrinsic irrepresentability of the West. These problems, I will show in this chapter, leave the stories I present full of ambiguity and uncertainty about their own ideological work. According to literary critic Michael L. Johnson, at the closing of the frontier, Americans want "the first West—and still do—but they wanted it subdued—and still do. They have been like a man who wants a woman who'll be both his tempestuous mistress and his submissive wife. They have wanted the West to be always somewhere yonder, unlimited, spiritually other but also here, containable, materially theirs" (174). Here, the erotic charge of Johnson's discomfiting

metaphor shows how the desire of readers for an exciting West echoes the desire underlying Miss Andrews's sexually repressed exterior. She fantasizes about being accosted by a man on her nocturnal walks, but her fantasy concludes not with sex, but with a prim upbraiding of her would-be assailant; "Sir, I will ask you not to annoy me," she fantasizes saying (9:265). Like Miss Andrews, American readers fantasize not about being swept away by excitement and romance, but rather bringing the West under the management of the nation. The realist resistance and repression of the romance is as important as the romance itself. Miss Andrews's desire to be desired, not for the sake of succumbing to that desire, but rather to reject the overture, emblematizes the duality of American feeling toward the West: the conflicting need for the West to be different and dangerous and for it to become familiar and safe.

The project that *Sunset* attempts (or claims to attempt)—that is, to offer authentic information about the West—is caught in this double bind. The texts seek to produce regionally differentiated romance and excitement in order to appeal to tourists and investors, but also to show the reader that the West is sufficiently under the management of the nation and therefore safe enough that those tourists and investors won't be alarmed. At the same time, they must produce an air of authenticity in their description of an object that is assumed to test the limits of language and literature in its grandeur and sublimity. These are the impossibilities that face the writer that claims to write of the West at the closing of the frontier. I will show how this representational impossibility, this limit of language, produces a preoccupation with authenticity. More specifically, I will show how Western writing overtly thematizes problems of authenticity and representation, even as it tactically relies upon these principles. I unpack the ways that these stories are not only keenly aware of the dubiousness of their authenticity and indeed skeptical of

the viability of their particular boosterist projects; there is a countercurrent in these stories that actively undermines the very idea of boosterist fiction.

The texts I examine in this chapter confront this paradoxical problem by representing scenes of creating and consuming fiction, exposing the complications produced by the simultaneous desires of an Eastern readership for excitement and safety, sublimity and realism. Western writing, in cases that I present in this chapter, becomes preoccupied with questions of its own authenticity, but in the expression of this preoccupation undermines its viability as a boosterist mode. If the Southern Pacific is to successfully argue that the area of its geographic coverage ("the Western Empire") deserves special attention from tourists, investors, and others who might travel by rail, it must successfully make the point that the West really has something that the rest of the nation doesn't. Whether articulated in terms of unique natural wonders or extraordinary economic opportunities, the magazine is charged with proving the regional distinctiveness of the real West, even at a time when the closing of the frontier is eroding the difference between the West and the nation. Most crucially, this regional differentiation must read as authentic. But this project of textually producing the region is complicated by the tensions between Wild West and real West, romance and authenticity. The creators of *Sunset* are at pains to emphasize that the West they portray is authentic: the "resources of this great western empire...will be treated in these pages as fully as space will admit, as concisely as the subjects will warrant, and at all times—truthfully" (1).[4] "The Galbraiths," and the other texts I present in

[4] Unfortunately, literary historians can only rely on the contents of the publication itself to reveal the intentions of the magazine's earliest publishers, including its original editor, E. H. Woodman. Many of the publication's early records were lost in the fire and earthquake that devastated San Francisco in 1906. But in any case, the early *Sunset* is not a case in which a particularly suspicious hermeneutic seems warranted. Its content appears to be entirely aligned with its creators' economic interests. This is a magazine published to economically boost the "Western Empire."

this chapter represent the conflation or admixture of the romantic and the real and force readers to confront the dangers attending this conflation or admixture.

This chapter's first section shows how the fiction in *Sunset* can produce a sense of regional distinctiveness by enchanting the West. The epistemological clash between two characters in Paul F. Shoup's short story "By Order of the Moon: A Tale of a Desert Treasure" demonstrates the unique capacity of fiction to produce certain forms of excitement about the West. Even though the Mysterious Stranger's story is clearly a work of fiction—its plot is so preposterous that it can leave no doubt that the events it relates could not possibly be real in a literal sense—I show that it strives to produce an image of the West that the reader will understand as authentic. Whether through the literary figurative capacity of fiction to offer both romance and authenticity or through the tall tale as a distinctively Western genre by which authenticity comes to cooperate with regional romance, this text affirms the capacity of Western writing to bridge romance and authenticity. But I proceed to complicate the first section's claims of the possibility of authenticity in Western writing by presenting a pair of stories that thematize and problematize the idea of fiction as a mode of producing information that captures both the Wild West and the real West in more overt ways. Like "The Galbraiths," Boudon Wilson's "Gentleman Jack's Widow" and Bret Harte's "Lanty Foster's Mistake" represent scenes of producing and consuming fiction that perform the kind of work instantiated by "By Order of the Moon." At the same time, however, they also produce claims about the risks and dangers of boosterist fiction romanticizing the West, even as they exemplify this boosterist fiction. These texts show a surprising ambivalence about their own ideological work. Finally, I examine pieces from *Sunset* that are presented as nonfiction, including articles on Yosemite National Park and on the potential of the prune industry to show how, regardless of whether they present

themselves as fiction or nonfiction, boosterist regional writing operates through the same logics and, crucially for my purposes here, exhibit the same doubts and anxieties about their own boosterist projects. The suspicion these texts cast on the authenticity in Western writing is not limited to texts that present themselves as fiction. Even nonfiction texts perform their boosterism with doubt and irony. Ultimately, I produce an account of the ideological work on the region and the nation performed by the fiction and nonfiction in little-studied Western periodicals and show how the revision of the West's regional distinctiveness fits into a broader narrative about the paradoxical relationship between the West and the nation at a crucial time in Western American history: the closing of the frontier.

3.1 Differentiating the West: Enchantment and Local Color in "By Order of the Moon"

The very first work of fiction to appear in *Sunset* reveals the periodical's preoccupation with authenticity. Appearing in the magazine's first issue, Paul F. Shoup's 1898 story "By Order of the Moon: A Tale of a Desert Treasure," dramatizes the tension between what is presented as a tall tale and also as a scientific case. The reader is presented with the question: which of these two is the authentic account? To briefly summarize, the story is mostly comprised of a conversation between two characters, a "Mysterious Stranger" in possession of an enormous opal, who weaves a strange tall tale about his discovery of a buried treasure and his interlocutor, a character Shoup calls the "Eminent Scientist." Initially a luckless prospector, the Mysterious Stranger encounters an enormous terrapin one night in the desert.[5] When he kills it, he discovers a treasure map on its shell, but when he goes to the indicated location, he is initially finds nothing but an empty cave and echoing, sinister laughter. But one night, later on, the terrapin's

[5] In the United States, terrapins live in freshwater habitats on the East Coast, not Western deserts. This inaccuracy suggests that the Mysterious Stranger might not be trustworthy as a source of information and casts doubt on his tale.

ghost lassoes him around the neck and drags him back to the desert, where he finds a horde of terrapins who transform into a ghostly army. The previously empty cave is now filled with riches. He tells this bizarre story to a rapt audience aboard a refined observation car on the Sunset Limited, including the frame story's narrator and the Eminent Scientist. The Mysterious Stranger tells a tale that is utterly unbelievable; it strains the credulity of all of his listeners and must surely be a work of fiction. The Eminent Scientist dismisses it out of hand: "The part about the knights and soldiers is absurd—utterly absurd—of course you dreamed it" (1:10). He comes up with an alternative theory that explains the sudden appearance of the treasure by the tidal action of the nearby Colorado River. The Eminent Scientist strives to police a strict boundary between fiction and reality, explaining how a story so fantastic that it can only be fiction might possibly be revised to serve as a scientifically verifiable account of real places and events. The listeners on the train car, including the narrator are, like Shoup's reader, thrust into a judgmental position. All are put in position to discern the inauthentic from the authentic, the very same conundrum that faces the story's reader.

The distinction between the Mysterious Stranger's tall tale and the Eminent Scientist's rationalist account is geographically coded. The Scientist is a national, even hemispheric figure; the narrator links him to flows of capital and media that reach not only his rapt audience in the West, but also the tobacco industry of the South and a national marketing apparatus: "He was a very famous man, indeed: so famous that his picture appeared on the boxes of a peculiarly atrocious brand of cigars."[6] The Mysterious Stranger, on the other hand, represents a

[6] By identifying the cigars as "peculiarly atrocious," the narrator archly suggests that the Eminent Scientist might not be quite as famous as he thinks. But nonetheless, the association of the Scientist with the cigars identifies him as a participant in these economic and cultural flows that transcend the American West.

distinctively Western mysticism untouchable by science.[7] He tells his listeners, "I have seen the tide forty feet high go roaring up the Rio Colorado and heard its only answer in that vast stretch of silent loneliness when from some sand dune a coyote howled and howled in endless melancholy, and then the Spirit of the Desert has come into me. Is it strange I have known things not found within sight of the smoke of a hearth-fire?" (1:9). The Eminent Scientist wants to quash the Mysterious Stranger's mystical regionalism, but in this story, Shoup proves reluctant to resolve the tension between science and mysticism. Shoup denies readers the satisfaction of one man proving the other wrong. Rather, he further muddies the waters. After all, how does a luckless prospector come into the possession of an enormous opal (1:9)? The Pullman Porter reveals that the Mysterious Stranger is no stranger at all; he's a liar, and a familiar personage, a "Mistah Ma'cus 'Relvus Johnson, one ob de fines' gemmen an'—an' de bigges' liah in de whole Soufwest." However, even as the porter deflates the mystical aura that the Stranger cultivates for himself and throws water on his tale, the porter continues to weave a fragile fantastic thread: Mr. Johnson is not merely a liar, but rather the biggest liar in the whole Southwest and, paradoxically, one of its finest gentlemen. The porter uses this contradictory and hyperbolic language to disparage Johnson as a speaker of contradiction and hyperbole. Although in its closing lines, the Mysterious Stranger's account is dismissed as a lie, Shoup introduces a dissonant final note, archly leaving the slightest opening for the possibility that the Mysterious Stranger's story just might be authentic. Shoup stops just short of totally dismissing the

[7] While I would argue that the particular features of the West and the national fantasies associated with this particular region perform regionally distinctive work in this story, this is not to say that the *form* of the production of regional distinctiveness instantiated in this story are unique to the West. The South, for example, is a similar site of national fantasy and is likewise associated with enchantment and difference. See Jennifer Greeson's *Our South* (2010) for an account of the South becomes distinctive relative to the nation.

Mysterious Stranger's story. Moreover, the alternative, scientific story that the Eminent Scientist offers is hardly more convincing. The Mysterious Stranger's story and the playful suggestion that it just might be true produce in its the reader a sense of the West as a distinct from the East by virtue of its romantic potential. Playing on stereotypes about the West as a place in which one might find such regional tropes as the American Indian (albeit figured as a terrapin),[8] the fabulous gold deposit (figured as buried treasure) or racial violence (figured by the dragging of the Mysterious Stranger by the terrapin by a noose around his neck). Shoup constructs the West as a place distinct from the rest of the nation for an Eastern readership and offers attenuated versions of the Wild West's distinctive features. The reader gets the best of all worlds: a sense of authenticity, but not so much Western authenticity that it becomes an unattractive region for leisure travel or investment. The figurative work that Shoup performs to attenuate these harsh Western features romanticizes the West.

As a frontier imagined as unpopulated or underpopulated, wild and therefore unpolluted by modern culture, the West is the last viable site for the kind of extravagant fiction the Mysterious Stranger offers. The wealthy, socially elite readers of *Sunset* are painfully aware of the encroachment of modernity and Taylorism and of the disappearance of mysticism and experiences of transcendence from American life as the frontier closes and economic and social life becomes increasingly dictated by urbanization, industrialization, and all of the rationalization entailed by these processes. "By Order of the Moon" revivifies nostalgic fantasies concerned with overnight fortunes and encounters with noble savagery and locates them in the fertile

[8] I would argue that the ghostly terrapin represents the ghostly presence of the disappearing American Indian, subject to racialized violence and killed for the material treasures of the West. However, I concede that the figurative work performed by the terrapin is ambiguous; the descriptions of the terrapin army evoke medieval European crusaders.

ground of the West. A *Sunset* reader on the East Coast preoccupied with the disappearance of certain aspects of premodern life, can enjoy a fantasy set in the distant West. However, he imagines this geographically distant fantasy as still proximate enough to mediate his own fantasy of transcending the drudgery of his distressingly modern life. He is able to imagine tasting the kind of fantasy offered by the Mysterious Stranger because he is able to purchase a railroad ticket to the West. In other words, this story performs its ideological work on the basis of an irreducible overlap between the Western fiction and the national reality that, through fiction, survives the closing of the frontier. This is the kind of regional and national entanglement that is the subject of this dissertation: the ultimate inseparability of the distinctive qualities of the West and the churning regionalist discourses within the imagined community of the nation.

Even if one reads the Mysterious Stranger as a liar and totally rejects the idea that Shoup declines to foreclose the possibility of genuine enchantment in the West, "By Order of the Moon" still produces regional difference that reads as authentic. Even if the cynical reader finds that there's no tantalizing possibility of literal truth in the Mysterious Stranger's tale, the West is still constructed as a place featuring distinctive practices of producing fiction because the Mysterious Stranger becomes a teller of a tall tale rich in regional markers and the observation car of the Sunset Limited becomes an ersatz campfire or saloon. Instead of producing the West as a distinctive region where enchantment is possible and one might magically make a fortune overnight, the West is produced as a distinctive region where one might meet such colorful local characters as Marcus Aurelius Johnson, spinner of entertaining yarns. The reader is offered a credible basis for fantasizing about escaping the land of the dull Eminent Scientist and visiting the West, where characters like the Mysterious Stranger or, say, Mark Twain's Simon Wheeler, the colorful, verbose bartender who narrates most of "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras

County" (1865), are in plentiful supply. In this reading, the story is legibly authentic to an Eastern audience as an example of typically Western fiction; in other words, it's an authentically Western tall tale. Even if the content of the Mysterious Stranger's tale rings false, the story rings true as a story that would circulate in the West of the national imagination, which makes "By Order of the Moon" a work of fiction that registers as authentic to an audience of the tourist and investor class outside the West. Whether one takes at face value the enchanted West in the story or merely sees the Mysterious Stranger's narrative as a pleasing tall tale, Shoup's story shows how *Sunset* produces a distinctive and attractive West in a way that registers as authentic.

On the one hand, one might read the authentic markers of the West as encoded within the Mysterious Stranger's story. The capacity of fiction to produce two meanings at once allows the West that the story produces to be both wild and real. If we are able to read the terrapin as an actual magical terrapin and, at the same time, as the noble savage figure of the American Indian, it becomes possible to read the text as authentic to the existing West of the Eastern imagination and producing an account of the West in accordance with the ideological desires and financial incentives of the Southern Pacific. On the other hand, one might read the story itself as exemplary of an authentically Western form of fiction: a tall tale.[9] In this reading, it is the very performance of producing fiction in a certain manner—the oral transmission of a ludicrous tall tale to a crowd of onlookers—that reads as authentically and distinctively Western. What these two readings have in common is that they affirm the capacity of Western writing (regardless of whether they do so through figurative language or cultural practice) to perform the regional

[9] See Carolyn S. Brown's *The Tall Tale in American Folklore and Literature* (1987) for a general account of the genre and its power to mediate social relations. Though she doesn't claim that the tall tale is unique to the West or even the United States, Brown argues that the genre serves as "a tool and an emblem of regional and national identity" (2).

revisionist work that is *Sunset*'s *raison d'etre*. Whether through the symbolism and use of literary tropes or through the genre of the tall tale, *Sunset* is able to produce attractive Western regional difference that is presented in a way that is legible as authentic. At the moment of the frontier's closing and the ideological adoption of the West into the nation, this periodical fiction produces Western regional distinctiveness. Yet, as I will argue in the coming sections, Western fiction dedicated to producing regional difference that reads as authentic proves to be cognizant of its own work and skeptical of its own methods. I will present scenes of Western writing and reading in another short story from *Sunset* that problematizes the model I have so far presented. The texts I will describe in the remaining sections of this chapter critique of their own methods, problematizing the project of boosterist writing as an index and producer of an authentic West.

3.2 Writing and Reading Western Romance in "Gentleman Jack's Widow"

Even in a story that ostensibly reinforces the stereotype that the West is a wild place with little use for such impractical things as romantic fiction, Boudon Wilson inserts scenes of reading and writing creative work. These surprising moments in a text about rough Western railroad workers point out the dangers and absurdities of romance. Yet they do their work, ironically, within a work of fiction. Like "The Galbraiths," the story with which I begin this chapter, there is a sense of a joke at the reader's expense, a metatextual consternation that problematizes the optimistic view of the capacities of Western writing that I outline in the previous section. Boudon Wilson's short story "Gentleman Jack's Widow," published in *Sunset* in 1901, concerns a woman we come to know as "The Widow," who travels to northern Mexico to reunite with her husband. She encounters a railroad worker named Harry Evans and explains her situation: that she has come to find her husband, a man named Jack. Harry quickly realizes that the woman must be referring to Gentleman Jack, a notorious killer and gambler who was recently lynched

by the alcalde, or so the reader is initially led to believe. Harry thinks that hearing that her husband was a scoundrel is too much for the Widow to bear while in a state of shock and grief, so Harry conspires with the other railroad men to invent an alternative narrative of his character and of the circumstances of his death. To briefly summarize the remainder of the plot, the Widow is apparently shocked to learn that her husband is dead, but she eventually settles in with the railroad men. She opens a bakery that offers these workers a reminder of American femininity. Her business is a success and she eventually brings the trappings of civilization to the frontier, much like Jack Potter's wife in Stephen Crane's "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" (1898). The Widow eventually takes on the role of the banker in the town and the wholesome social opportunities produced by her bakery run the local monte dealer, Monte Jake, out of town.[10] The twist at the end occurs when the men are ready to move the camp down the line and are surprised that the Widow is no longer answering her door. Harry, who the Widow had agreed to marry a year after Jack's death, assumes that that the time for the wedding has come, saying "she's takin' a day off now to get used to the idea" (7:152). But when another day passes and there is no movement in the Widow's house, the men enter, only to find that the place empty and the safe cleaned out, save for a note from Gentleman Jack to Harry. This note explains that the alcalde saves Jack after his apparent hanging and he and the Widow have absconded with all the railroad workers' savings—a sum of five thousand dollars.

For my purposes, the most interesting moment in this text is the one in which Harry and the railroad men get together to plan what they will tell the Widow shortly after her arrival in the camp. Telling the white lie that Gentleman Jack was noble and heroic necessitates that Harry and his fellows compose a new work of fiction: "'She's sure to ask a lot o' questions, an' so we must

[10] Monte is a card game associated with the lawless settlements of the Wild West.

get together on some one lie, an' then all stick to that." The plan is for Harry to craft the lie in the form of a story and for the workers to learn it by rote: "They would memorize it when he had written it out." When it comes time to create the lie, he produces an elaborate, sentimental tale rather than one that rings authentically true to the reader. Though Wilson never offers readers a precise account of the contents of Harry's story, the author is marked as an authentic Westerner: a stock railroad man who tells unbelievable tales. Like the Mysterious Stranger's story in "By Order of the Moon," the storyteller is marked as Western while the skeptical audience (the Widow who comes from elsewhere by train) is not. Strangely, Harry's story appears to prove a roaring success, both in the sense that the Widow at least seems to believe it and also in the sense that the other railroad workers adjudicate it to be an excellent work of literature. By the time the railroad workers find a grave to pass off to the Widow as Jack's, "Harry had finished writing his story of Jack's death—a marvel of pathetic heroics and bad English that drew tears from the eyes of some of its readers, and that won for its author a reputation for wonderful ability in the literary line" (7:150). Wilson's story pokes fun at both writer and reader. Harry doesn't attempt to write a plausible, mundane story for the Widow, which would presumably be much more effective as a lie. Instead, he crafts a clumsily rendered, unnecessarily elaborate fiction that the reader of Wilson's story would find laughable. Indeed, the story's illustrations suggest that Harry's story and the Widow's reaction to it should be read as comical. The widow performs her grief in a fashion as exaggerated as Henry's story, throwing herself face-down on the grave in a pathetic display. The dramatic irony that the grave is in fact that of "a Mexican who had met his death at the heels of a vicious mule" signals the reader that this scene is to be read as comedic (7:150).

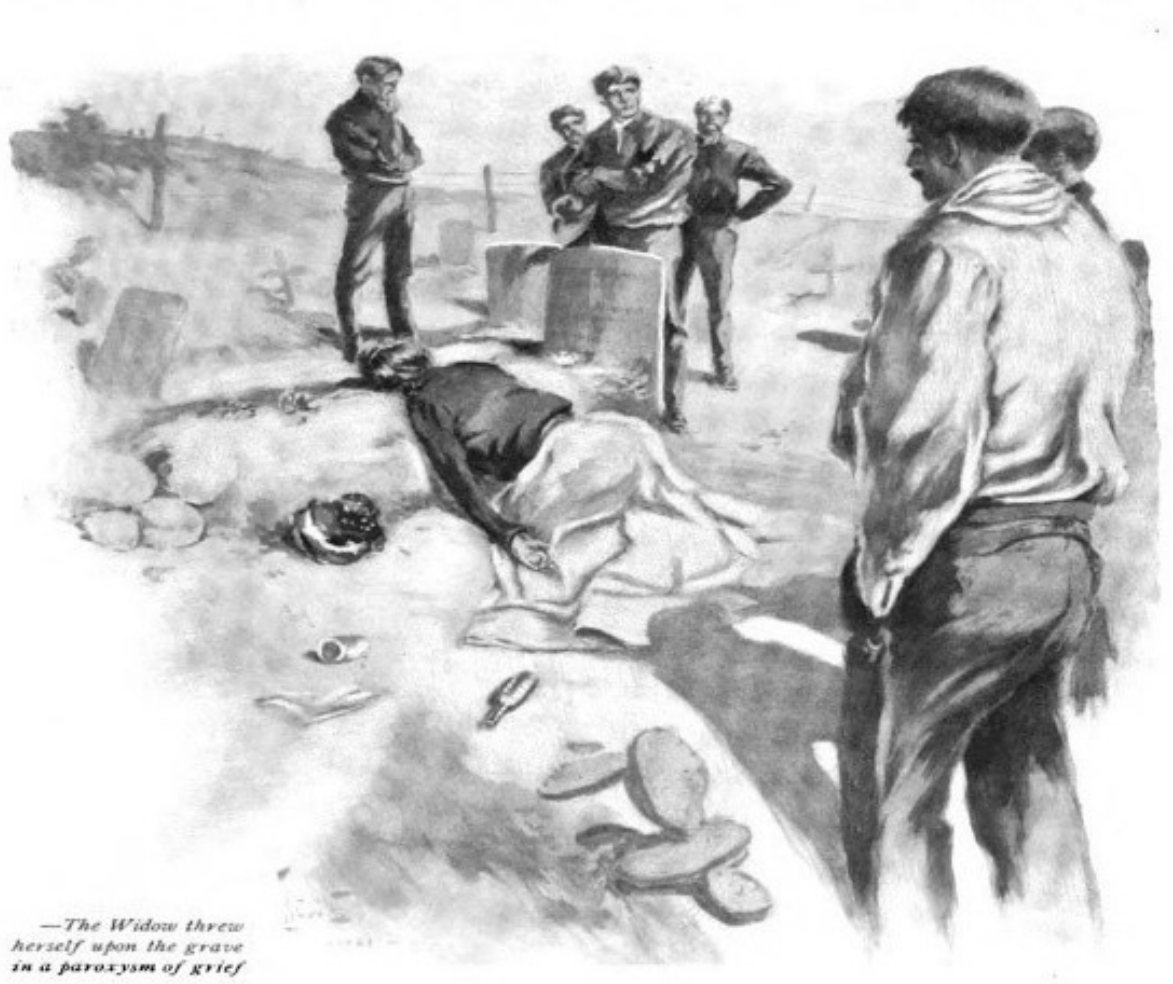

Fig 3.1 Arthur M. Lewis's illustration "—The Widow threw herself upon the grave in a paroxysm of grief" from Boudon Wilson, "Gentleman Jack's Widow," *Sunset*, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 149.

As ludicrous as the story is meant to appear to Wilson's reader, the fiction readers represented in the story—the uncultured railroad workers—are moved to tears and judge Harry's fiction to be of high literary quality. Indeed, Wilson directs the reader, albeit archly, to read Harry's actions not as a lie (or, to be precise, not *only* a lie), but rather as fiction, even "literary" fiction. In this moment, it seems as though this work of Western writing has enormous potential to do good. For Harry, fiction produces the possibility of softening what he sees as a terrible emotional blow to the Widow. For his fellow railroad workers, the story is a "marvel of pathetic heroics and bad English." Wilson puns on the word "pathetic," which denotes at once an elaboration of the pitiable quality of the fiction and the sense that this writing nonetheless emotionally moves his

readers. The description of the English as "bad" can be attributed only to Wilson and not to the readers represented in the story, who evidently find the text excellent.

But what's fascinating about this moment in Wilson's story is the way in which it might be understood as a metatextual commentary on "Gentleman Jack's Widow" itself, since it is, arguably, an exercise in presenting pathetic heroics in bad English. Setting aside the value judgments about the extent to which this work of commercial genre fiction features "pathetic" heroics or "bad" English, I emphasize here that the work that Harry's lie is intended to undertake is remarkably similar to the work "Gentleman Jack's Widow" performs for *Sunset* and the Southern Pacific in that it revises the West in the imaginations of its readers. Like "By Order of the Moon," Wilson's story offers a version of the West that preserves the excitement of the West but attenuates the region's associations with violence and criminality in accordance with *Sunset*'s boosterist aims. As in Shoup's story, we see enough glimpses of Western stereotypes to invite the reader to see it as an authentic representation of the Wild West, but these representations are softened by Wilson's authorial choices. In "Gentleman Jack's Widow," Harry loses his money, not his life, and what he loses to Gentleman Jack and the Widow, he presumably would have lost to Monte Jake anyway. The similarity of the names of Gentleman Jack and Monte Jake suggest the interchangeability of these two characters, who both win the honest railroad workers' money over the card table. Though he is alleged to be a murderer, Gentleman Jack's crimes are never directly represented directly to the reader, but rather presented in mediated form as the gossip of the workers. His hanging, moreover, turns out not to be quite the lethal event that the reader initially understands it to be. These choices conspire to show how the work of Western fiction here amounts to the softening of a displeasing reality: the very project that Harry takes on in composing his lie for the Widow. However, the comparison between Harry and the railroad men

on the one hand and Wilson and his reader on the other is unflattering. Harry is good-hearted, but he is a liar. Worse, he is a talentless fiction writer. The railroad workers who are so moved by his writing are, at best, uneducated and lacking in taste. This text betrays anxiety or at least ambivalence about the work that Western boosterist fiction performs. It likens its author to Harry, an amateur hack, and its reader to the railroad workers, who wouldn't know literary merit if they saw it. The very boosterist fiction in which "Gentleman Jack's Widow" engages, Wilson suggests, bears a resemblance to Harry's unsubtle endeavors for an audience of unsophisticates.

I have been arguing that the nature of Harry's mistake is that he thinks he is the *author* of fiction—the lie that Gentleman Jack is an honorable man, worthy of his Widow's mourning—when he is actually the *reader* of a similar kind of fiction—the lie that Gentleman Jack is dead and that the Widow is ignorant of his true nature. But Harry makes another kind of error as well in seeing himself throughout the text as a character in a certain kind of fiction, acting like a knight in a medieval romance and assuming that the Widow, accordingly, will play her part as a damsel in distress. The reason Harry makes this mistake is that he has no judgment about what constitutes an authentic account. He takes scripts for behavior drawn from fiction and (mis)uses them as a guide to behavior. This is more or less what *Sunset* hopes its readers will do: conflate the idealized image of the West created by these stories with authentic accounts of the real West. Wilson uses some unusual phrasing to signal the reader that Harry's treatment of the Widow is governed by something like the logic of medieval myth. Wilson describes how Harry has "not seen an American woman in many moons" and immediately upon meeting her, Harry takes on an absurdly courtly role in relation to the widow (7:146). This phrasing places the text in the West by invoking a stereotypically American Indian phrase, but it also suggests that Harry understands this encounter with the Widow to transcend his ordinary life, the departure marked by this piece

of deliberately archaic and exotic phrasing. He awkwardly squires her to the "Hotel de Montezuma," a mere "tent" and the bathetic contrast between the miserable material circumstances described in these scenes and Harry's exaggerated chivalry does the work of softening the West, but it also makes Harry look like a fool when the Widow's true nature is revealed. He tells his coworkers, "I swear she's as sweet an' as purty an' as innocent a little woman as ever wore calico" (7:149) and yet she is secretly working with the notorious murderer and gambler Gentleman Jack.

Inasmuch as Wilson's story sets out to produce a version of the West that seems authentic for *Sunset*'s readers who are craving one, it undermines its own project in two ways. First, it produces an unflattering, parodic representation of its writer and its reader. Second, it shows readers the dangers of being seduced by fiction and using it as a guide for real behavior. Harry pays for this mistake with his savings and his humiliation at the hands of a cleverer man. Fiction can be a helpful boosterist mode, but it can also easily slip into lying or delusion if the reader is unable to discern the authentic from the inauthentic. In the next section, I show a much more extreme example the mistake that Harry makes in misjudging the authenticity of stories. Bret Harte's "Lanty Foster's Mistake" is the story of a young girl so obsessed with reading romantic fiction that she falls into circumstances worthy of a tall tale. Lanty comes dangerously close to freeing a dangerous bandit because of her inability to draw a clear line between romance and reality. Expanding on the ways in which this section argues that boosterist fiction calls for skepticism of its own mode and representation of itself as information, the next section shows Western fiction that directly raises the question of whether it's possible for literature to produce an authentic image of the West while also warning its readers of the inherent dangers and shortcomings of fiction.

3.3 The Dangers of Misreading in "Lanty Foster's Mistake"

Bret Harte's short story "Lanty Foster's Mistake" is published in *New England Magazine* in December 1901 and almost immediately reprinted in the *Overland Monthly*, indicating that publishers believed that this story would be of interest throughout the country.[11] Though *Sunset* is at this time more overtly concerned with economic boosterism in the West, the *Overland Monthly* is also originally established to promote economic investment in the West. The titular Lanty is an adolescent girl who loves reading romantic fiction.[12] This is a habit that leads her to have a dangerously fertile imagination, but in this story, she is saved from the worst consequences of her habit by the ubiquity of romantic writing in American culture. One night, Lanty's engrossment in her novel prevents her from promptly taking in the laundry that is drying up the hill near her house. In the dark, she encounters a strange man on a horse who wishes to take some clothesline to repair his saddle girth. In the process of cutting off a piece, he drops his knife in the dark. When he and Lanty are unable to find it immediately, he tells her to keep it for him when she finds it and steals a kiss on Lanty's cheek. It is only later that she discovers that this knife is in fact "really a dagger! Jewelled handled and richly wrought—such as Lanty had never looked upon before. The hilt was studded with gems, and the blade, which had a cutting edge, was damascened in blue and gold" (25:416). This dagger, which the reader soon learns

[11] A 1908 piece in the *Overland Monthly* reveals that the magazine's founder Bavarian immigrant Anton Roman had reservations about bringing on the renowned Western writer Bret Harte as the first editor: "Roman has since confessed that he was afraid 'that [Harte] would be likely to lean too much toward the purely literary articles, while what I was then aiming at was a magazine that would help the material development of this coast" (52:6).

[12] Lanty Foster's unusual name Atlanta evokes Greek mythology, an allusion to classical culture humorously juxtaposed against a provincial settings and characters. It also alludes to the city of Atlanta, which had taken up the name Atlanta-Pacifica in 1847 at the suggestion of railroad man J. Edgar Thomson in anticipation of the connection of town to transcontinental rail networks. Lanty's name therefore invokes the transcontinental railroad, the connection of the West to the nation, and the mix of commercial boosterism and culture aspiration underlying such projects.

represents wealth acquired by banditry, emblematizes the rapid changes in financial fortune only possible in a romantic version of the American West. Like the Mysterious Stranger's fabulous treasure in "By Order of the Moon," this dagger performs romanticizing ideological work on the image of the West and holds out to readers the alluring promise of a rapid fortune. Indeed, Lanty immediately associates her new keepsake with her romantic reading habit:

> the thought of it filled the rest of her evening. When her household duties were done she took up her novel again partly from force of habit and partly as an attitude in which she could think of *It* undisturbed. For what was fiction to her now! True, it possessed a certain reminiscent value. A "dagger" had appeared in several romances she had devoured, but she never had a clear idea of one before. "The Count sprang back, and, drawing from his belt a richly jewelled dagger, hissed between his teeth"—or, more to the purpose, "Take this," said Orlando, handing her the ruby-hilted poignard which had gleamed upon his thigh, "and should the caitiff attempt thy unguarded innocence—" (25:417)

The erotic thrill that Lanty derives from secreting the strange man's "dagger" in her bed reframes the practice of reading fiction for her. Harte's curious phrasing, at once an exclamation and a rhetorical question, "For what was fiction to her now!" might suggest that reading becomes less vivid now that she is able to hold a real physical object that resembles the fictional object.

However, the phrase also metatextually poses the question of the function of fiction and its relation to ordinary life. If one reads the phrase as an excited exclamation rather than a question with the implicit answer of "nothing," fiction becomes not a waste of time, a distraction from chores, and a childish infatuation, but rather an indispensable guide. The following sentence "True, it possessed a certain reminiscent value" is ambiguous; it seems plausible, given

the earlier italicized "*It*" referring to the dagger, that Lanty is thinking of the way in which the dagger recalls to her mind her gallant bandit. But the position of the sentence relative to "For what was fiction to her now!" suggests that the antecedent of "it" is "fiction." Lanty allows that it might initially seem that the immediate material presence of the dagger obviates reading fiction (again, reading the exclamation as a rhetorical question), but in this reading, she concedes that fiction nonetheless retains value to her. In other words, Lanty here acknowledges that even though the dagger transforms her life into something similar to the romantic fiction she loves to read, actual fiction as such retains a "reminiscent value" as her memory of her encounters with fiction in some sense prepare her for her encounter with the dagger. This reading bears obvious erotic connotations and suggests that there is practical value in romantic fiction as a pedagogical tool for initiating Lanty into the world of adult sexuality. The illustration accompanying the *Overland Monthly*'s publication of the story grants the dagger a spotlight, or even a halo or aura, suggesting that it carries an intense symbolic charge.

"For it was really a dagger!"

Fig 3.2 George Leslie Hunter's illustration "For it was really a dagger!" from Bret Harte, "Lanty Foster's Mistake," *Overland Monthly*, vol. 38, no. 6, p. 405.

At the same time, though, the prefatory word, "True," emphasizes Lanty's equivocation: on the one hand, it might set up the claim following it as a concession that runs counter to Lanty's general strain of thought. However, it might also denote an affirmation of the idea. Harte hesitates to foreclose the meaning here, leaving Lanty's assessment of the necessity of fiction in her life after the arrival of the real dagger ambiguous.

Lanty's inability to evaluate the authenticity of the stories that she hears ultimately proves less costly than Harry Evans's. When she discovers that there are Mexican horse thieves known to be in the area, she suspects that the man whose dagger she secretly keeps is their leader. Though she attempts to box his ears for his presumptuousness in kissing her, a gesture straight out of a romance novel, Lanty feels an intense attraction to the man. This attraction is consecrated by his entrusting of the enormously valuable dagger to her. Eventually, the leader of the horse thieves, a man named Murietta is captured and kept in a barn.[13] In order to live up the trust he places in her with the dagger, Lanty executes a daring plan to cut loose his bonds and return the knife. She never clearly sees the man she frees. Upon returning home, she is shocked to see the man she believes to have been the horse thief arrive in her living room. He introduces himself as "Captain Lance Weatherby, Assistant Chief of Police of San Francisco, Deputy Sheriff, and ex-U.S. Scout," the man who had infiltrated Murietta's band and captured him and—after Lanty releases him with the dagger—captures him yet again (25:424). As it turns out, the night that he had met Lanty with her laundry, he was in disguise as a bandit and Lanty's

[13] The name alludes to Joaquin Murieta, a legendary Mexican bandit immortalized in John Rollin Ridge's *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* (1854). Ridge's story, unlike "Lanty Foster's Mistake," is incredibly violent and constitutes a good example of the discourses that *Sunset* and other western boosterist texts hope to challenge.

eponymous mistake was that she had freed the real Murietta, not seeing that he was not the man who had loaned her the knife. However, Weatherby explains that he was able to easily recapture him even after Lanty frees him because he lingers around the Foster Ranch, believing that Lanty has fallen in love with him. Here, Harte unexpectedly shows us another implicit scene of reading. Harry draws on romance to script his behavior towards the Widow. Something very similar happens to Murietta, who chooses a chance at love over a chance to escape, which is not what a reader would probably expect of a notorious Mexican bandit. When Lanty's reading leads her to behave towards him in an extravagantly romantic fashion, he responds in kind. Though the reader is not privy to scenes of Murietta's reading, his choices mirror Lanty's, whose behavior is shaped by the "reminiscent value" of fiction.

"Lanty Foster's Mistake" occasions an examination of the West's dangers and also the dangers of misjudging the difference between a romantic fiction and real life. After all, it's Lanty's engrossment in her novel that causes her to be slow in bringing in the laundry and constitutes the proximate cause of her encounter with the man she comes to think is a bandit. But the story also works to bring the West into epistemological, moral, and legal harmony with the rest of the nation. This is the kind of softening of the region that all of the texts I examine here attempt to perform. Harte suggests that the West is indeed dangerous, the dagger bringing to mind the omnipresent threat of violence. However, that the dagger is richly jeweled and is therefore as much a work of art as a functional weapon suggests that the stakes in this story aren't necessarily life and death. Lanty frees a horse thief, but because Murietta, like Lanty, behaves as if he is in a romance novel, nothing bad really comes of it. Lanty's eponymous "mistake" dramatizes the kind of mistake about the identity of the West that the story pleasurably generates for the reader. The West is a place of thrilling romance, but it is also a place where law

and order ultimately triumph. Even the foreign bandits are susceptible to the pull of romance. The reader might "mistake" the West for an exciting Mexican bandit, but it's really a much more suitable partner: an American lawman.

In this section, I add a further layer of complication to the idea that boosterist fiction promotes the West by offering a sense of enchantment or affirming the region's distinctive local color through the use of stock characters. While I show how "Lanty Foster's Mistake" takes up the same strategy as Wilson's and Shoup's stories of softening the image of the West, I add yet another layer of metatextual complication. If "By Order of the Moon" offers an archetypal example of fiction enchanting the West and "Gentleman Jack's Widow" continues this work of softening the region while at the same time presenting the problems inherent to fiction, "Lanty Foster's Mistake" draws the reader's attention directly to the dangers of mistaking romantic fiction for an authentic account of the real West. While Harte's story does much the same ideological work as the *Sunset* stories, it makes the dangers of readerly misjudgment its central theme and casts doubt upon the whole concept of regional boosterism through these stories. While it is certainly pleasurable and exciting to regard the West as an object of romance or fantasy, we also learn that reading and believing Western writing bears serious inherent risks. If "Gentleman Jack's Widow" shows how fiction can leave one a penniless dupe, "Lanty Foster's Mistake" offers at least the specter of much greater danger. It's only because the notorious bandit Murietta *also* falls prey to the conflation of fiction and information that Lanty doesn't unwittingly endanger her community. Having offered an account of boosterist fiction and its metatextual engagement with the dangers it presents to the reader, I turn now to nonfiction texts to show how they, too, undermine their own boosterist work by drawing the reader's attention to matters of Western authenticity. In the coming section, I show how these more straightforwardly

"informational" texts, which present themselves as nonfiction undermine their project of presenting authentic information to potential tourists and investors from outside the West.

3.4 Self-Awareness and Self-Doubt in Boosterist Nonfiction

I've been describing how texts that present themselves as fiction both operate through and put pointed questions to the idea of authenticity in the production of the idea of the West. But even texts that don't present themselves as fiction perform their authenticity with the same self-awareness and irony as the short stories I've been describing. That these texts present themselves as nonfiction and that they wear their boosterist agendas on their sleeves might make it surprising that beneath their promotional surfaces lies a surprising undercurrent of ambivalence about the project of boosterist writing itself. The Southern Pacific's economic interests lie not in the propagation of accurate information, but rather in the propagation of information favoring their businesses. Nowhere is this clearer than in the nonfiction texts that directly promote tourism and investment in the West. All writing bears the biases of its creators and publishers, but the writing in *Sunset* responds to very specific and identifiable financial imperatives. Literary critics have long been interested in the emergence of writing as a profession in the United States. Scholars like Philip H. Round have traced the emergence of "proprietary authorship" in the 19th century United States, and ample manuscript evidence from canonical writers from various parts of the country like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Bret Harte offer plentiful evidence that writers themselves are very interested in the financial security, even prosperity. that proprietary authorship offers. Here, though, I am concerned with a different kind of link between literary and financial concerns. If the lens of proprietary authorship highlights the legal and financial relationship between the individual author and the texts she or he authors, commercial periodical writing emphasizes the analogous link between the text and the firm underwriting its publication.

In other words, I am less interested in the way that a story might advance the financial interests of its author than in the way it might serve the financial interests of the firm that paid for its writing and publication. Owned as it was by a railroad firm, *Sunset* was less interested in advancing a program of literary principles or the careers of certain authors than drumming up business for its owners. Until 1914, when ownership of the magazine passed from the Southern Pacific to a group of the magazine's employees, *Sunset* was not a literary magazine, but rather a boosterist one. This means that, at least in theory, all of the text in the magazine should be united in its commercial purpose.

So far, I have focused on the ways in which works that present themselves as boosterist fiction actually show surprising tensions, even doubts, about the ideological work that they are ostensibly written to perform. These tensions and problematizations of the idea of authentic, boosterist Western writing are not endemic to texts that present themselves as fiction. Even in texts that present themselves as factual descriptions of the attractions of the West, the writing is suffused with doubt and irony regarding the possibility of authenticity. In its first issue, the magazine proclaims that "It has no advertising space to sell and comes to you unbiased" (1). Though this rule is eventually relaxed and later issues of the magazine contain plentiful advertising, this early proclamation establishes that the magazine's editors and publishers are concerned that the magazine's content be perceived primarily as informative rather than interested, financially or otherwise. There's a certain deceptiveness in the claim that *Sunset* eschews advertising, since the entire magazine serves as an advertisement for the Southern Pacific, but the sentiment expressed in this sentence nonetheless affirms the magazine's desire to present itself as offering reliably authentic representations of the West, unadulterated by ulterior

commercial motives. And yet, as I will show in this section, there is a skepticism in these texts, undermining their claims of authenticity.

Two particularly common genres of these nonfiction pieces in the magazine's early issues correspond to two kinds of travelers that they anticipate attracting to their passenger travel business: tourists and investors. Descriptions of places and activities likely to appeal to tourists frequently highlight the exceptional natural features of the West; for example, the first issue of magazine features a glowing description of Yosemite National Park, which had been established in 1890 (3-8). The early issues of the magazine are also peppered with advertisements for resorts in the West owned by the Southern Pacific. What these texts have in common is that they their usefulness would seem to hinge upon their bridging of their boosterist need to present the West in the best possible light while also maintaining credibility as a source of actionable information. This strategy of representing the magazine to present "unbiased" information marks these nonfiction texts as claiming to be more similar to history or reportage rather than creative work. It might therefore seem important to the mission of these texts that they at least claim to offer authentic representations of the West. In their diction, syntax, and figurative language, however, they bear evidence of their authors' consideration of factors beyond authenticity and even metatextual warnings of the ways in which their authenticity is a performance.

An important promotional priority of the magazine is the promotion of tourist travel in the West. The first example of a piece targeted at potential tourists is the aforementioned description of Yosemite in the very first issue of *Sunset*. A blurred line between authentic description and a more literary mode is immediately apparent from the piece's most obtrusive formal features. It opens with an epigraph taken from Sir Walter Scott's "The Lady of the Lake," describing in poetic form some of the natural features that *Sunset*'s readers might discover on a

trip to Yosemite (1:3). Scott is not describing a lake in Yosemite; any reader knows that the Scott poem cannot be understood to be an authentic representation of any body of water in Yosemite in a literal sense because "The Lady of the Lake" is set in a mythic version of Scotland. Yet the author of this unsigned Yosemite article implies that the same representational strategies present in literature can offer readers an authentic sense of what Yosemite would have to offer a tourist. In adopting this strategy, the author might be understood to either insist upon Western regional distinctiveness or concede the point on it. On the one hand, using "Lady of the Lake" to describe Yosemite suggests that the real West is unique in the world, so no authentic, nonfiction description can even represent it. This recalls Nathaniel Lewis's point about American readers insisting that the West persistently transcends the mode of realist description. As the author observes, Yosemite not only defies description, but also comprehension: "The imagination cannot grasp the stupendous entirety" (1:3). The lakes of Yosemite are so sublime that the only language that can hope to offer an authentic description is not in a realist mode at all, but lyric poetry inspired by myth. At the same time, though, the way in which this particular literary allusion is so geographically tied to another real place erodes the piece's insistence on the geographic distinctiveness of the West. If Scott's language can be applied to even a mythic Scotland, it's not distinctive to the American West. Moreover, it destroys the pretense of authenticity. Before it really even starts, the piece deviates from the strategy one expects from the magazine's manifesto: authenticity and regional distinctiveness.

The same piece quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson, who calls Inspiration Point, "the only spot I have ever found that came up to the brag" (1:3). The idea behind presenting this particular quote is that Yosemite (and indeed the West) are full of places that are talked up by boosters. It is rare, Emerson suggests, that these accounts are authentic representations of the real West; they

almost never match the "brag." Even as the piece praises Inspiration Point, it signals the reader that boosterist writing is, as a rule, not to be trusted. The reader comes to understand that Inspiration Point, as a spot that comes up to the brag, is a rarity; it's the only example Emerson can think of in which the circulating description matches the real thing. Though it evidently attempts to produce the most flattering possible account of Yosemite, offering rapturous descriptions of natural beauty that entice the potential tourist, the article represents itself as describing real phenomena. Here, *Sunset* is restricted by a need to represent itself as presenting authentic information about the West in a way that the fiction I describe earlier in this chapter is not. The magazine cannot simply invent the heights of the waterfalls and peaks, as described in a table in the article. Nor, for that matter, can the magazine invent waterfalls and peaks altogether, since it presents itself as an authentic description of the park, despite its borrowing of allusions and techniques from literature Yet at the same time, these moments in the text undermine its regional boosterism. Unpacking these allusions to Scott and Emerson show that the piece is surprisingly attentive to the risks and shortcomings of its own strategies. It draws the reader's attention to the impossibility of authentic representation and the textual production of regional distinctiveness. In this sense, it insists upon its own incapacity or failure to achieve what it ostensibly sets out to accomplish.

In addition to information meant to attract tourists to the West, the magazine offers informational pieces meant to appeal to people who might bring human and financial capital to the region. Transforming tourists into residents and investors would ensure enduring demand for the services of the Southern Pacific. These pieces, too, feature surprising qualities that veer away from the authorial choices that might most directly build a sense of authenticity in the text. In the "The Propaganda of the Prune" by Charles H. Allen and in "Stoneless Prunes, the Latest

Wonder" by L. H. Bailey, *Sunset*'s nonfiction writers celebrate of the prune industry with plenty of facts.[14] Hard data and photographs substantiate their claims. But these authors also write with surprising brio and playfulness. That the first piece refers to itself as "propaganda" establishes an ironic tone. This arch diction winks at the united financial interests of the magazine and the prune industry. Here, the authors confess their financial incentives to exaggerate the attractiveness of the prune industry with startling openness. Allen also deploys repetition and staccato parallel sentences to humorous effect: "The prune is delicious. The prune is the most healthful fruit known. People who eat prunes have clear complexions. The longer they eat them the better they like them. Prunes make people well. Prunes make people strong. Ask your doctor what he thinks about prunes" (6:165). In these works, one finds the extreme hyperbole one might associate with the most artless hucksterism, as when Bailey terms simmered prunes with cream "a feast for the gods" (7:211). While at times rhapsodizing in florid prose about the virtues and value of the prune like Bailey, Allen also occasionally does the opposite, comically diving into the weeds of quantitative analysis in his comparison of the water content of various foods. Claiming the superiority of the prune's value to the consumer over other foodstuffs, he writes, "To be entirely fair in this matter, it must be admitted that there is a small loss in the pit, which is

[14] The California prune industry was a commercially significant. Prune production in California can be traced to the Frenchman Louis Pellier who, with his brother Pierre, established commercial prune farming in California. The first record of commercial prune production was an 1859 shipment of 11 tons from John Ballou to San Francisco, and "by 1870, there are 19,000 prune trees in California" (Connell 3-4). "The Propaganda of the Prune" quotes a publication called "The California Prune Primer," also put out by the Southern Pacific Company, to establish significance of the prune industry in the state: "There are 62,000 acres of prune trees in California. Last year they bore nearly 350 million pounds of green prunes. Some trees had 800 pounds apiece. Each acre has usually 100 trees. The 150 million pounds of cured prunes grown last year would fill 6000 freight cars. That would make a train 45 miles long. These California prunes in a row would go around the earth ten times" (165). This "California Prune Primer" was itself a cultural sensation. It was initially distributed to 100,000 teachers around the nation, but demand for the pamphlet led to the distribution of an additional 500,00 copies (Orsi 325).

usually thrown away" (7:209). This rhetorical tension between soaring hyperbole and comic scientific precision suggests that these writers aren't only moved by the desire to appear as authentic and accurate as possible. The magazine presents ostensibly dry information in surprisingly complex and playful ways and the figurative language in these pieces suggests that entertainment is a crucial consideration in these nonfiction texts. Though the institutional context in which these articles are published suggest that they should be offering an authentic account of a distinctive region, the authorial choices suggest that this project is shot through not only with self-skepticism that, in this case, manifests as archness in its boosterism. Texts like the piece on Yosemite and the pieces on prunes show surprising self-awareness and irony in their boosterist work, drawing attention not only to the genuine strengths of their case—the sublime beauty of the first national park and the notable success of the California prune industry—but also to the ways in which their project is flawed. Even as they offer accounts of the West that entice readers to the region with claims that register authentic, they remind the reader that they are engaged in a form of economic boosterism that undermines their whole project.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter exposes the tensions within Western writing that for literary historical reasons has always presented itself first and foremost as authentic. I offer an account of periodical texts that aim to produce authentic Western regional distinctiveness that balances the reader's desires for the Wild West and the emerging region that Thomas Lyon terms the real West. Yet what I find is that claims of authenticity in these texts are surprisingly suffused with self-awareness and irony. Like the other historical moments that I trace in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, the closing of the frontier produces a crisis in the national identity. Discursively reproducing Western regional distinctiveness while sanding off its sharpest edges is a project in

which the financial interest of the Southern Pacific aligns with the ideological appetites of the nation. Yet the very texts that one might expect to be most interested in producing Western regional distinctiveness—and doing so with the appearance of perfect authenticity—also produce doubts about the whole project of Western boosterist writing. They repeatedly call the reader's attention to the weakness of the literature of which they might appear to be examples: the absurdities of Western genre fiction, their dubious literary quality, the dangers of confusing fiction for reality, and so on.

In *Unsettling the Literary West*, the definitive account of Western literature's postmodern features, Nathaniel Lewis convincingly argues that Western regionalism is particularly concerned with authenticity. "The West of which I speak," he goes so far to claim, "is but another name for the Authentic" (6). For Lewis, the stakes lie in authorship. He asks, "what happens when the claim of authenticity is examined critically and is revealed to be not only a quixotic rhetorical strategy but also a form of authorial self-invention?" (9). My concerns here are not necessarily with authorship and the insistence on realism that has so long hampered Western literary production. Rather, I'm interested in showing a particular set of tensions within Western writing and their impact on texts that, at least on the surface, should seem relatively simple in their ideological ambitions. *Sunset* is an extreme case, being a magazine wholly owned by a major railroad. But my readings here not only show that Western writing is not only preoccupied—even obsessed—with authenticity, but also that this preoccupation can manifest as a kind of neurotic self-doubt. Even as these texts seem to attempt to inveigle the reader with their financially interested form of Western regionalism, they undermine their own boosterist aims and cast doubt upon the viability of their aim: the production of authentic regional distinctiveness

as the frontier closes. In this chapter I offer an account of the opportunities and dangers within boosterist discourses about the American West.

This simultaneous textual embrace and estrangement characterizes what this dissertation calls the paradox of Western American literature. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I move from a period of crisis in national identity occasioned by the closing of the Western frontier to a crisis in national identity occasioned by unprecedented waves of European immigration to the American West. Here, I show how the distinction between West and nation, weaker than ever before because of the closing of the frontier and the settling of the West, nonetheless serves as a vessel of a certain kind of American humanism. Immigrants, Willa Cather's work suggests, find the version of American that most lives up to its egalitarian, pluralistic ideals in the West. What I show in the final chapter, though, is the ways in which Willa Cather is attuned not only to the plight of the immigrant, especially in the context of the West's ultimate failure to shield the immigrant from nativism, she is also attuned to the plight of the American "native," a figure she represents as the surprisingly sympathetic tramp.

Chapter 4: Americy to America: Multiculturalism and Nativism in Willa Cather

4.0 Introduction: "Norwegians now, is it?"

In Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918), the title character relates a jarring tale of nativist despair. As the narrator Jim Burden and Ántonia's employers the Harling family prepare walnut taffy, Ántonia tells them a story about an American tramp who happens by, desperate for a beer, when she is threshing wheat with some neighbors. When Ántonia tells this tramp that he will be unable to find any, since he is among Norwegians, who don't drink beer when they thresh, the tramp replies, "My God!...so it's Norwegians now, is it? I thought this was Americy." Feeling like an outsider in his own country, the tramp shortly thereafter commits suicide by leaping, head-first, into the wheat thresher (178). Cather's symbolism is blunt; the threshing of wheat draws the reader's attention to the labor and appetite of the immigrants that outcompete the American tramp. The note of disbelief in his rhetorical question, "so it's Norwegians now, is it?" tells readers of his weariness of the pace, volume, and diversity of immigration into the United States, rendering it no longer recognizably "Americy." Though Cather's prairie novels are widely celebrated for their portrayals of the immigrant families that tame the frontier, the tramp reminds us that European immigration often comes at the cost of people who see themselves as more genuinely American. In "Americy," the tramp complains, one should be able to find a beer at threshing time. But it's clearly not just desperation for a beer that drives him to kill himself in this vivid fashion. What kills him is the transformation of American culture into something he can't recognize: the move from "Americy" to America. What had been a reliable, familiar culture in which he could rely on certain kinds of people and perhaps no longer exists, its edifice worn away by a stream of immigrants that seems endless ("Norwegians now, is it?"). Though Cather's Nebraska prairie novels propagate a humanizing and generally triumphalist story about

European immigration to the United States, this tramp asks readers to also consider the costs to the Americans who came before them.

Ántonia tells her listeners that authorities are able to learn little about the tramp's origins. Their only clue is a poem found in his pocket, a worn clipping of a "The Old Oaken Bucket," a piece by Samuel Woodworth widely printed in the early 20th century. The poem is an apt choice for the nativist tramp's pocket, as the poem describes its author's nostalgia for the scenes of his boyhood and the well bucket from which he would drink after returning from the fields on his father's plantation: "And now far removed from the loved situation, / The tear of regret will intrusively swell / As fancy reverts to my father's plantation / And sighs for the bucket which hangs from the well" (6:2).[1] While the poem's explicit theme is nostalgia for boyhood, it figuratively alludes to a youth uncomplicated by the presence of strangers. There are no characters in the poem at all except for the narrator himself and his father, who doesn't even appear except as the owner of the plantation on which his son grows up. The poem plays on the desire for the reproduction of identity within a family that becomes impossible in a world shaped by global flows of people and capital.[2] It is for this lost "Americy" that the tramp yearns.

[1] Woodward is a New Englander, but the poem's reference to the plantation—and perhaps the tramp's vernacular—carries Southern regional implications. Woodward's roots, combined with the circulation of this thematically Southern poem to the West in the tramp's pocket, suggest that this tramp's poem isn't simply figuring a clash between Southern and Western regionalism. And to the extent that the South in particular is important in this poem in excess of its thematization of nostalgia, the regional reference invokes ideas of Darwinian racial hierarchy that are ideologically connected with anti-immigrant politics. The rising prominence of the Ku Klux Klan in the period and region in which Cather works only makes the anti-immigrant implications stronger. D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* is released in 1915 and the film inspires renewed interest in the group defined in part by its anti-immigrant stances. Furthermore, as I will argue later in this chapter, the South proves to be Randolph Bourne's case for what the United States would look like untouched by immigrant influence on its Anglo-Saxon roots.

[2] For an account of the incestuous impulse in nativist modernism, see Walter Benn Michaels's *Our America* (3).

Thinking about the tramp's suicide in light of the Woodworth poem, it becomes all the clearer that he commits suicide for the same reason that Ántonia's father does. Unable to adjust to life in a foreign land (or, in the tramp's case, a land that now feels foreign to him), self-destruction is the only escape. As sure as the reader feels for Ántonia's father, the cultured musician too sensitive for the harsh realities of prairie life, the reader must see the obvious parallels between Mr. Shimerda and the tramp. Though one is an immigrant and one is a native, they are both worthy of tolerable lives. *My Ántonia* presents the reader not only with a triumphalist immigrant narrative, but also a genuine moral conundrum, which manifests as affective shear. Even as the reader identifies with the vivacious immigrant characters that dominate the novel, Cather also encourages readers to see how the tramp has legibly human desires, human value, and a political point of view that can't be simply dismissed on account of his individual faults.

The tramp's case for his own value lies in his Americanness. It's wrong, he suggests, that Norwegians should prosper while the true citizens of "Americy" suffer. But inasmuch as the tramp's strongest case for his value lies in the reader's sense that he is the real American and the Europeans don't really belong in the United States, on what grounds can the reader be sure that he is more deserving of the American identity? If he is an American, he's not a particularly impressive or archetypical specimen. He is hardly the figure of the frontiersman that Frederick Jackson Turner called the epitome of the "American intellect." On the contrary, he is reliant on the charity of others for survival, prejudiced in his views, and lacking in the will to persevere. This particular tramp appears to be an anti-frontiersman in his dependence on people and on alcohol, but the idealized tramp is, for sociologist Robert Park, "a belated frontiersman, a frontiersman at a time and in a place when the frontier is passing or no longer exists" (160). However, Paul Durica points out in his dissertation on the figure of the tramp, that the

frontiersman is part of a progressive, teleological process, while tramping is "open-ended" (*Flux Americana* 7). This is a crucial difference because, as Durica points out, in what might be legible as a corollary of the Frontier Thesis: "In America one should always move forward" (9). The tramp, then, becomes not a distinctively American figure by virtue of his mobility, but rather a counter-American figure by fault of his mobility's lack of direction and his non-productivity. He claims to know more about "Americy" than the immigrants, but by being a failed frontiersman rather than a successful one like the immigrants, he shows himself to be, at least in a certain sense, less American than the so-called foreigners. But Durica makes one more move, complicating the failure of the tramp to be sufficiently teleological in his reading of Hart Crane's *The Bridge* (1930) and related archival materials. For Durica, Crane's tramp figure reasserts the connection between tramp and frontiersman via their shared antimodernism, even if the tramp lacks the firmly westward, teleological impetus of the frontiersman (178). So the tramp is both like and unlike the frontiersman. They are alike in that they (like the immigrant) are mobile figures and they also share a disdain for the civilized trappings of modernity, but they are also unalike because the frontiersman is engaged in the project of bringing about the social conditions of his own banishment. Unlike the tramp, who lives without regard to projects or progress, the frontiersman is always moving a particular direction and moving his country in a particular direction as he transforms wilderness into civilization. In this sense, the tramp has much more in common with the Indian or "Native American," a figure that is represented as living without history. In the Indian's world, the closing of the frontier and the encroachment of civilization leads to death at the hands of roving savages; this is the fate of the inhabitants of the Cliff City in *The Professor's House* (1925). Maintaining a connection with the wild is crucial for the fitness of a people.

This ideal of tramp as frontiersman is contiguous with the crises in American masculinity I describe in this dissertation's second chapter. The arrival of immigrants only exacerbates the fears of middle-class American men that modernity is a danger to their sense of racialized national identity. Historian Todd DePastino describes a generalized anxiety that "white men were growing soft and weak amidst the civilized refinements of home. New groups of exotic immigrants pouring into urban centers and building powerful new political machines fed into the sense of crisis" (116-117). As I argue earlier in this dissertation, American manliness had *been* in quiet crisis since the second quarter of the 19th century for economic and technological reasons. By the end of the 19th century, this crisis is being seriously exacerbated by immigration, and the rise of figures like the literary tramp is one response. Drawing on the ideological associations of the West is a promising path to salvation for American culture for some American men. Though Cather is best known for telling stories of immigrant success, she also tells a story of native failure. As I will explore later in this chapter, this native tramp is not only a minor, pitiable character as he might initially appear to be in *My Ántonia*, but also a useful framework for reading characters that might not be immediately recognizable as native tramps, like Tom Outland in *The Professor's House*.

I begin this chapter with this native tramp because it is a vivid, arresting figure that allows me to begin thinking about the complexities and contradictions of the way in which Willa Cather represents immigration and assimilation in her novels of the 1910s and 20s. It challenges and muddies the triumphalist immigrant narratives that lie on the surface of these texts and plunges into the contentious intellectual and political debates that occur in this period. It also invites a discussion of other kinds of stakes, such as questions of literary historical categories and how Cather might fit into them, fail to fit into them, or demonstrate their untenability. I begin

this chapter's body sections with this latter point, a focused claim about Cather's critical reception and categorization as it relates to this dissertation's main argument regarding the paradoxical difference and identity of Western and American literature.

4.1 Willa Cather's "Familiar Country"

I invoke the story of the tramp in *My Ántonia* to highlight the importance of questions of American identity in Willa Cather's work. It has become a truism that the term "regionalist" has always been pathologically haunted by an implicit prefix: "mere." In the last 20 years, several critics have attempted to address or correct critical disdain for writers and texts that have been dismissed in this way as parochial and unliterary.[3] But there was never anything minor about Willa Cather, who is both closely associated with various forms of Western regional writing and also a giant of American modernism, widely acclaimed even relatively early in her career.[4] One thing that makes Cather such an interesting figure in American literary history is her embodiment of the paradox that lies at the heart of this dissertation. I have been arguing that the distinctions between writing that is seen as distinctively Western and writing that is distinctively American are more fragile than the ubiquitous accounts of some texts as (merely) regional and others as genuine articles of American literature might lead one to believe. The traits that define these literatures are, for literary historical reasons that I explore in this dissertation, entangled and

[3] For example, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse argue in *Writing Out of Place*, that "historians have minimized, ignored, and disparaged [regionalist] writers, either relegating them to the category of 'local color' or describing them as a subset of realism by the phrase 'regional realists'" (4). Blake Allmendinger argues that this problem is especially severe in the case of the west: "How had students come to believe that an introverted poet such as Emily Dickinson, or a resident of tiny Walden Pond, was somehow 'American,' while anyone who took as his or her subject the whole western half of the continent was a regionalist, a local color writer, or a miniature portraitist?" (1).

[4] As Susan J. Rosowski observes, "Nebraska and great literature seem, as Willa Cather herself acknowledges, an unlikely combination." Yet, Rosowski writes, "Critics now agree that Cather's coming to terms with Nebraska led to the flowering of her art" (141).

ultimately indistinguishable. Cather offers a useful test case for this dissertation's argument because critics have long understood her writing to be regional, yet she has successfully attains a national reputation. Crucially, for my purposes here, this national reputation develops not in spite of her persistent interest in and association with the American West but because of it. As Cather points out in her 1931 essay "My First Novel (There Were Two)," the process of writing her first novel to be set on the prairie *O Pioneers!* "was like taking a ride through a familiar country on a horse that knew the way...*O Pioneers!* interested me tremendously, because it had to do with a kind of country I loved, because it was about old neighbors, once very dear, whom I had almost forgotten in the hurry and excitement of growing up and finding out what the world was like and trying to get on in it." While she acknowledges in this essay that the snobbish East Coast literati might say, "I simply don't care a damn what happens in Nebraska, no matter who writes about it," Cather clearly won over the arbiters of American literary taste, at least in the early part of her career ("My First Novels" 171-172). According to Cather, this acclaim is a result of her giving up the stilted and effortful transnationalism of *Alexander's Bridge* (1912) and writing about the places and people that she knows best.

The "prairie novels" that first bring her national recognition, culminating in a Pulitzer Prize for *One of Ours* (1922), focus specifically on what Cather calls "familiar country." However, this is not to say that Cather consistently cultivates or embraces regional associations in her work. On the contrary, she is anxious that too strong an identification with a particular region, especially one with the dubious literary pedigree of the West, could undermine her image as a serious artist, a worry personified in the aforementioned hypothetical reader who doesn't give a damn what happens in Nebraska. She intuits that part of "finding out what the world was

like and trying to get on in it" is distinctly at odds with writing about "familiar country."[5] This chapter reads this tension between the world and the West in Cather's career, showing how her work is shot through with conflicting impulses to both embrace the region and to abandon it in favor of national forms of identity, even as it becomes increasingly unclear whether there's any difference between the traits that define them. By unsettling the distinction between the regional and the national, Cather demonstrates that the problem of whether the regional has been unfairly marginalized in comparison to other, larger geographic frames of reference becomes less meaningful; the regional and the national become mutually imbricated, paradoxically distinct and at the same time identical. In this chapter, I argue that Cather's both represents and instantiates the failure of Western traits to be convincingly different from the national ones. Yet, I will also show that she insists on distinguishing between the West and the nation even in the face of its untenability. Even as she produces a "Western" literature filled with themes, characteristics, and practices that she sometimes presents—and critics nearly always attempt to read—as regionally distinctive, she and her readers also imagine them through the framework of literary nationalism. Cather's writing reproduces the paradox that this dissertation describes: the way that the literary West is imagined as both different from and identical to the nation.

Here, I focus my readings on Cather's handling of the themes of immigration and assimilation of immigrants.[6] My rationale is primarily historical. The period in which Cather's national reputation develops is marked by ubiquitous concern in the United States about the potential negative consequences of what appears to be an endless stream of arriving immigrants.

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[5] Fetterley and Pryse read Cather's short story "Old Mrs. Harris" (1932) as Cather's assessment of regionalism as a comforting retreat from the pressures of modernity (57-58).

[6] Joseph Urgo argues that the movement of people is not only the key theme of Willa Cather's work, but also the definitive experience of American culture. See *Willa Cather and the Myth of American Migration* (1995).

Since the middle of the 19th century, the United States had been shaped by several waves of Asian and European immigration. Opposition to widespread immigration is immediate. The "American Party," also known as the "Native American Party" or, more famously, the "Know Nothings" attained prominence in the 1850s by advocating against immigration, especially of European Catholics. Nativist sentiment continued to frame American political conversations around national identity into the 20th century, culminating in the passage of a series of laws designed to freeze the demographic proportions of the nation, avowedly in the service of preserving and defending American culture as it was then constituted.[7] These nativist politics

[7] Significant European immigration to the United States begins in the 1840s, driven by the Potato Famine in Ireland and political violence in continental Europe. Around this period, the discovery of gold in California also draws immigrants, including many from Asia. Up to this point, immigration policy is largely handled by individual states. The first federal legislation to limit undesirable immigration, the 1875 Page Act prohibits individuals from "China, Japan, or Oriental country" from entering the country if they are not coming by "their free and voluntary consent" and it also bans "the importation of women into the United States for the purposes of prostitution" and "persons who are undergoing a sentence for conviction in their own country of felonious crimes other than political or growing out of or the result of such political offenses, or whose sentence has been remitted on condition of their emigration." This ban proved to be insufficiently wide-ranging in its attempts to protect the interests of "Americans" in the West from the influx of cheap Chinese labor, so the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act becomes the next in a series of federal laws intended to protect American citizens from the social and economic consequences of widespread immigration. While the Page Act and Chinese Exclusion Act focus on limiting the influx of immigrants with visible racial differences from the Americans they were intended to protect, the passage of the Immigration Act of 1882 a few months after the Chinese Exclusion Act codifies the first federal restrictions on immigration applicable to European as immigrants. Towards the end of the 19th century, steamships make it possible for Europeans to emigrate to the United States more quickly and cheaply than before and events in Europe produced greater impetus for them to do so. Economic and political factors both "pushed" Europeans from their home countries and "pulled" them to the United States. In the United States, good farmland is more abundant, technological developments are creating urban jobs with better wages than are available in Europe, and the more immigrants that arrived in the Midwest, the easier the transition appears to Europeans contemplating immigrating to the United States. Meanwhile in Europe, economic hardship and religious persecution make emigration more appealing. The Immigration Act of 1882 is only the first in a series of federal legislative efforts to tighten immigration policy in the United States. By the early 20th century, federal legislation reflects growing anxieties among American elites about the quality and character of the immigrants that are reshaping the nation. For a broader historical treatment of American

relied upon ideological accounts of what, exactly, these parties were preserving and defending. By 1920, anti-immigrant sentiment had reached a boiling point. Here, one finds another situation like those I identify and examine in this dissertation's earlier chapters: an intensification of desire for articulations of what constitutes American culture, usually in response to demand created by some kind of geopolitical, economic, or demographic crisis exogenous to culture as such. Cather's work serves as this dissertation's final case study in Western regional responses to the expressed need for a national literature. I will show how even the writer most renowned by critics for her Western regionalism and who claims, if somewhat ambivalently, the West as her literary ground shows that the traits of Western literature are inextricable from those of the national literature. If Western and American literature are not two separate or separable things, but rather one paradoxical formation, the usual frameworks for understanding American national identity no longer make sense.

This chapter begins by examining Cather's immigration politics in relation to the renowned progressive intellectual and cultural critic Randolph Bourne. Bourne is not only the author of "Trans-national America," an essay that makes an eloquent case for what we would now recognize as American multiculturalism, he is also an enthusiastic reader of Cather. The feelings of regard are mutual, as Bourne also earns Cather's admiration for his perceptive critique of her work. In this section, I show how "Trans-national America," an essay best known for its arguments about the national culture of the United States, is deeply indebted to logics of regional difference and how the cultural entanglement of the West with the nation play a crucial role in his vision of a plural American culture. I also argue that his reviews of Cather's work

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immigration, see John Higham's *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (1955).

flesh out his more theoretical work about American culture. His assessment that Cather's brilliance relies on her regionalism echoes the logic of "Trans-national America," prizing regionally differentiated culture reinvigorated by the admixture of European national traditions over what he sees as an increasingly consumerist and mediocre national culture, a tired shade of the nation's Anglo-Saxon cultural origins. This section locates Cather within a fierce and explicitly political debate about American culture in a time in which it is widely believed to be under assault by enormous numbers of immigrants.

The two subsequent sections examine two perspectives on European immigration to the United States: the immigrant's and the native's. First, I examine the portrayals of the immigrant in Cather's work, specifically the politically charged relationship between the American citizens of Frankfort, Nebraska and their German immigrant neighbors in her 1922 novel *One of Ours*. As the United States enthusiastically enters WWI and Germany becomes the enemy, Cather portrays the difficulty of figuring out what American cultural identity means when multiculturalism would dictate the assimilation of the nation's most threatening enemy. My reading of the novel is particularly attuned to the significance of the American West and the enhanced possibilities for cultural pluralism that the novel's characters imagine to be distinctive functions of Western regionalism. Far from the established centers of Anglo-Saxon American culture on the East Coast, in a small community where every immigrant is known as an individual, it would seem that multiculturalism would be best equipped to weather the Great War's challenges to the United States' commitments to liberalism. Yet Cather shows the paradoxical way in which the region both is and isn't different from the nation and how the failure of this regionalism shatters the novel's protagonist, the idealistic Claude Wheeler.

After examining representations of the challenges of assimilation, I turn to the other half

of the story of American immigration: the supposed victims of the immigration that Cather's 1910s novels ostensibly glorify: the native. I read the figure of the tramp in several of Cather's most widely read novels as an emblem of the American victim of European immigration: not only economically disenfranchised, but also a victim of a culture that pivots unexpectedly away from him. I read the tramp who commits suicide in a wheat thresher in *My Ántonia* and the sick tramp who infects the town of Moonstone by throwing his diseased and dying body into the town's water supply as surprisingly human figures, even sympathetic ones. I ultimately read one of Cather's most beloved protagonists, Tom Outland, a character who might initially seem very different from the disgusting and disturbing tramps I describe earlier in this section, as another nativist tramp. I argue that these tramps show Cather to be far more ambivalent, even dubious about the massive European immigration that shaped American demographics in the late 19th and early 20th century, than one might expect, and I argue that these stories of the native tramp's desperation and disappointment provide yet another opportunity to think through the possibilities and limitations of multiculturalism and regionalism in a period in which there is a desire for definitive articulations of American identity.

In addition to thematizing the challenges of multiculturalism by representing the natives harmed by immigration, Cather employs abrupt aesthetic ruptures that formally echo the dissonant note sounded by the tramps. The most famous example is "Tom Outland's Story," the "turquoise set in dull silver" of *The Professor's House*, but I show that the tramp stories are of a piece with other strange, disruptive anecdotes set in Cather's novels, such as the story of Peter, Pavel, and the wolves in *My Ántonia* and the story of Ole's dance with his unfaithful wife in *The Song of the Lark*. I argue that the heteroglossic discontinuity Cather produces here figures the heterogeneities in American culture produced by immigration. Just as these stories are woven

into a broader narrative yet insistently retain an otherness and integrity apart from the text as a whole, so too do immigrant communities persist within the broader tapestry of American culture, according to Bourne's vision of a "trans-national America." Cather famously loved hearing the stories of immigrant women when she was a girl new to the town of Red Cloud. In the frame narratives and formal discontinuities in her novels, we see matter that refuses to dissolve in the melting pot of American culture.

4.2 Randolph Bourne and the Promise of American Multiculturalism

Cather helps bring to light the ways in which the American West and its endemic regionalism are bound up in constructions of a national culture in a period in which it served as the setting for fierce debates about immigration policy. In this section, I argue that regionalism is surprisingly central to a discourse about multiculturalism that was—and is—generally understood to be national. Writers in this period spoke of a need to describe American culture, American behaviors, and American identity. In my examination of multiculturalism, I pay special attention to Randolph Bourne's work on the possibilities of transnationalism in American culture for several reasons. First, Bourne is an influential figure in American intellectual history and "Trans-national America" is an enduringly influential account of how cultural pluralism can enhance the nation. Second, Bourne and Cather read and engaged with each other's work. Bourne publishes several reviews of Cather's early novels before his untimely death in 1918 and Cather identified him as an exceptionally skilled critic, capable of perceiving her work in ways that even she could not. Third, Bourne and Cather both lead lives shaped in part by their outsider status, which grants them exceptional perspectives on American culture and politics. Though Cather's gender performance and sexuality and Bourne's disabilities are not focal themes in this chapter, their personal histories constitute a subtext for their broad pronouncements on American

life that is difficult to ignore.[8] This dissertation, like most, is concerned with the discourses of people who find enough professional success to leave lasting textual traces of their lives. Consequently, they tend to write with the instinctive authority that comes from their relatively privileged social position. Cather and Bourne are different, as a I will show later, and, as a result, share both a disenchantment with nostalgic versions of American culture and a greater tolerance for difference than one might expect from artistic or intellectual elites. As Bourne puts it in his 1911 essay "The Handicapped," his disability and the difficulties and exclusion that it causes have both intellectual and emotional consequences. On the intellectual side, it denaturalizes social structures; institutions were not made with the "handicapped" in mind, so "Human affairs seem to be running on a wholly irrational plan, and success to be founded on chance as much as on anything. But if he can stand the first shock of disillusionment, he may find himself enormously interested in discovering how they actually do run...He has practically to construct anew a world of his own, and explain a great many things to himself that the ordinary person never dreams of finding unintelligible at all." In addition to a burning intellectual curiosity, his disability has emotional consequences. He argues that a "man like me...will be filled with a profound sympathy for all who are despised and ignored in the world. When he has been through the neglect and struggles of a handicapped and ill-favored man himself, he will begin to understand the feelings of all the horde of the unpresentable and the unemployable, the incompetent and the ugly, the queer and crotchety people who make up so large a proportion of human folk" (324). Cather and Bourne see American culture from the perspective of sympathetic outsiders.

[8] Cather's gender performance and sexuality have long been of interest to her biographers (see, for example, O'Brien 121). Bourne is facially disfigured by forceps at birth and spinal tuberculosis give him a hunchback and stunt his growth.

In this section, I examine multiculturalism as an intellectual response to the social and economic conflicts I outline in the previous one. Through my readings of Cather and Bourne, I aim to show multiculturalism in this period in a new light. It becomes not only a humanist gesture, an attempt to transform identity from a function of blood into a function of behavior, or, even better, a vision for a united national culture. In addition, multiculturalism here becomes an index of regionalist discourses, every bit as much as nationalist ones. This complicates conventional narratives of the origins of American multiculturalism. It's not just about people from different countries trying to figure out how they can be part of American culture, whether through Dewey's melting pot or Bourne's tapestry; it's also about the fractious discourses produced by writers like Cather and Bourne about the relative role and importance of the region and the nation in the production of identity. Cather shows us how region is imagined to matter very much in how the figure of the immigrant and the figure of the native are produced in literature. As this dissertation has been arguing, though, traits that define the region and those that define the nation will be harder to distinguish than one might expect. In subsequent sections of this chapter, I will show how reading through the lens of the paradoxical entanglement of region and nation produces new and sometimes contradictory readings of Cather's representations of the immigrants on the prairie, as well as further evidence of her role in the production of what Walter Benn Michaels has termed nativist modernism.

I follow literary critic Sarah Wilson in arguing that Cather's stance on immigration is "more than a simple argument for, or even demonstration of, the 'inclusion' of immigrant heritages" (130). Wilson focuses her analysis of Cather's complicated stance on immigration and assimilation on the question of temporality. In *Culture and Democracy in the United States*, Horace Kallen objects to a "melting-pot" version of cultural assimilation on the grounds that it

cut immigrants off from and deprives American culture of the benefits of the immigrants' "ancestral memories" (112). Wilson suggests that Cather's literary techniques in the representation and thematization of time produce a form of time and with it a form of history that becomes more plastic than Kallen might allow. National traditions are mediated by textual productions of history, and when modernist formal experiments problematize history, it suddenly becomes possible to revise identity in new ways. For example, Cather's engagements with the past in *The Professor's House* enable Tom to adopt the Indian "Eve" as his "mother," over and above whoever gave birth to his dead parents: "one rises above brutal biology through a passionate queerness that can, and does, change one's understanding of who one's grandfather is, what he represents, and what one's relation to other grandfathers might be" (164). Here, I extend Wilson's intervention by showing how Cather not only problematizes history but also geography. Just as much as works like *My Ántonia* and *The Professor's House* produce accounts of time and ancestry that challenge Kallen's claim that an immigrant cannot change the identity of his grandfather (60), I aim to show how Cather problematizes space to challenge the literati who would dismiss the Western regional work of someone who cannot change the location of her upbringing. I begin by offering a brief account of the early part of Cather's literary career to expose links between her encounter with immigrant communities in Nebraska and her rise to literary stardom as a regionalist. I then describe this chapter's impact on the critical narrative of Cather's literary career and political views through an exploration of her regionally inflected engagement with nativism.

Movement and immigration are central to Cather's literary biography. Her association with the West is the result of her family's move first to the frontier prairie where her grandparents were living and shortly thereafter to the town of Red Cloud, Nebraska from

Virginia when Cather is nine years old. According to Cather herself, her frontier childhood among both nature and a diverse community of European immigrants is formative in her aesthetic and literary sensibilities. Joan Acocella, one of Cather's biographers describes the young author as social and inquisitive to the point that she irritates the adults around her, gathering from Czechs, Swedes, Bohemians, and Germans the raw material for her writing (7). After her childhood, Cather's story begins to move East. She attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, originally intending to be a doctor, but her ambitions become more literary after a professor submits (without permission) her essay on Thomas Carlyle to the *Nebraska State Journal* (Acocella 11). Cather falls in with a literary crowd and pens notoriously barbed theater reviews (O'Brien 149). After a year back home in Red Cloud, she uses her literary connections from college to begin her career as an editor and writer in Pittsburgh in 1896. Her early work is, by most accounts, unremarkable. By her own admission, her first major work, *Alexander's Bridge* is derivative and uninteresting. It is only when she turned to material related to her Western youth that she begins attracting serious attention from the national literati.

The relationship between Cather's rise to national literary stardom and the ubiquity of desire for literary articulations of American cultural identity in this period can be understood both in terms of the ways in which the qualities of her work establish her as an American writer and in terms of the ways in which her status as an American writer reframes the stakes of her work. On the one hand, her rise can be explained at least in part by her success at meeting demand for an articulation of American culture. If the West embodies what is best and most distinctive about the United States as Frederick Jackson Turner and his followers insist, Cather's regionalism can be reimagined *as* nationalism. For Turner and subsequent generations of historians inspired by his work, understanding the relationship and the nation in this way

supports the strongest argument for the genius and significance of Cather's work: that Cather translates the particularities of a region into images and ideas that transcend the region. She produces something that captures the national identity from the material of the West. On the other hand, having achieved a national reputation as an artist, her work takes on new responsibilities and new significance. That Cather's work is recognized as both great and emblematic of distinctly American themes and images gives us important clues about what American intellectuals hope to represent as constituting American culture. These two methods of reading Cather as a national figure are circular when held together; they form a chicken and egg problem: is her work only understood to be great because the nationalist implications of its regionalism suited the time? Or is her work adopted as national because it is judged to be great for other reasons, such as its popularity or its formal qualities?

These questions lie at the heart of feminist regionalist arguments about the relationship between region and nation that seek to determine the political possibilities offered by literary regionalism. For example, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse take to task influential critics like Richard Brodhead and Amy Kaplan for what they see as the denigration of regional writing. According to Fetterley and Pryse, even as prominent critics recognize the talent of writers like Sarah Orne Jewett and Kate Chopin, they argue that regionalism of these women writers' work undermines any claim that these authors might have to agency or creative genius. Rather, these critics suggest, their literary stature can be attributed to the good luck, so to speak, of growing up in backwater areas in a moment in which provincialism is valued by literary tastemakers. In other cases, perhaps, the marks of regionalism are an embarrassing limitation that a discerning critic might convince other readers to overlook. Fetterley and Pryse, however, see regionalism less as a problem or handicap than as a way for writers to opt out of problematic political projects,

arguing that regionalism constitutes an "alternative and oppositional tradition, one that worked against the construction of nation and empire" (212). For them, regionalism can be a prophylactic against grasping, unsavory nationalisms. What I am arguing here, though, is that, at least in the case of Cather's Western regionalism and its significance to her readers, the division between the regional and national is has never really been reliable.

If, as I argue, Cather both represents and instantiates the paradoxical otherness and identity of the literary West and the nation, it would complicate rather than settle the question of regionalism's potential as a corrective to the excesses of nationalism or imperialism. For example, it would undermine the framework through which Fetterley and Pryse articulate their disagreement with scholars of American literary nationalism that they accuse of dismissing, eliding, and otherwise denigrating regionalism. But for the very same reason, it would also challenge any account of American literature that reads regional difference as a challenge to the project of forming and maintaining a national culture.[9] It would also reframe how we read thinkers like Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne, who argue that American culture should not let European cultural legacies fade away through assimilation or demands of unity (America as "melting-pot") but rather in the dogged perpetuation of various European nationalisms in an American context.[10] This view is articulated by Bourne in his essay "Trans-national America," published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in July of 1916. What some of Bourne's critics have not fully

[9] I don't mean to suggest here that literary regionalism constitutes anything like an existential threat to the national literature. However, any attempt to produce an account of a prestigious, coherent national literature that might compete with the great European traditions would be inevitably undermined by unruly, unserious backwater writing. These are the critics that Cather is thinking of when she describes the kind of snob who dismisses any writing set in Nebraska in "My First Novel (There Were Two)."

[10] See Sarah Wilson's *Melting-Pot Modernism* for an account of the metaphor of the cultural melting pot and literary form.

appreciated is that his call for multiculturalism over a vague national monoculture, drawing heavily from the work of Kallen, is articulated in overtly regional terms. Cather is sympathetic to Bourne's critique and in a 1924 interview called "passion for Americanizing everything and everybody" a "deadly disease" in the national culture (*Willa Cather in Person* 71-72). The hallmarks of cultural assimilation, for Cather, are a cheapness and haste that have had disastrous aesthetic effects. Better, Cather argues, to allow the preservation of foreign traditions within American culture, an idea popularized by "Trans-national America."

Bourne criticizes the ubiquitous ideal of the melting pot, advocated by his mentor John Dewey among others, to describe the assimilation of immigrants from throughout Europe into a homogeneous American culture with Anglo-Saxon Puritan roots.[11] His argument originates in a comparative study of regions in the United States. He finds that cultural deterioration is the inevitable result of insistence upon Anglo-Saxon traditions as the measure of American identity. He identifies the South as the most American region by this criterion and he compares it unfavorably with what he calls the "Northern states." By "Northern states," though, it becomes clear from the examples that he gives that Bourne means, more or less, Cather country: Wisconsin and Minnesota, characterized by immigration of "Scandinavians, Poles, and Germans." This region one might call the midwestern frontier, or a part of the greater American West: that part of the country not slavishly devoted to Anglo-Saxon traditions but rather, borrowing a Darwinian metaphor, takes advantage of cultural "cross-fertilization." If the South "still remains an English colony, stagnant and complacent, having progressed culturally scarcely beyond the early Victorian era," the American West in states like Wisconsin and Minnesota have

[11] Dewey is not fond of the term "melting-pot," but he believes in the importance of assimilation (Wilson 14).

become comparatively advanced in "wisdom, intelligence, industry and social leadership." For Bourne, American cultural identity at its best should come not from the assimilation of continental European cultures into a melting pot, but rather the assimilation of Americans into these other national traditions: a reverse assimilation that explodes a stultified American culture into a transnational spectrum, taking advantages of the "German and Scandinavian political ideas and social energies" (118:89-90). Regions, for Bourne, offer a kind of laboratory in which the role of the control is played by the American South, long untouched by European immigration, and more western states play host to an experiment of reverse assimilation. Already we begin to see the unreliability of the line between what is imagined as regional and what is imagined as national. Like so many before, including many figures I discuss in this dissertation, Bourne's optimism about the future of the United States lies in his will to blur the boundaries between the culture of the West with the culture of the nation.

Bourne is not just a contemporary of Cather, but an avid reader of her work. In his review of *My Ántonia* in *The Dial*, published shortly after his death under the title "Morals and Art from the West," he expresses the same paradoxical entanglement of the regional and the national that he gestures to in "Trans-national America." His readings of Cather's prairie novels show how he believes that Cather's greatness as an American writer worthy of wide acclaim comes from her particular attachments to the rural West. He criticizes *The Song of the Lark* for straying from the Nebraska prairie that she knows best: "Willa Cather has already shown herself an artist in that beautiful story of Nebraska immigrant life, O Pioneers! Her digression into The Song of the Lark took her into a field that neither her style nor her enthusiasm really fitted her for" (65:557). An earlier, unsigned review essay by Bourne in *The New Republic* waggishly titled "Diminuendo" offers a fuller articulation of his distaste for this novel on the grounds of its departure from

Cather's familiar Western scenes: "It is difficult, from 'The Song of the Lark,' to reconstruct that lyric preface to the former book, the 'Prairie Spring,' which sang the very theme of the book and made at least one Dakotan youth quite weak with homesickness" (5:153).[12] Though he praises the novel's Western scenes, he argues that the novel goes terribly wrong when Thea's singing career draws her outside her and Cather's home region.

For Bourne, Cather's strength as a writer lies in her intimate familiarity with the West, which can only come from personal experience: "The early chapters—the little Swede girl's childhood in the Colorado town, her quaint pastoral family, the old musician, her early musical studies in Chicago—are delightfully done. So are scenes like the Mexican dance, where Thea's artistic soul rises against the disapproving conventionality of the little town. There is air and sun in the Arizona cliff summer. All this is real because it is part of the Thea that Miss Cather is writing about, and part of Miss Cather's own assimilated experience...Miss Cather would perhaps be shocked to know how sharp were the contrasts between those parts of her book which are built out of her own experience and those which are imagined. Her defects are almost wholly those of unassimilated experience" (5:153-155). Cather doesn't disagree. In a letter to renowned activist, educator, and writer and longtime friend Dorothy Canfield Fisher dated 15 March 1916, she calls Bourne's "the best of these adverse reviews, the only interesting one." In addition to correctly, in Cather's mind, criticizing the novel's title, "He puts his finger on another thing. The book is done in two manners—one intimate, one remote. She goes on, but I stand still in Moonstone with Tillie, and I write from Moonstone...The book moves about, and yet all hangs

[12] Bourne refers here to the poem that serves as the preface to *O Pioneers!* "The Prairie Spring" is a lyrical tribute to the flat and fertile Nebraska prairie. Cather's poem is first published in the December 1912 issue of *McClure's Magazine* (*O Pioneers!* 174).

on the Moonstone relation—which latter fact this Mr. Bourne did not get" (*Selected Letters* 218-219). Though I have no evidence that Cather met Bourne before his 1916 death from influenza, in a 5 January 1919 letter to her brother Roscoe, she calls him "the ablest of our critics" (*Selected Letters* 272). This idea, that Cather knows the West well but falters when she tried to take the plot beyond her "familiar country" becomes the basis of the harshest criticism of *One of Ours*, the novel in which Cather ultimately turns her attention back from the prairie to the wider world. According to critics, the Frankfort, Nebraska scenes in this novel are vintage Cather, but the WWI scenes set in Europe ring false. Sinclair Lewis's review allows that "truth does guide the first part of the book," but that the war sections are full of the "commonplaces of ordinary war novels" (173).[13]

In accordance with his belief that the weakness of *The Song of The Lark* comes from Cather's turn away from the West, Bourne praises Cather for turning her focus back to the Nebraska prairie in *My Ántonia*, gushing, "Here at last is an American novel, redolent of the Western prairie, that our most irritated and exacting preconceptions can be content with." Ultimately, he finds that the excellence of Cather's ability to connect to the truly particular and local is her ticket out of literary provincialism. He finds her exceptional talent in "these simple

[13]As Nathaniel Lewis writes in *Unsettling the Literary West* (2003), the critical measure of a western writer has historically been authenticity, and critics find it in the Nebraska scenes. Yet the second half of the novel strays from the Nebraska prairie to the transatlantic passage and occupied France. Critics seem uneasy with the Western writer writing outside the West and continue to attempt to think in terms of the authenticity of Cather's writing rather than the formal innovations that modernists developed to capture the dislocations and transcendent horror of WWI. Literary critic Steven Trout's *Memorial Fictions: Willa Cather and the First World War* lays out the case that *One of Ours* is "far more modernist than most critics have assumed" (7). Though critics like Sinclair Lewis and also Ernest Hemingway, who saw WWI firsthand attacks the novel's war sections for their inauthenticity, it proves popular with soldiers and the novel won a Pulitzer Prize. Indeed, many ordinary soldiers praise the book's accuracy (Harris 663).

pictures of the struggling pioneer life, of the comfortable middle classes of the bleak little towns" and it is through her ability to write convincingly about these scenes and people that she knows best that she "has taken herself out of the rank of provincial writers and given us something we can fairly class with the modern literary art the world over that is earnestly and richly interpreting the spirit of youth. In her work the stiff moral molds are fortunately broken, and she writes what we can wholly understand." In this review, Bourne credits Cather's talent for writing "Morals and Art from the West" for allowing her to transcend the "rank of provincial writers" and producing work that can be classed "with the modern literary art the world over" (65:557). This a remarkable claim and an instance of the paradox of Western American literature: her very provinciality is what allows her to transcend provinciality.

Bourne's literary critical engagement with Cather's career is entirely consistent with his immigration politics: creative strength and vitality come not from the bland mixture of the melting pot, but rather from insisting on the particularity and difference made legible by regionalism. In the absence of the injection of foreign vitality that can only come from immigration, he argues, American culture will succumb to mediocrity. Maintaining enclaves of foreign influence maintains cultural vitality: "It is not the Bohemian who supports the Bohemian schools in Chicago whose influence is sinister, but the Bohemian who has made money and has got into ward politics. Just so surely as we tend to disintegrate these nuclei of nationalistic culture do we tend to create hordes of men and women without a spiritual country, cultural outlaws, without taste, without standards but those of the mob" ("Trans-national America" 118:90). For Bourne, it is not the failure of immigrants to assimilate, but cultural assimilation itself that presents the keenest danger to the United States, not only in moral terms but in cultural ones. Immigrants who lose the cultural identity of their homelands "become the flotsam and

jetsam of American life, the downward undertow of our civilization with its leering cheapness and falseness of taste and spiritual outlook, the absence of mind and sincere feeling which we see in our slovenly towns, our vapid moving pictures, our popular novels, and in the vacuous faces of the crowds on the city street." It is not only the individual who suffers, untethered to the communities created by cultural belonging, but also the national culture, "moving pictures" and "novels" that are the worse for the melting pot approach to American culture ("Trans-national America" 118:91).

It's tempting to see progress against ethnic or racial bigotry in Bourne's call to "speak, not of inferior races, but of inferior civilizations," but Walter Benn Michaels argues in *Our America* (1995) that the early 20th century sees the emergence of a new form of nativism.[14] Michaels argues that the early 20th century saw the rise of both modernism and nativism and that the two are linked by their shared "commitment to identity" (3). In what he calls the "nativist modernism," that emerges "just after WWI," there is "not only a reassertion of the distinction between American and un-American but a crucial redefinition of the terms in which it might be made" (2). For Michaels, a characteristic feature of nativist modernism is the collapsing of the sign into its referent, obviating the need for representation. The sign can simply be, its mere

[14] While I do not claim that Bourne is entirely immune from the Darwinist racial hierarchies of his period, there is evidence that he finds even non-white people to be capable of development, even to the point of parity with European peoples. The quote of speaking "not of inferior races" comes in the context of an argument that any race is capable of progress, even equality, in a relatively short period of time: "I do not believe that this process is to be one of decades of evolution. The spectacle of Japan's sudden jump from medievalism to post-modernism should have destroyed the superstition. We are not dealing with individuals who are to 'evolve.' We are dealing with their children, who with that education we are about to have, will start level with all of us. Let us cease to think of ideals like democracy as magical qualities inherent in certain peoples. Let us speak, not of inferior races, but of inferior civilizations. We are all to educate and to be educated. These peoples in America are in a common enterprise. It is not what we are now that concerns us, but what this plastic next generation may become in the light of a new cosmopolitan ideal" (118:87-88).

identity performing what had hitherto required the work of representation. The process is the same in developing a modern(ist) national identity. Rather than emerging from cultural practices, he argues, the question of who counts as an American becomes a question of family, of blood. In short, he claims, "the great American modernist texts of the '20s must be understood as deeply committed to the nativist project of racializing the American." This racialization, however, does not always appear in explicitly racial terms, however. For Michaels, it is cloaked in the language of culture: "Culture, put forward as a way of preserving the primacy of identity while avoiding the embarrassments of blood, would turn out to be much more effective than incest, impotence, and homosexuality as a way of reconceptualizing and thereby preserving the essential contours of racial identity" (13). While Bourne argues for a progressive multiculturalism that would preserve the best features of diverse national cultures and his emphasis on cultural practices would help Americans understand their national belonging to transcend embodied race or ethnicity, Michaels argues that the turn to culture is not really a turn away from race but actually a retrenchment of the significance of race to the production of a national culture. I extend Michaels's critique of multiculturalism by showing that multiculturalism is not a reliable solution to the problem of cultural difference in the United States, even if it could be delaminated from questions of blood due to the uneasy and unstable relationship between regional and national forms of cultural belonging. As I will show in my reading of *One of Ours*, the ways in which multiculturalism is produced, articulated, and represented in literary art itself constitutes regional cultural differences.

4.3 Multiculturalism and Regionalism in *One of Ours*

Michaels argues that the particular version of nativism that emerged in the United States in the 1920s shares with literary modernism an obsession with identity. Just as nativism makes

blood rather than behavior the determinative factor in questions of national belonging, texts rely on a logic by which figuring or saying a thing and the thing itself became equivalent. Identity is everything. Indeed, the title of Cather's novel *One of Ours* (1922) practically begs the reader for an account of identity: who is the "ours" in *One of Ours*? Is the reader included? If so, how far does Cather intend to press the reader's sense of sharing a collective sense of self with the novel's characters, the region that they call home, and the indeed with Cather herself? If not, the question remains of how big the "ours" might be. The novel's protagonist Claude Wheeler is based on Cather's cousin Grosvenor Cather, who, like Claude dies on a WWI battlefield in Europe.

Fig. 4.1 G.P. Cather's Army Unit. Cather appears third from the left in the bottom row, directly above the sign. As the sign (which reads "Nebraska") suggests, units are formed out of men from the same place, which sets the conditions for the regionally inflected tension between Wheler and David Gerhardt that Cather represents in *One of Ours*. MS 113. George Cather Ray Collection. Archives & Special Collections, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, Lincoln, NE.

In an 8 March 1922 letter to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, the author describes the model for her protagonist: "My cousin, Grosvenor, was born on the farm next to my father's. I helped to take care of him when he was little. We were very much alike—and very different. He never could escape from the misery of being himself except in action, and whatever he put his hand to turned out either ugly or ridiculous. There were years when we avoided each other. He had a contempt for my way of escape, and his own ways led to absurdities" (*Letters* 311-312). Indeed, Claude, like Grosvenor, struggles to fit into the provincial, pragmatic forms of life that characterize his Western upbringing. Part of the reason that the idea of the region is so important to him is that he needs to believe that life offers more than what he sees in Nebraska. Even as a youth, he is drawn to broader perspectives than Frankfort and his backward education can offer. He hopes to attend the state university and he falls in with the German Erlich family, coming to love their impractical but intellectual and artistic ways. The ideologies he comes to loathe are embodied by his business-minded brother Bayliss and his obsessively religious wife Enid.

In this chapter section, I describe Cather's representations of nativist, specifically anti-German sentiment in *One of Ours* and the ways in which this nativism and failure of multiculturalism are a product of the failure of Western regionalism to produce the region as reliably distinct from the nation. I also argue that Cather nonetheless insists on prosecuting this doomed argument for Western distinctiveness, as it provides the only fleeting hope for the kind of ideological "escape" that Claude, like Grosvenor Cather, so desperately needs. In this chapter section, I show how Cather not only engages with the theme of immigration to the United States, she does so in ways that paradoxically insist upon the significance of region, even as she undermines it.

In the early part of *One of Ours*, set mostly in Nebraska, Cather explains to the reader

that the protagonist Claude Wheeler understands himself and his habitus as distinctively Western. This regional identification shapes the representation of the immigrant and the process of cultural assimilation in the text. While on a train journey home from his college at Christmastime, Claude observes a gang of friendly train workers joking and flirting with the German restaurant proprietress, a Mrs. Voigt who retains the accent of her homeland but feels great affection for her American customers. As he watches the scene, Claude "wondered whether working-men were as nice as that to old women the world over. He didn't believe so. He liked to think that such geniality was common only in what he broadly called 'the West'" (56-57). Cather emphasizes Claude's imaginative construction of the region ("what he broadly called 'the West'") and he places it in the context of a geographic other imagined as global (he wonders whether this geniality is common "the world over"). Cather creates a note of ambiguity in Claude's regional differentiation, offering two slightly different phrasings with slightly different meanings in quick succession: "He didn't believe" the rest of the world was like "the West" and at the same time, "He liked to think" that it wasn't. What is unclear here is whether Claude actually believes that this genial culture is distinctive to the West or he only *hopes* that it is: is the West actually distinctive, or is the idea of the West's geographic distinctiveness merely a pleasing notion? This moment of ambiguity, especially when coupled with the stiltedness of Cather's phrasing, "what [Claude] broadly called 'the West,'" offers the reader the idea of a distinctive regional identity that captures or aspires to capture a global ideal for the relationship between immigrants and their neighbors, but makes it awkward and agonistic. Claude struggles to imagine region into being, deliberating naming and thereby discursively producing "the West" with a specific ideological goal. The reason that "the West" is important to Claude is that it is a space set aside from both the bigotry that would make it impossible for a German like Mrs. Voigt

to become a part of the fabric of her new country.

As it turns out, the West of *One of Ours*, like the rest of the nation, is ultimately caught up in anti-German sentiment. The most explicit scene of anti-German distrust occurs in the legal proceeding in which the Wheelers' neighbor Mr. Yoeder and another German immigrant Mr. Oberlies are found guilty of disloyalty and fined three hundred dollars apiece. Yoeder and Oberlies both appear to have assimilated smoothly into American life. In defending himself before the judge, Yoeder appeals to the liberal ideals that lie at the heart of most constructions of American exceptionalism: "I thought this was a country where a man could speak his mind" (322). Oberlies's life is a picture-perfect version of the American dream: "His neighbours were proud of his place...They told how Oberlies had come to Frankfort county a poor man, and had made his fortune by his industry and intelligence" (319). Yet these two men, exemplars of American ideology, political in the case of Yoeder and economic in the case of Oberlies, are singled out by their neighbours for their ongoing loyalty to Germany, evidenced by remarks they make to their neighbors to the effect that they would like to see Germany conquer and occupy the United States. The Judge rules that the men may not be out of line from a legal perspective, but that they fail to adapt to the procedural demands of American culture: "You have not recognized the element of appropriateness, which must be regarded in nearly all the transactions of life; many of our civil laws are founded upon it. You have allowed a sentiment, noble in itself, to carry you away and lead you to make extravagant statements which I am confident neither of you mean. No man can demand that you cease from loving the country of your birth; but while you enjoy the benefits of this country, you should not defame this government to extol another" (322). The men have learned to live in their region, earning the respect and admiration of the people who know them personally, including Claude's father. Even after Yoeder is fined for

disloyalty, Mr. Wheeler walks out of the building, chatting with him as his son prepares to fight against the army of Yoeder's ancestral homeland (323). Yoeder and Oberlies have mastered the behavioral forms of cultural assimilation needed to get by in the West, but with the looming war, their good behavior is not enough; they require the state's imprimatur of "appropriateness," which can only be granted by the Judge, who is not a true Westerner, but a figure who represents the importance of loyalty to nation over loyalty to region.

This Judge, Cather implies, is a veteran of the Civil War: "a one-armed man, with white hair and side-whiskers...He was an old settler in Frankfort county, but from his frock-coat and courtly manners you might have thought he had come from Kentucky yesterday instead of thirty years ago" (318). By making this veteran of the conflict that recently literalized the difficulty of separating region and nation, Cather draws the reader's attention to the influence of the region on questions of even the most overtly nationalist forms of culture. Making him a Kentuckian only heightens the symbolic role that the Judge plays in parsing these regional and national forms of belonging. Slavery had been legal in Kentucky and in 1861, the state refused to contribute troops to the Union and the state government proclaimed the state neutral. However, intense pressure from both the Union and Confederacy and the state's geographic location on the border between the North and the South eventually make this neutrality unfeasible. By the end of 1861, public opinion leans towards the Union, so the Confederacy, believing several sites in the state to be of strategic importance, invades. The state never secedes from the Union and, although it sees bloody fighting in the early years of the Civil War and ongoing guerilla violence, it remains mostly under Union control. The Judge's missing arm, Cather suggests, is a grisly cautionary figure for what happens when the region is allowed to undermine the nation. This is what motivates the Judge to mistrust and ultimately punish the German farmers. They had been too

secure in their regional belonging and had felt free to flout their national belonging. The specter of regional secession reminds the Judge of the dangers of allowing cultural practices within the region to be wholly constitutive of identity without nationalist oversight, a kind of cultural Supremacy Clause. The citizens need to remember that the nation has authority that must be procedurally recognized, lest the nation again devolve into disunion brought on by regionalism. The West is not allowed to be an exceptional case; it must be subordinated to the nation.

As she represents the inability of these proud and gruff farmers to perform the kind of procedural, state-recognized assimilation that would inoculate them from this fine, Cather also returns to the most unthreatening version of the German immigrant in Mrs. Voigt. Unlike the train employees who treat her with easy familiarity, a group of troublemaking boys steals her dinner bell, prompting the uniformed Claude to retrieve it. "She's a German and we're fighting the Germans, ain't we?" one of the boy reasons, presenting a nationalist justification for his cruelty. "I don't think you'll ever fight any," Claude retorts. "You'd last about ten minutes in the American army. You're not our kind. There's only one army in the world that wants men who'll bully old women. You might get a job with them" (331). Here, Claude speaks of armies representative of nations, not regions. Cather presents the failure of regionalism to produce meaningful ideological difference; just as the Judge insists on the predominance of the nation over the region, Claude can only turn to national and institutional forms of belonging to castigate the behavior of the boys. Claude believes, or at least likes to believe, that things are different in "the place that he broadly called 'the West,'" that people there are kinder to old German women, but the boys resolutely insist upon the category of the nation, rejecting Claude's belief that the West is untouchable by the nation's prejudices. They argue that their shared nationality is what really matters ("we're fighting the Germans, ain't we?"). Claude's appeal to the boys is in the

language of the archetypal national institution: the army. Relying on the state authority conferred by his uniform, he abandons any effort at persuasion on the grounds of culture identity. He does not say that we in "the West" treat old women a certain way, but rather that there's only one nation in the world that would take boys who bully them. Just as Michaels describes the invention of cultural pluralism in *Our America*, Claude struggles to talk his way into understanding national identity as a matter of behavior rather than blood, claiming that in engaging in the behavior of stealing Mrs. Voigt's bell, the boys make themselves into German soldiers rather than Americans. It is through their behavior, not through their blood, that they forfeit their claim of national belonging. They might join the only army in the world made up of people who bully helpless women, namely the Kaiser's German one. His phrasing, "You're not our kind," though, produces uncertainty about the sources of a cultural identity. Being of a kind invokes Linnaean biological rhetoric and national belonging moves from the realm of culture into the realm of blood. Like the title phrase "one of ours," "you're not our kind" thematizes questions of political and biological belonging, just like the discourses around federal immigration policy produced by the likes of Dewey, Kallen, Bourne, and others.

Cather's title opens the question of who might legitimately claim the war dead like Claude as "one of ours." This is a disturbing question in some ways because the answer to this question that seems most obvious and intuitive—the people of Frankfort, Nebraska—is so obviously untenable. Claude is miserable in his home region, a place that let him down so terribly in the case of Mrs. Voigt and is otherwise so obviously full of people that had little in common with him. Cather hints at his failure to draw a sense of cultural identity from the place of his birth and upbringing in her description of his discomfort with his name. This uneasiness with the name "Claude" stems from two reasons that seem mutually exclusive. First, its French

origins leave him feeling that it engages in unseemly social striving. The bathetic contrast between the name's association with high culture and his rural, uncultured upbringing makes him self-conscious. On the other hand, the name—especially when pronounced by the annoying preacher Arthur Weldon or his cold wife Enid—is homophonous with "clod," as in dirt clod: an association to which Cather draws the reader's attention (279).[15] Like all of the protagonists of the prairie novels, perhaps none more so than Alexandra Bergstrom of *O Pioneers!*, Claude is deeply tied to the soil—the literal clods—that produce him. The name "Claude" is somehow both too elevated and abstract and too earthy and unsophisticated for the protagonist. There is also an irony to the residents of Frankfort calling Claude "one of ours" in the sense that Claude struggles mightily against the regional culture which he finds anti-intellectual and stultifying.

Claude's brother Bayliss in particular constitutes the modern, capitalist impulse that Cather often attacks in her novels. Literary critic Celia M. Kingsbury links Bayliss to modern industrial titans like Henry Ford and John Harvey Kellogg, who reshape American life with a legacy of material satisfaction but spiritual want. Bayliss also appears to have much in common with such characters as the dangerously callous lawyer Ivy Peters of *A Lost Lady* and the superficially charming but uncreative Jewish electrical engineer Louie Marsellus of *The Professor's House*. Harsh though it might seem to compare the benign if oblivious Louie to the psychopathic Ivy here, I mean to emphasize the formal method that Cather employs to use these characters as critiques of modernity. They serve as foils to their more romantic counterparts

[15] See Myra Jehlen's *American Incarnation* (1986) for an account of the significance of the physical fact of the American continent in the development of a distinctively American form of liberalism. Also see Stephanie Lemenager's *Manifest and Other Destinies* (2008) for analysis of the various environments of the American west and the variety within them that has historically been occluded by the idea of an all-encompassing manifest destiny.

(Claude, Captain Forrester, and Tom Outland) and they tend to become very wealthy. What's important for my argument here, though, is the way in which Cather codes these characters in regional terms. The romantic dreamer is the Westerner and the pragmatic capitalist is not. Captain Forrester speaks of the ways in which "All our great West has been developed from such dreams; the homesteader's and the prospector's and the contractor's" (44-45) while Ivy and people like him reap the rewards: "The Old West had been settled by dreamers, great-hearted adventurers who were unpractical to the point of magnificence; a courteous brotherhood, strong in attack but weak in defence, who could conquer but could not hold. Now all the vast territory they had won was to be at the mercy of men like Ivy Peters, who had never dared anything, never risked anything." The greatest crime of this kind of man is that he destroys the region of the West itself, bringing it into sameness with the nation: "They would drink up the mirage, dispel the morning freshness, root out the great brooding spirit of freedom, the generous, easy life of the great land-holders. The space, the colour, the princely carelessness of the pioneer they would destroy and cut up into profitable bits, as the match factory splits the primeval forest" (89-90). Ivy hates the west so much he attacks it physically, draining the Forrester marsh. Marsellus, though not as obviously dangerous as Ivy, represents a suspiciously foreign influence. Like Ivy, he gains his wealth not by becoming a dreamer who risks his whole life, but a technician. Just as Ivy profits off the work of Forrester, Louie becomes rich by patenting Outland's invention, risking only his capital. The grotesque house that he builds with the money is built in a European style, showing that the invasion of foreign cultural influence and the dispossession of "real" Americans is not only a matter of demographics, but also of aesthetics. The conflict between Claude and Bayliss is of a piece with these other conflicts between Western romanticism and the modernizing nation.

Claude's sense of ambivalence toward the region in his personal identity is magnified when he meets fellow officer David Gerhardt in Europe. The soldiers under Claude's command are also Westerners, but they do not share his urgent desire for some kind of escape or transcendence from their home region. David is first introduced by colonel Scott in terms of his geographic identity within the United States: "I see you're an officer short, Captain Maxey...Lieutenant Gerhardt is a New York man" (454). When he meets David, Claude is initially struck by a strange, antagonistic feeling: "something like jealousy flamed up in him. He felt in a flash that he suffered by comparison with the new officer; that he must be on his guard and must not let himself be patronized" (455). Early in their friendship, Cather describes how "A kind of rivalry seemed to have sprung up between him and Claude, neither of them knew why." This rivalry, literary critic Mary K. Ryder suggests, comes from the sense that David is a man while Claude remains (and will forever remain) a boy. Yet there is also a regional rivalry between the boy from the Nebraska prairie and the "New York man." The factors that distinguish Gerhardt— his mastery of the violin and his intellectual, sensitive nature—are at times liabilities in the context of trench warfare: "Claude could see that the sergeants and corporals were a little uncertain about Gerhardt. His laconic speech, never embroidered by the picturesque slang they relished, his gravity, and his rare, incredulous smile, alike puzzled them. Was the new officer a dude?...Was he a swell-head? No, not at all; but he wasn't a good mixer. He was 'an Easterner'; what more he was would develop later.[16] David and Claude ultimately become close. David and the people to whom he introduces Claude recapitulate the role that the Erlich family plays in

[16] See Richard Harris's note on the term "dude": "American slang; a 'dude' (from the Scottish 'duds' or clothes) is a man who pays an excessive amount of attention to how he dresses. In the American West the 'dude' was often depicted as an effete and ineffectual easterner (*One of Ours* 757).

Claude's youth. Yet the novel continues to both express and repress the significance of regional difference in the context of war effort that demands nationalist feeling.

Cather also thematizes this tension between the West and nation in the title of the novel's final section, "Bidding the Eagles of the West Fly On." It certainly invokes the eagle as the symbol of the United States, but even this title carries a strong regionalist association even as it appears to demand a national interpretation.[17] The phrase is drawn from the Vachel Lindsay's 1919 poem "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan," an idealistic youth's account of a great conflict, though in this case, the struggle is not the recently concluded WWI, but the 1896 presidential election pitting the Republican William McKinley against the Democrat William Jennings Bryan. The poem's subtitle, "The Campaign of Eighteen Ninety-Six, as Viewed at the Time by a Sixteen-Year-Old, etc." deploys the rhetoric of the war ("the campaign") and its central figure, a tragic youth, is a member of Claude and Grosvenor's generation. The poem paints the election in starkly regionalist terms: "Not the silver and the gold, / But Nebraska's cry went eastward against the dour and old, The mean and cold" (19). In Lindsay's telling, Bryan is represented as "Nebraska's shout of joy," who "scourged the elephant plutocrats" (19). These metropolitan businessmen and gold standard supporters politically dominate the rest of the nation, "And all these in their helpless days / By the dour East oppressed, / Mean paternalism / Making their mistakes for them, / Crucifying half the West" (21), until Bryan's populist campaign: "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, / Gigantic troubadour, speaking like a siege gun, / Smashing Plymouth Rock with his boulders from the West" (22). He gathers the support of these Western states to challenge the regional hierarchy that keeps McKinley's wealthy coalition, composed of

[17] Wendy K. Perriman offers exactly this nationalist interpretation of the eagle in the section's title in *Willa Cather and the Dance* (127).

businessmen whose interests he would protect by maintaining the gold standard and establishing protective tariffs, in a position of dominance. The economic differences between Bryan and McKinley are inextricable from regional concerns, and the map of the electoral college shows a sharp regional divide in the nation's preferred candidate.

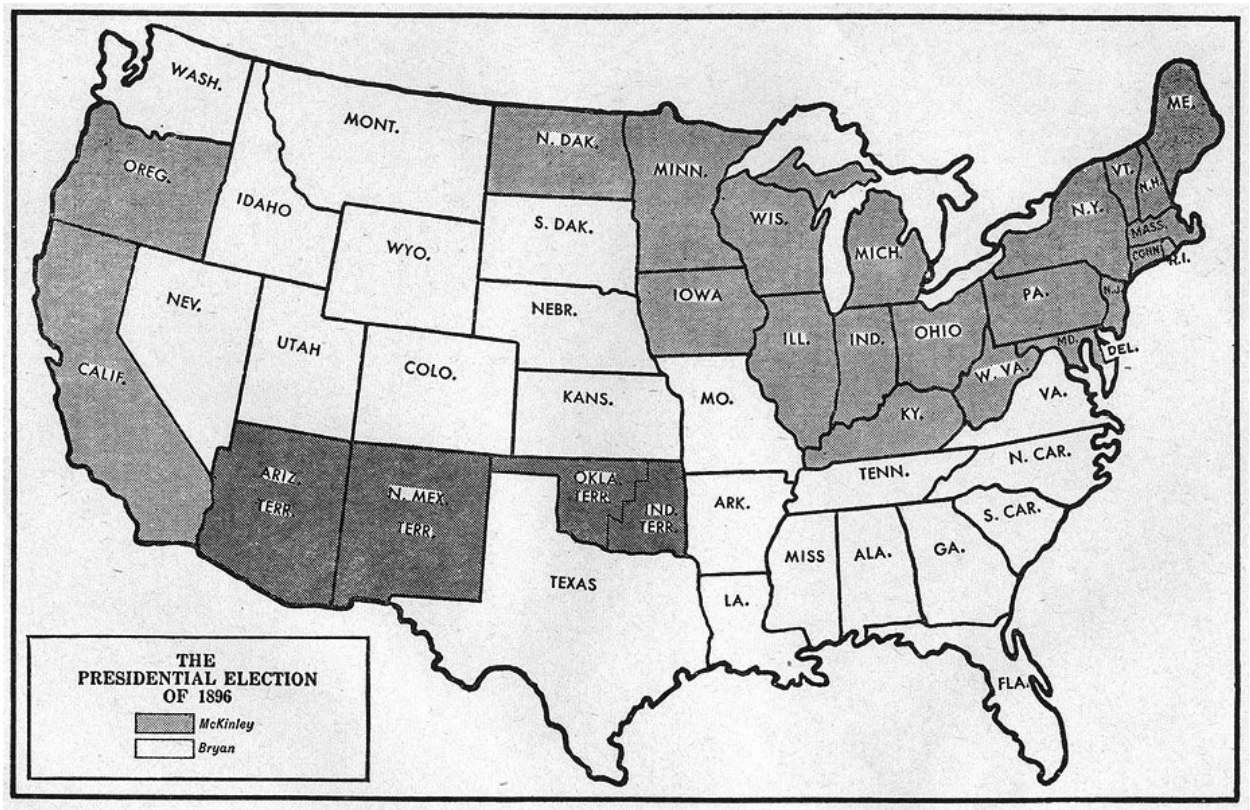

Fig. 4.2 "The Presidential Election of 1896." McKinley's victory is assured by his victories in populous, economically developed states, mostly on the East Coast. Bryan's victories came in the West and the South. Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic*, vol. 2, Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 263.

Lindsay's poem draws on the rhetoric of WWI and the genres of feeling that it evokes, such as solidarity and identity, but adapts a national struggle against oppression into a regional one. This is the poem that Cather deploys for the battlefield section of *One of Ours*, takes full advantage of the double-meaning of "West" to denote both the Western location of the United States in relation to the nations they aid in Europe and also to denote the Western region of the United States, another geographic entity to which Claude might be said to belong. Claude places a great

deal of stock in his identification with the American West and his interactions with the German immigrant community illustrate the optimism bound up in his hopes for the ideological usefulness of the West. Here is a place where immigrants, even from countries at war with the United States might be treated differently and more fairly than they would be in the rest of the nation. The populist strain of Western politics and the intimate individual relationships that rural life affords are imagined to hold the West apart from the nation. Even as it becomes increasingly clear that this difference is insufficient to protect immigrant communities from displays of nativist sentiment, Claude maintains hope that the best of the nation is still to be found in the West. Cather insists on this difference, punning on the symbolic meaning of the "eagle" to suggest that even as the West fails in practical terms to serve as the ideological exemplar of the nation, the dream of a successful multicultural society in which German immigrants are allowed to retain the best of what German culture has to offer while still becoming fully American relies on the union of West and nation. It is the paradox of Western American literature that creates the conditions for the dream of multiculturalism, the failure of that dream, and the attachment to that dream, even in the face of its inevitable failure.

I have largely focused in this section on strands of American thought that favor immigration. Thinkers like Bourne who are suspicious of nationalism for its amorality and capacity for violence and excited by the possibilities of cultural pluralism (a term coined by Kallen). But I do not mean to suggest that this attitude towards immigrants and assimilation is the only one or even the dominant one. On the contrary, even Cather, a writer justly famous for her nuanced and sympathetic descriptions of immigrant families in the American West, I will argue, takes nativist concerns seriously and offered elegiac, sympathetic portraits of a figure I call the nativist tramp.

4.4 "This Tramp Boy": Willa Cather's Natives

In this section, I aim to contribute to a strain of criticism that complicates the idea that Cather's prairie novels show her to be a booster of immigration, provided that it's European and Christian.[18] Any reader of the prairie novels can't help but notice the sympathetic, humanizing portrayal of European immigrant families. Central figures if not the protagonists in each of these novels—Alexandra Bergstrom in *O Pioneers!*, Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark*, and Ántonia Shimerda in *My Ántonia* are either immigrants themselves or born to immigrant families. Cather's biographers frequently note that the young Cather, living in Red Cloud, Nebraska, comes to know and love these Swedes, Bohemians, and members of various other groups who had arrived recently from northern and central Europe. Her writings repeatedly emphasize the significance of her coming to know many such families in her childhood after her arrival from Virginia. Yet for many Americans, European immigration represents a terrible threat, not only in terms of economic competition, but also in terms of moral and biological degradation. In *Our America*, Michaels describes Cather's "nativist modernism," a distinctive form of modernism that shares nativism's obsession with both identity and blood as the measure of identity. The vanished American Indian is a central figure in the novels that Michaels examines. The builders of the Cliff City in "Tom Outland's Story" are a case in point. These Indians build beautiful objects but ultimately perish because they are unable to defend their land

[18] Cather's views that might be described as anti-Semitic have been a persistent strain in scholarly assessments of her work, notably in Michaels's reading of Louie Marsellus in *The Professor's House*. Only with ambivalence can Cather's readers must conclude that she disfavors Jewish immigration even as she lionizes Christian immigrants. The sympathetic portrayal of the Jewish Rosen family in "Old Mrs. Harris" already troubles this claim. But in this section, I offer a different argument against the idea that Cather should be read as a champion of immigrants, insensitive to the potential harm they cause groups of people who construct their identity as native.

against more warlike cultures. Father Duchene speculates: "They were, perhaps, too far advanced for their time and environment...They were probably wiped out, utterly exterminated, by some roving Indian tribe without culture or domestic virtues, some horde that fell upon them in their summer camp and destroyed them for their hides and clothing and weapons, or from mere love of slaughter" (198). This does not sound unlike the portrayal of the innumerable hordes of European immigrants whose labor makes life untenable for some poor Americans. European culture becomes a threat in itself; literary critic Celia M. Kingsbury shows how WWI propaganda makes use of the German term *Kultur* (literary "culture"), arguing that its meaning unites German manufacturing and militarism. As a result of economic troubles in the United States, many of which are imagined to be linked to excessive immigration, a number of Americans are left homeless and wandering the nation in search of work. I argue that representations of these tramps and tramplike figures in Cather's novels reveal her awareness that European immigration to the United States comes at the cost to "natives." I further argue that reading the figure of the tramp through the lens of nativism not only highlights the significance of nationalist discourses in her work; it also provides new cases for exploring the paradox of Western literature: the simultaneous otherness and identity of the West to the nation.

In addition to the suicidal tramp from *My Ántonia* who I describe at the beginning of this chapter, the figure of the tramp also appears in a tragic and disturbing form in *The Song of the Lark*, the novel published just a few years before. One day, a sick tramp shows up in Thea Kronborg's hometown of Moonstone. Like the tramp who appears in *My Ántonia*, this one shows indications of an American nationalist identity and exhibits hostility toward the immigrant townspeople. Cather describes how a "particularly disgusting sort of tramp came into Moonstone in an empty box-car" (170). After attempting to gather money through a public entertainment

(playing the accordion and offering to eat a live rattlesnake), he is arrested and his means of livelihood are destroyed: "After that he was seen no more. He had disappeared and left no trace except an ugly, stupid word, chalked on the black paint of the seventy-five-foot standpipe which was the reservoir for the Moonstone water-supply; the same word, in another tongue, that the French soldier shouted at Waterloo to the English officer who bade the Old Guard surrender; a comment on life which the defeated, along the hard roads of the world, sometimes bawl at the victorious" (172).[19] Just as she offers the clue of the nostalgic poem to humanize the nativist tramp in the later *My Ántonia*, Cather offers readers a hint at the motivations and desires of this ill tramp. The song that he plays on his accordion is "Marching Through Georgia," a tune composed by Henry Clay Work at the end of the Civil War in celebration of the Union Army's "March to the Sea" under William T. Sherman. Its lyrics celebrate the symbols of the United States: "Yes and there were Union men who wept with joyful tears, / When they saw the honored flag they had not seen for years." In the hands of the dying tramp, the song takes on an ironic meaning. This is a song of victory, but as Cather points out, the tramp's only recourse when he is shunned by the town is the bitter language that "the defeated, along the hard roads of the world, sometimes bawl at the victorious."

Like the tramp that longs for "Americy" and keeps a nostalgic poem in his pocket, this tramp plays music that evokes the last great victory of the nation over the region before succumbing to individual defeat. The entertainment act for which the tramp passes the hat—

[19] Susan Meyer identifies the word as "shit." Her interpretation is that the tramp argues, "you treat me like excrement, and I'll put that typhoid-contaminated excrement into your water supply, and I'll make you suffer as I suffer; I'll make you as unfortunate in life as I am" (109). Meyer argues that this is a vengeful tit for tat. To extend Meyer's reading, though, the sting of the tramp's social rejection is intensified by his sense that he should be inoculated from it by shared national identity.

eating a rattlesnake—also thematizes national union over regional identity. It evokes a 1754 Benjamin Franklin political cartoon urging the colonies to stand together against the British during the French and Indian War.

Fig. 4.3 "JOIN, or DIE." Segments of a rattlesnake are labeled with the abbreviated names of the colonies and the caption "JOIN, or DIE" makes an impassioned case for solidarity between American regions: loyalty to each other across their boundaries against the British Empire. Benjamin Franklin, "JOIN, or DIE," *Philadelphia Gazette*, 9 May 1754, p. 2.

Cather festoons the tramp with the trappings of American nationalism, arguing that it is Americans who suffer when the immigrants prosper.

Yet Cather, through Thea's moral conscience, urges the reader not to dismiss the tramp with disgust, even though his last act is a terrible blow of revenge that results in the death of innocent children. On the contrary, she urges the reader to do the difficult work of recognizing his humanity and moral non-disposability. It is troubling to Thea that she causes him distress by

covering her nose at his stench. Long after the typhoid epidemic, "the drama of the tramp kept going on in the back of her head, and she was constantly trying to make herself realize what pitch of hatred or despair could drive a man to do such a hideous thing...How could people fall so far out of fortune?" Ultimately, she tells her closest confidant, "It seems to me, Doctor Archie, that the whole town's to blame. I'm to blame, myself. I know he saw me hold my nose when he went by" (173-174). Dr. Archie comforts her, "Ugly accidents happen, Thea; always have and always will. But the failures are swept back into the pile and forgotten...Forget the tramp, Thea. This is a great big world, and I want you to get about and see it all" (176). Dr. Archie urges Thea, the promising daughter of an immigrant family to "forget" these emblems of native loss. He casts the economic disruptions of European immigration, in a sense, as an "accident" and Americans who fail to adapt as "failures." Neither Thea nor Cather seems convinced by Dr. Archie's callous way of thinking about the tramp. On the contrary, I argue that her most celebrated avatar of American cultural identity is himself a tramp.

Tom Outland, of *The Professor's House*, is perhaps the most sympathetic of all of Cather's tramps. He appears, poor and travel-worn before Professor Godfrey St. Peter's house. Many critics have made careful study of Tom as a vanishing Indian, an emblem of both the western frontier and the tragedy of lost American Indian.[20] As an Indian figure, he does nativist work and in this chapter section, I classify him as a tramp. He is not uneducated or poor or sick

[20] Michaels argues that Tom Outland embodies the nativist romance of Indian descent and blood contiguity between the American Indian and the "native" American of the 1920s. By calling the mummified Indian Eve and his ancestor, he draws a biological connection between himself and the Cliff City Indians: "Claiming descent from Indians, Tom is committing himself to the conception of American identity embodied in the Johnson Act and, comparing Roddy to Dreyfus, Tom is committing himself to an understanding of political disloyalty as racial betrayal. The issue, in other words, is what it means to be American a point that Roddy, despite his feeling 'away out of my depth," makes clear when he characterizes Tom's speech as a 'Fourth of July talk'" (32).

in quite the same way as the tramps that I describe in *My Ántonia* and *The Song of the Lark*, but Godfrey refers to him, in free indirect discourse, as a "tramp boy," (233) who turns up looking for academic help in the professor's front yard. Though he is "fine-looking...tall and presumably well built," he is burned by the sun and dressed unfashionably (95). His mysterious origin story establishes him only more firmly as a tramp. Orphaned when his mother dies of illness and his father drowns during their westward wagon trip (104-105), he lives a life of constant movement and poverty. It is only when he comes into contact with the Cliff City and apprehends his connection to "Mother Eve" that he begins to resemble the tramps of Cather's 1910s novels any less. Rather than dismissing the Indians as foreigners on the grounds of racial difference, he sees them as more truly Americans than the Americans in Washington who refuse to recognize their own ancestry.[21] The Indian artifacts, Tom's inheritance, are ultimately taken from the Americans by the German, Fechtig in collaboration with Americans like Roddy and the bureaucrats in Washington.[22] Tom is a "native" American with a grievance against grasping Europeans and their allies. Reappraising Tom as a tramp does less to denigrate Tom than it does to rehabilitate the tramp in Cather's work.[23] Like Claude, Tom goes on to die tragically in WWI, another

[21] See accounts of Tom's appropriation of Indian ancestry in *Our America* (32) and *Melting-Pot Modernism* (147).

[22] Matthias Schubnell offers historical and biographical context related to German collection of American Indian artifacts in his article "From Mesa Verde to Germany: The Appropriation of Indian Artifacts as Part of Willa Cather's Cultural Critique in *The Professor's House*." His translation of "Fechtig" as "fencing" or "fighting" suggests that Fechtig is in competition or in an adversarial relationship not only with other European collectors, as Schubnell argues, but also with Americans in a nationalist context. Schubnell also usefully draws the connection between "Tom Outland's Story" and Thea's experience in Panther Canyon in *The Song of the Lark*. As Schubnell points out, Fred Ottenberg's employee Henry Biltmer is also a German collector of Indian artifacts (32).

[23] Durica argues that Jack London helps to "transform" the tramp from "a social pariah into an object of fascination and aesthetic possibility" around the turn of the 20th century (*Oxford Handbook* 474).

example of a Westerner becoming caught up in nationalist events that lead to his demise as a regional and national martyr.

In addition to these thematic readings that position the tramp as a nativist figure who complicates the triumphalism of Cather's multicultural immigrant communities, I want to make a claim about aesthetic form. Ántonia tells her horrifying story of the tramp and the wheat thresher to an audience of children in an incongruously homey setting. She enthusiastically trots out this "new story" while Jim and the Harling children pick out kernels for walnut taffy (176). It's hard to know exactly what kind of work, aside from prurient entertainment, Cather's representation of the transmission of this violent and disturbing story might be doing in the text, but it carries thematic echoes of another violent and disturbing story that Ántonia tells the young Jim: the one that offers the backstory of how the two Russian men, Pavel and Peter, came to live together on the Nebraska prairie. Years ago, back in their Slavic homeland, the two men are driving newlyweds home after their wedding feast when their party's sledges are set upon by wolves. As the sledges behind them are overtaken, they realize that their survival will depend on whether they can reach the safety of their village before the wolves catch them. In order to lighten the sleigh, they literally throw the bride and groom to the wolves. The shame that follows them in their home country drives them to emigrate (56-60). It's not hard to see the common thread between the two stories. In the dire conditions of the frontier, when every individual must strive for his or her own survival, sometimes people are left behind to die. The tramp, like the bride and groom, is unsuited to survival and he is ultimately unable to fend for himself. Literary critics have long puzzled over the significance of Pavel and Peter's story in the broader context of the novel. I am arguing that the lens of nativism and competition offer another method for deriving meaning from this horrifying miniature. Jim suggests that that transnational movement is a key

to understanding it. In the dreams inspired by this story, he finds himself on a sledge "dashing through a country that looked something like Nebraska and something like Virginia" (61). Jim sees himself, transported again across the regional division in the United States, fearing the wolves that haunt a foreign landscape. Again, the regional and the national become entangled in this story. It relies upon the tropes of the frontier and its casual, unforgiving violence even as it relies on the nation to produce the stakes of geographic difference.

Literary critic Joseph Urgo indeed offers a reading of the story that focuses on the theme of sacrifice and frontier inhospitality, but through the lens of transnational movement. For him, throwing the bride and groom off the sleigh figures, as I have argued, the necessity of leaving things behind to keep moving. It is not just that things must be sacrificed to live in a harsh frontier environment; it is the old national identity itself: "Those ones who do the sacrificing, who throw away the baggage—bodies, loyalties, allegiances—are the ones who survive...To migrate successfully, the migrant must throw over something, the load must lighten" (7). But even though the migrant must "throw over something," the migrant must also keep something. There is always some excess that the immigrant couldn't get rid of, even when he wishes he could. The story itself, the identity branded on Pavel and Peter, even the sensory details that invade Jim's dreams are all carried over from the fatherland. It is brought over and it is not smoothly integrated into the novel; Cather leaves it formally cut off, concealing Ántonia's act of narration. Cather simply ends Jim's narration and begins a new paragraph, abruptly taking the reader from the Nebraska prairie to a Russian village (56). By refusing to conceal the seams of the immigrant stories thrust into American modernist novel, Cather suggests that the immigrant need not assimilate to flourish in America and that the regionally particular can endure, sealed within the national aesthetic whole.

4.5 Conclusion

This dissertation has been arguing that the distinctions between writing that is presented as distinctively Western and writing that is presented as distinctively American are far more fragile and unreliable than we have hitherto realized. The traits that define these literatures are entangled and ultimately indistinguishable. Cather offers a trenchant test case for this claim because critics have long considered her both a regional and national writer. Reading Cather's representations of immigration and assimilation in the context of the paradox of Western American literature reframes the debates about her career and her politics. She is no longer either a booster of immigration or a nativist modernist. She is no longer either a "mere" regionalist or a major figure of global modernism. Cather evinces an almost compulsive need to be a regionalist. My readings in this chapter bear this out and she says so herself. Mentored by Sarah Orne Jewett and attributing her professional success to her turn to the region of her birth, Cather knew that her status as a significant figure in the literary history of American modernism relied on Western regionalism. What's paradoxical about Cather's intense connection to the West and the immigrant populations who typify Cather's personal West is that her rise to literary stardom occurred against a backdrop of extreme nativism in the 1910s and 20s. As a result, her stories of immigrant families and nativist tramps became suspended in the dislocations of modernism but at the same time grounded in particular regionalism. However, the stakes of this claim are broader than single author, even one as important as Cather. In this chapter, I aim to rethink the nationalism and nativism of the early 20th century through the lens of the region, which offers new sources of both optimism and ambivalence to both sides of these rancorous political debates and suggest the surprising significance of regionalism in the history of American nativism and nationalism.

Coda: Afterlives of the Paradox of Western American Literature

This dissertation traces the paradox of Western American literature from the twin births of the idea of a distinctive national literature of the United States and the idea of a distinctive regional literature of the American West in the 1820s into the 1920s. The 19th century had seen the production and proliferation of ideas about the distinctiveness of the American West, dominated by Turner's frontier thesis, but by the conclusion of WWI, articulations of the region's distinctiveness become more an object of nostalgia than a plausible description of economic or cultural conditions. This makes Willa Cather's 1922 novel *One of Ours* an appropriate point at which to conclude the story my dissertation tells. In the middle part of the 20th century, the relationship between the idea of the West and the idea of the nation entered a new phase not only because Americans subscribing to the frontier myth perceived the era of manifest destiny to be over, but also because the American mediascape was changing with the arrival of new technologies of mass communication. However, the changes both in the West of the national imagination and the new forms in which these ideas were produced and disseminated did not constitute the end of the paradox of western literature.

On the contrary, the entanglements between the West and the nation continued to shape American nationalism throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. There are two striking examples of the ongoing utility of the idea of the American West in the production of national character that I will gesture to here: the genre western in film and television and the appropriation of images of the West in contemporary political conflicts about the roles of federal and local government and their right to regulate individual behavior. While these examples fall beyond the chronological scope of this dissertation, I will briefly describe some of the ways in which the paradox of Western American literature has various afterlives that continue to shape

the way that Americans understand their national identity.

The parameters of the print genre western had been established by the turn of the 20th century. I alluded earlier to Joaquin Miller's frustration with the expectations of his readers for "blood and thunder" in stories about Texas in a 1902 piece in *Sunset* and literary critics generally consider Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, published the same year, to be the first genre western novel. The rise of the genre western in print, I suggest in this dissertation's third chapter, is a consequence of the proliferation of the idea that the western frontier was closed and the nation's desire to see the West as an object of nostalgia. As I show in that chapter, the West's ideological utility comes from its ability to be simultaneously different from and part of the nation, both the other upon which American elites could project the nation's undesirable wildness and violence and also find the seat of the nation's characteristic wealth and independence. The rise of the genre western in film and television in the middle part of the 20th century might be understood to be responses to ongoing demand for the same kinds of articulations of national identity that I have been tracing throughout the dissertation. WWII and the Cold War produced new forms of demand for articulations of national identity. European fascisms and Soviet communism were both widely understood in the United States as antithetical to American values. One might envision an alternative version of this dissertation more explicitly organized around international armed conflicts (the chapters, respectively, would focus on American literature and culture around the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War, and WWI). Each of these wars produced unique demand for national feeling that required fresh articulations of national identity as part of the justifying the costs of war.

While genre westerns might be understood as escapist fantasy, providing Americans reprieve from the economic and psychological costs of the fights against fascism and

communism, they might also be understood as crucial components of the justification for military action. Producing and widely circulating ideas of American cultural distinctiveness clarified the stakes of war. Anticommunist sentiment in the United States was on the rise long before the Cold War and had long had a profound impact on the entertainment industry. The House Un-American Activities Committee was formed in 1938 and anticommunist blacklisting reached its zenith in the 1940s and 50s. Historian Tony Shaw argues that during the Cold War, westerns "almost consciously took on a topical relevance" (51). Focusing on characters that prized their independence in the a scantily populated frontier where governments and other institutions hold relatively little sway, it's easy to see how anticommunists might see representations of an idealized from of the West as a desirable alternative to popularly circulating images of communism.[1] Even as these representations of the West suggest an archetypically American way of life superior to communism, they also provide an exciting other, displaced in time, which provides a source of romance and entertainment. In this way, the paradox of Western American literature explains how the image of the West is deeply entangled with American identity beyond the moment in which the nation's elites recognized the closing of the frontier.

Though I have been describing the rise of the genre western as an afterlife of the paradox of Western literature, the genre western, which faded in popularity in the late 20th century, has had afterlives of its own. If images of the American West were coopted into the ideological war

[1] This is not to say that many genre westerns can't also be read as critiques of McCarthyism and even of violence. For example, *Shane* (1953) features a scrupulous loner standing up against a morally bankrupt cattle baron. While one might read a critique of communism in the film's valorization of the individual and his conscience, one might also easily see a critique of the unchecked greed of capitalist enterprise in the villainous Ryker and a critique of violence in the hero's desire to trade in a life of gunfighting for a life of quiet domesticity. See Richard Aquila's exploration of the film's contradictions and complications in "*Shane*: Western Heroes and the Culture of the Cold War" in *The Sagebrush Trail: Western Movies and Twentieth-Century America* (2015).

efforts associated with WWII and the Cold War, they have also been crucial cultural facets of the Global War on Terror. Literary critic Susan Kollin begins the introduction of the essay collection *Postwestern Cultures* with President George W. Bush expressing regret in 2006 for the "tough talk" he used in referencing an "old poster out West" to demand Osama bin Laden "dead or alive" in the wake of 9/11 (ix). Kollin notes that Bush's phrasing here is entirely consistent with his political brand: "an earthy, no-nonsense Texas rancher, the president traded on some of the most enduring images of American national identity. Indeed, the allure of the Old West with its promises of personal freedom and collective renewal has proven to be a central means for political self-fashioning for a long line of U.S. Presidents" (x). The paradox of Western American literature helps us understand both Bush's impulse to cast the search for bin Laden in Western terms, but it also helps us understand his discomfort with his own choice of language. He both adopts the steely resolve associated with Western vigilantism but shrinks from the extrajudicial violence it implies. But what I emphasize here is that Bush, born in 1946, would have been referencing not so much an actual "old poster out west" as the trope of the wanted poster imbibed over a lifetime steeped in 20th century genre westerns in print, film, and television. Bush's choice of imagery evidences not only the prominence of the genre western in the production of forms of identity imagined as national, but also the rise of the imagery of the American West on the political right, including nationalist critiques of the federal government.[2]

In this dissertation's introduction, I alluded to Judge Roy Moore's choice to adopt dress and behavior associated with the American West in his campaign to represent the people of Alabama in the United States Senate. I would argue that Moore, here, utilizes the paradox of the

[2] The affinity of the American political right for the imagery of the West also stems from the popularity of Ronald Reagan, who was a successful actor with parts in several westerns.

West, both signaling his patriotism through invoking the desirable aspects of independence, pragmatism, and a certain form of manliness, but also—more crucially for his purposes—emphasizing his opposition to federal government overreach. Rather than linking the nation to the state, he opposes the nation to the state, taking up a popular strain of thought on the political right long associated with the American West that the federal government itself is a threat to national values and national feeling. By invoking the West and its paradoxical relationship to the nation with his choice of dress and behavior, Moore's patriotic display becomes a promise to voters to not only strive to limit federal taxation and spending, but also to preserve regional culture against the threat of the nation armed with the coercive power of the federal government. Moore's ostentatious performance of a distinctive regional culture suggests that power, political and cultural, should reside within the region, whether that region is the West or the South.

This antipathy for the state and preference for culture and policy to be determined locally is a powerful idea in contemporary American politics. It lies behind two recent crises that resulted in armed standoffs between private citizens and federal agents in Nevada and Oregon. Here, I refer respectively to the conflict between Cliven Bundy and United States Bureau of Land Management and the occupation of the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by a group of anti-government militants, including Bundy's son. The 2014 Bundy family standoff in Nevada was the result of the Bundy family's use of federal land to graze their cattle, for which, according to the Bureau of Land Management, they owed $1 million in fees and fines. The Bundy family refused to recognize the BLM's authority to restrict their grazing and levy fees, resulting in the attempted confiscation of his cattle and, ultimately, an armed showdown with law enforcement in the spring of 2014. The occupation of the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge from January 2 to February 11, 2016, was in protest of the arrest of

two Oregon ranchers, father and son Dwight and Steven Hammond, imprisoned for arson on federal lands. While the specific triggering events were somewhat different, the two protests essentially hinged on the same issue: the federal government owns vast amounts of land in the West and people like Cliven Bundy and his family think the land should belong to more local government entities like states and to private landowners. The two protests were linked in political aims, but they were also linked in terms of style: in both of these actions, the anti-government protestors dressed and behaved in ways that appropriated the imagery of the West.

Like Roy Moore, Cliven Bundy and his fellow protestors wore Stetsons, rode horses, and openly carried firearms, embracing popularly circulating images of Westerners.[3] Alan O'Neill, the former superintendent of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area is quoted in a *New York Times Article* puzzling over the contradictions of Bundy's political views, musing, "He calls himself a patriot, and says he loves America…And yet he says he won't follow any federal laws" (Nagourney A1). This is, by O'Neill's reckoning, a contradiction. A patriot who loves America should be willing to submit to the laws of the country he loves. Yet Bundy's investment in and performance of Western identity, in the same ways as I have been describing in this dissertation, complicate the logic that O'Neill attempts to apply. Paradoxes emerge when love of America is entangled with love of the West, a regional identity that is both identical to and estranged from the national culture and characteristically resentful of any kind of political authority. To love

[3] LaVoy Finicum, a spokesman for Citizens for Constitutional Freedom, was one of the most visible figures in the Oregon protest. He was killed by federal agents during an attempt to avoid a roadblock on January 26, 2016. He rarely appeared in the media without a cowboy hat and was wearing one when he was shot. See Julie Turkewitz and Jack Healy's *New York Times* article "LaVoy Finicum: 'I Would Rather Die Than Be Caged,'" which notes that Finicum "often appeared at news conferences wearing a broad cowboy hat on his head and a sidearm on his hip" (A16). Finicum was born in Utah, but at least some of the protestors who rallied to the side of Cliven Bundy were not themselves Westerners (Nagourney A1). Nonetheless, the protest's aesthetics were noticeably Western.

America as a Westerner is to be subject to the kinds of contradictions and paradoxes that O'Neill sees in Bundy.

Figures like Bush, Moore, and Bundy are not alone in deploying linguistic and visual idioms associated with the American West in the service of producing and modulating forms of identity imagined as national. This dissertation has shown that this phenomenon is as old as the origins of the idea of the West and of the nation as culturally distinctive entities. This dissertation traces the first century of the relationship between the West and the nation and concludes at a moment in which the idea of the American West as a culturally distinctive region begins to fade. Yet here I have shown that the paradox of Western American literature has potent afterlives in the rise of the genre western in film and television and the appropriation of the imagery of the West in the contemporary American political right. This is not an exhaustive account of the afterlives of the paradox of Western American literature so much as a gestural acknowledgement of the ongoing ideological force of the American West in the production of national culture in the United States.

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