Chapter 2: The Incommensurable West between Integration and Separation

Colliding Visions of the Louisiana Territory

The world shall follow in the track we're going,
The star of Empire glitters in the West.
Here we had toil, and little to reward it,
But there shall plenty smile upon our pain;
And ours shall be the prairie and the forest,
And boundless meadows ripe with golden grain. J. Lindsay (attributed)[1]

In 1682, Robert Cavelier declared the existence of the Louisiana Territory as part of the French Empire:

> In the name of the most high, mighty, invincible and victorious prince, Louis the Great, [...] I [...] take [...] possession of this country of Louisiana, the seas, the harbors, ports, bays, adjacent straits, and all the nations, peoples, provinces, cities, towns, villages, mines, minerals, fisheries, streams and rivers, within the extent of the said Louisiana [...] hereby protesting against all who may hereafter undertake to invade any or all these aforesaid countries, peoples, or lands, to the prejudice of the rights of his Majesty, acquired by the consent of the nations dwelling herein.[2]

The proclamation formatted the newly exclaimed French Louisiana alongside three imaginative regimes. First, a vaguely defined geographical extent and its legal organization under the doctrine of first discovery.[3] Second, the assumed or

1 National Library of Scotland, "Broadside Ballad Entitled 'Cheer Boys, Cheer!'", *The Word on the Street*, 2004, https://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/view/?id=16731 (accessed 23 April 2020). The ballad was distributed in Glasgow between 1852 and 1859 as a farewell for emigrants and sailors who left for the US and Canada.

2 Qtd. in A. N. de Menil, *The Literature of the Louisiana Territory*, St. Louis: St. Louis News Company, 1904, pp. 21–22. Prior to this proclamation, there was already a long history of French ambitions to parts of the continent. In 1562, Jean Ribault, an important figure in the attempted colonization of Florida, "erected a pillar on which were engraven the arms of France, and taking possession of the country in the name of the king and of the admiral: a vain and idle ceremony" (Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 12).

3 In 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas laid down the Doctrine of Discovery under which Europeans were permitted to colonize foreign territories under the condition that they were inhabited by "non-Christians" (B. A. Watson, "John Marshall and Indian Land Rights: A Historical Rejoinder to the Claim of 'Universal Recognition' of the Doctrine of Discovery", *Seton Hall Law Review* 36 (2006) 481, pp. 481–549, at 499–503).

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contractual consent of indigenous peoples, but also the implicit acknowledgment of them as (at least indirect) holders of rights. And third, the guarantee of protection by the French crown for all inhabitants, a policy quite dissimilar from the racially exclusive spatial orders in the English and Spanish colonies in the Americas. The king's new colony stretched from Mobile Bay to north of the current US-Canadian border, including parts of the present-day Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Unlike its imaginative conception, the physical ordering of Louisiana turned into a much more difficult and messy process. In theory, France's footholds in Canada and Louisiana had created a North-South axis that promised immense economic and military benefits. Access to the Mississippi, Missouri, and other important waterways, it was believed, would lower the costs of transportation and expand the profitable fur trade with native tribes that was undergirded by a complex network of diplomatic treaties. Easily accessible ports like New Orleans would open trade with Spanish colonies in Florida and the Caribbean, creating a dynamic hemispheric economy with considerable potential, which might even outperform British trade on the eastern seaboard. Much of this optimistic vision, however, remained a dream and was soon reformatted by more dire realities.

Louisiana's humid climate, its infestation with disease-carrying mosquitoes combined with impervious bayous, swamps, and thick mangroves made agriculture and settlement less than appealing and enticed few Frenchmen and even fewer Frenchwomen to abandon their homes in the Old World and start anew under these adverse conditions. Concurrently, Louisiana's district judge and author Henry Marie Brackenridge envisioned the drainage of swamps as a way of transforming the region into a Europe-like space. "The swamps, and wet lands", he suggested, "might be drained without any great difficulty. At some future day, this will be the Flanders of America".[4] Despite his projections, in the middle of the eighteenth century Louisiana's population stagnated at 80,000 inhabitants, many of which depended on imports for their survival. At the same time, Great Britain's colonial subjects in the East had grown to over 1,500,000.[5] Poor administration and a lacking infrastructure meant that much of the Sun King's colony remained unmapped, sparsely inhabited, and traversed mainly by trappers, explorers, and other socially liminal figures.

These spatial actors, together with later immigrants, entrepreneurs, and authors nonetheless crafted their own peculiar imaginations of Louisiana, which sometimes integrated, but more often collided with official policies and their

4 Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 103.
5 Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 161.

guiding narratives. They engendered a spatial (dis)order whose principal feature lay precisely in its unevenness of spatial imaginations, actors, and formats. This heterogeneity created constant tensions and crises, but also signalled a constant need for negotiation, compromises, and the intercultural approximation of shared practices and knowledges between European settlers, non-white, and native actors. Unlike the Old Northwest, the Louisiana Territory hence was much less inclined to subordinate itself vis-à-vis the homogenous spatial narratives that marked the nation-state. The discursive strategies of their integration, together with the lasting after-effects of the region's ambiguous national attachment, become the focus of the following investigations into literature, paintings, and other cultural discourses regarding the region.

At the end of the French and Indian War, France was ordered to cede *La Louisiane* to Spain in exchange for the Spanish cession of West Florida.[6] In the following decades, many inhabitants grew weary of their new administration, accusing Spanish officials of mismanagement and corruption. "These Frenchmen governed by Spaniards, and forced to be Spaniards", Alexander de Menil wrote, "while they were French in heart and soul, cast longing eyes across the border line on the free and independent Americans whose ownership of their own country, and whose right to enjoy their freedom they envied".[7] The loss of its largest colonial asset left deep marks on the economy and national pride of France, and plans to retake Louisiana were quickly formulated but remained unrealized until Napoleon's ascent to power. After the French Revolution, the new republic signed the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso with the financially strained Spanish Empire, which decreed the exchange of Louisiana for the Italian region of Tuscany. But the history of Louisiana's commodification as a colonial bargaining chip was still not over. Even though the bilateral agreement between France and Spain was brokered secretly, the American government got wind of the deal in 1801. In light of the brewing tensions in Europe, Jefferson was less than excited about having Napoleon's armies as new neighbours in the West, replacing the weak Spanish rule and taking control of the increasingly dynamic economies of the Mississippi and its tributaries.[8]

6 From a geostrategic perspective, "[f]or Spain, Louisiana would continue to serve as a buffer to protect more vital possessions in Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico against Britain and, later, the United States" (P. J. Kastor, "What Are the Advantages of the Acquisition? Inventing Expansion in the Early American Republic", *American Quarterly* 60 [2008] 4, pp. 1003–1035, at 1026).

7 de Menil, *Literature of Louisiana*, p. 28.

8 Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 328.

To avert an impending conflict, Jefferson sent his diplomat Robert Livingston to Paris. While negotiations dragged on for several years, Napoleon's campaigns in Europe and Egypt decimated France's national budget. In addition, the inhabitants of Saint-Domingue (Haiti) had capitalized on the French preoccupation in Europe and asserted their political independence. Caught in this cumbersome geostrategic situation, engaging in a multihemispheric conflict seemed overly ambitious even for Napoleon who decided to offload his American possessions and use the proceeds to fund another round of European warfare. For the American delegation in Paris, however, it came as a surprise when the French foreign minister Talleyrand asked them: "What will you give for the whole?"[9] In the treaty of cession signed on 30 April 1803, the price for the Louisiana Territory was set at USD 15,000,000.[10] What remained a matter of uncertainty, however, was the actual object of the contract. Asked by Livingston to define precisely what the US had just bought, Talleyrand supposedly responded: "I can give you no direction. You have made a noble bargain for yourselves, and I suppose you will make the most of it".[11] Both France and Spain had done little in mapping the territory, which the treaty described only as being located between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains.[12] Based on this vague demarcation, the Louisiana Purchase encompassed over 800,000 square miles, hence effectively doubling the extent of the United States (see fig. 3). Louisiana in this manner turned into both "an object of desire [and] a double fiction. The first fiction was that the seller possessed the object conveyed, and the second was that the object corresponded to what either the seller or buyer imagined".[13] This sudden territorial aggrandizement evoked concerns with regard to the

9 Hine and Faragher, *Frontiers*, p. 53.

10 Adjusted for inflation, the prize for Louisiana is equivalent to around USD 335,000,000 and hence the very definition of a bargain for the US, which was prepared to pay a similar price for New Orleans alone. However, as a slight downside, the contract also required the new owners to respect existing treaties with natives and uphold French trading privileges (P. J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, p. 43).

11 M. O'Brien, "Imperialism", *Placing the South*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007, pp. 48–52, at 50.

12 White relates that "[i]n 1785, 22 years after the cession of Louisiana to Spain, the governor general, Esteban Rodriguez Miró, could only apologize for having no map of the province except for the Mississippi and the French settlements along it. [...] At the end of 1795, the lieutenant-governor stationed at Saint Louis, Zenon Trudeau, complained that more than thirty years after the acquisition of the territory, the Spanish flag had never been seen on the Upper Missouri" (White, *The Middle Ground*, p. 49).

13 Ibid., p. 37.

Fig. 3: Map showing US territorial acquisitions including the Louisiana Territory, 1919.

young republic's tentative future ordering as either a consolidated eastern nation or aspiring continental empire.

At the time of their purchase, not much was known about the western regions that lay beyond the Mississippi and the commercial centres of St. Louis and New Orleans. When the fledgling newspaper market and literary scene engaged with the Louisiana Territory, the mindsets of many American citizens were still firmly rooted in the Puritan concept of *terra nullius* that painted the wilderness as a domain of danger, Otherness, and heathenism. Exceptions were represented by adventurous and enterprising Americans that roamed the peripheries similar to the French-Canadian *coureurs des bois*, spurred by visions of Louisiana as a springboard to far western resources like the fabled Mexican and Californian gold and silver mines. Even Robert Livingston, who had negotiated its acquisition in Paris, saw the region as nothing more than "vast solitudes".[14] Alexander Hamilton and his Federalist party opposed the government's unilateral policy of expansion and lambasted Jefferson's decision in open letters published under pseudonyms. The author of one such letter published in Boston's *Columbian Centinel* scoffed: "We are to give money of which we have too little for land of which we already have too much". Fisher Ames, the likely composer of the letter, went on to argue that this act of territorial overabundance would achieve nothing except diminish land prices in New England. He finished by repeating the age-old Puritan adage of the trans-Appalachian West being nothing but "a great waste, a wilderness unpeopled with any being except wolves and wandering Indians".[15]

In the upper echelons of power, however, Jeffersonian policy developed a diametrically opposed view that understood "Louisiana as a site for a kind of political, social, and economic mimesis". Despite the Federalists' fear-mongering, it was argued that "[t]he United States would not change; it would only replicate itself in the West".[16] This "organic" self-replication was to be achieved not by the management of a leviathan government or aristocratic benevolence, but by some of society's lowest-ranking members. As part of this literal grassroots movement, the "plain folk" of planters and non-slaveholding yeoman farmers would set forth to cultivate Louisiana, serving their own economic interests while planting the seeds of democracy in the postcolonial region. Guided by the egalitarian philosophy of Crèvecœur's *Letters from an American Farmer* and similar pamphlets, Jeffersonian agrarianism posited that not time but space would be the propellant of the nation's future. Because the raw virtues of democracy were

14 Qtd. in ibid., p. 38.

15 J. M. Burns, *The American Experiment: The Vineyard of Liberty, The Workshop of Democracy, and The Crosswinds of Freedom*, New York: Open Road Media, 2013.

16 White, *The Middle Ground*, p. 54.

already ingrained in the lives of hard-working, everyday farmers, all that was needed was a clean territorial slate where these virtues could freely unfold in the absence of restraints that held back the East's aristocratic society. Agrarianism thus "imagined the United States 'expanding through space' rather than 'developing through time'" based on the idea that "America could remain uncorrupted only if it remained a largely agricultural society, and it could remain agricultural only if [land] were available for settlement and if the farmer could find a ready outlet for his surplus produce. Free trade and territorial expansion were the means by which the United States might escape the curse of modernity itself".[17]

Despite its lofty idealism, Jefferson realized that this spatial order would not simply create itself and that some groundwork was needed to "pre-seed" Louisiana in the imagination of farmers, enticing them to cross the Mississippi together with their families. The initial steps seemed obvious: Making the opaque Louisiana Territory controllable and thus attractive first required reconnaissance, exploration, and mapping. Jefferson was captivated by his reading of Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages from Montreal Through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans* (1801). The Scottish explorer became famous as being the first European who crossed the North American continent from East to West. Helped by native guides and accompanied by a handful of *voyageurs*, he had reached Oregon via a northern route through Canada. Bypassing Congress and using Mackenzie's journals as blueprints, Jefferson assembled the Corps of Discovery to survey the new territory, and with the informal goal of gaining access (preferably by waterway) to the profitable western and Asian-Pacific fur trade. The Corps was jointly commanded by Meriwether Lewis, the president's secretary, and William Clark, an ex-military without formal education who misspelled the word Sioux in more than 20 different ways in his journals. The duo was put in charge of a motley crew of 40 that consisted of experienced backwoodsmen and *voyageurs*, but also included Lewis' black slave York.[18] In the spring of 1804, the group decamped from the mouth of the Missouri to enter the uncharted expanse of the Great Plains, where they arrived at settlements of the Mandan and Minnetaree (Hidatsa) nations and, living among them, captives from other tribes as well as French traders and their native wives and métis children.

The Corps erected Fort Mandan and spent the winter among the hospitable villagers engaged in pseudo-scientific participant observations, social interactions,

17 R. W. Tucker and D. C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 30.

18 Hine and Faragher, *Frontiers*, p. 53.

and more intimate relationships with local women. In his particular style, Lewis noted that the latter were "generally helthy [sic] except for Venerials Complaints which is verry [sic] Common amongst the natives and the men Catch it from them".[19] They quickly learned that the prairies were not, as many in the East believed, a sterile and unchanging space structured by ancient modes of living. Conversely, it had been fundamentally reformatted during previous centuries by the introduction of horses, acquired from the Spanish-speaking sphere to the South. Effectively reducing the vast distances on the plains, the use and breeding of horses established new forms of Native American mobility and hunting techniques, some of which already began to undermine the integrity of western ecosystems, most notably the alarming decimation of buffaloes. Encountering a group of hostile Lakota on horseback, members of the Corps promised to protect their Mandan acquaintances, thus antagonizing the plains' most powerful nomadic tribe. But this was only the first of many diplomatic mishaps that followed during their encounters with dozens of native communities before reaching the Pacific Ocean in November 1805.

Upon their return, Lewis' and Clark's reports were eagerly awaited and impressed policymakers and publics alike with their sheer comprehensiveness and attention to detail. The journals, written mainly by Meriwether Lewis, contained 14 volumes counting around 1,000,000 words in total. Attached were detailed maps and tables with data regarding climate and topography, as well as the documentation of 122 previously unknown animal and 178 plant species. Extensive reports detailed native languages and customs, approximated the number of their members, locations of settlements, and explained intertribal relations.[20] The Corps of Discovery had made peace and trade deals with various nations, often using material objects to create affective bonds by handing out "more than one hundred impressive silver peace medals".[21] Nonetheless, Lewis and Clark failed to achieve one of their main objectives, namely the discovery of commercially viable waterways to the Pacific. The routes on which they had crossed the Rockies proved impractical for transportation in volume.

Still, the expedition's reports sent ripples not only through the West but the geographic epistemology of the continental United States as a whole. Both the actual results and the fact that everyone survived (except one man who died from a burst appendix, which would have been equally fatal anywhere in the

19 J. P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002, p. 107.

20 L. W. Carlson, *Seduced by the West: Jefferson's America and the Lure of the Land Beyond the Mississippi*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003, p. 108.

21 Hine and Faragher, *Frontiers*, p. 55.

world) caused sizable excitement, replacing scepticism with optimism among the public and newspapers that reprinted the volumes' most interesting passages.[22] Although no comfortable route had yet been found, the Corps' reports stressed the abundance of fertile and seemingly unsettled land in the Louisiana Territory and the Far West, strongly hinting at the profitability and relative safety of overland travel. Skilfully edited by Clark's wife Julia, the journals read more like an adventure novel or docudrama full of hardship, danger, and masculine heroism. Emigrating to Louisiana or even the regions beyond the Rocky Mountains thus turned into a personal quest and spatial performance of upward mobility, particularly attractive to lower tiers of society and leading to the widespread view of the West as "a social and political safety valve".[23] In the light of this newfound optimism, the Louisiana Territory was no longer feared but more readily formatted through playful and humorous analogies. The *Connecticut Courant* for instance reported "that Capt. Lewis has lately discovered, in the interior of Louisiana, a considerable lake of pure Whiskey [and] it is believed that most of our newly imported citizens will speedily remove to that country for the sake of securing the free navigation of those waters".[24]

In the realms of reality, the largest social groups populating Louisiana consisted of Native Americans, French, Spanish, Mexican, and French-Canadian inhabitants. But what sparked perhaps the most controversies in the US was the comparably large number of *gens de couleur libres* (free people of colour) and Creoles, i.e. people of mixed French and African-Caribbean ancestry. Their ambiguous racial and legal status threatened to undermine both the strict hierarchies of the South and the future organization of western territories as either free or slave states. Often seen as liminal figures whose uncertain loyalties prevented

22 P. A. Appel, "The Louisiana Purchase & the Lewis and Clark Expedition: A Constitutional Moment?", in: K. Fresonke (ed.), *Lewis & Clark: Legacies, Memories, and New Perspectives*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, pp. 87–116, at 109.

23 R. S. Cox et al., "The Shortest and Most Convenient Route: Lewis and Clark in Context", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 94 (2004) 5, pp. 3–255, at 12. The safety valve function of the West, in fact, is regularly overemphasized. Until today, most mobility commences from rural to urban spaces, not from urbanity to wilderness. In the second half of the nineteenth century, migration into cities led to the depopulation of entire regions in states like Kansas, where over 6,000 ghost towns exist today. Hopes that unwanted and socially destructive elements would remove themselves to the West were diminished by the hardships of overland travel and the fact that railroad tickets often cost half of an average yearly salary.

24 Qtd. in Kastor, "Advantages of the Acquisition", p. 1003. Over the course of the century, the journals faded into obscurity but were rediscovered during the expedition's centennial in 1904 that celebrated Lewis and Clark as true American pioneers. Today, the journals are regarded as key sources of US expansionism.

their clear-cut integration into racial and social categories, Creoles had nonetheless enjoyed some civil rights in New France.[25] In his *Tour on the Prairies*, Washington Irving alludes to these issues in his description of a Creole character named Antoine (or Tonish) who was

> sometimes in the employ of traders, missionaries, and Indian agents; sometimes mingling with the Osage hunters. We picked him up at St. Louis, near which he has a small farm, an Indian wife, and a brood of half-blood children. According to his own account, however, he had a wife in every tribe [...] he was without morals, without caste, and even without language, for he spoke a Babylonish jargon of mingled French, English, and Osage.[26]

Causing further confusion in the strictly segregated East, some coloured Louisianans were themselves slaveholders who saw their region's upcoming affiliation with the US as an opportunity to expand their businesses, for instance by importing American slaves from the South. Because slavery regimes in New France were less strict – allowing for interracial marriages and property rights for slaves under certain conditions – Jefferson was apprehensive about their destabilizing impact and propagation of liberal ideas to slave plantations, especially concerning the events in Haiti and other slave uprisings. Additionally, Louisiana's practically unmapped wilderness provided ample refuge for runaway slaves, mutinous Indians, and other unruly spatial actors. The US sought to curtail the mobility of enslaved and native populations through forays into purchasing Florida from Spain and isolating Haiti.[27] In its own possessions, implementing more rigid racial segregation became a key factor in transforming the Louisiana Territory "from an odd periphery in the multiethnic West to a solid member of the slaveholding South".[28] Louisiana was divided into two large districts and foreign slave trade made illegal. In an example of divide and conquer, Louisiana's integration into the nation-state commenced through its isolation from outside influences and internal enforcement of racial hierarchies. Liberal manumission laws that had been further relaxed during the 40 years of Spanish rule and afforded opportunities for slaves to gain their freedom by defending the colony or paying a lump sum were replaced with a system of

25 M. Wills, "The Free People of Color of Pre-Civil War New Orleans", *JSTOR Daily*, 20 February 2019, https://daily.jstor.org/the-free-people-of-color-of-pre-civil-war-new-orleans/.

26 Irving, *Prairies*, pp. 6–7.

27 Jefferson was alarmed when he learned about British aid for Haiti and proclaimed that "the Governments who have Colonies in the West Indies [should negotiate] an Agreement not to suffer the former [slaves] to have any Kind of Navigation whatsoever or to Furnish them with any Species of Arms and or Ammunition" (R. Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution", *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63 [2006] 4, pp. 643–674, at 662).

28 Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, p. 227.

white supremacy. The *Code Noir* that had decreed the legal equivalency between free people of colour and whites was substituted with the Black Code of 1806 that differentiated only between white citizens and non-white non-citizens.[29] Further respatialization actions even segregated the dead by requiring "owner[s] of the railroad [...] to carry the corpses of whites, free persons of color, and slaves in different cars".[30]

When it gained statehood in 1812, Louisiana had been reformatted from a space of likely rebellion to one of the most loyal Union members, governed by white elites that kept coloured subalterns in check and gradually wrested natives of their remaining political leverage. As Peter Kastor summarizes the transformation of the territory's sociocultural geographies: "In becoming southern, Louisianians also became American".[31] With palpable excitement, Henry Marie Brackenridge expressed this notion, exclaiming: "Louisianians, you have now become truly Americans; never will you again be transferred from one nation to another; if you are EVER SOLD AGAIN, IT WILL BE FOR BLOOD".[32] But stricter hierarchies further cemented deep-seated fears of uprisings by escaped slaves or pan-tribal alliances. Brackenridge accordingly warns that "there is scarcely one white person to twenty blacks. When the lands on the coast shall be principally occupied by the larger planters, which will be the case at no distant period it will be found absolutely necessary to station an armed force at intervals, as far up as Pointe Coupée".[33]

In contrast, among African-Americans Louisiana gained infamy as one the most brutal slavery regimes, marked through forbidding imaginations that revolved around family separation and fears of being sold "down the river" into ever more adverse conditions. The river that fed Louisiana's slave empire was,

29 J. D. Thomas, "The Black Code of Louisiana, 1806", *Accessible Archives*, 25 August 2011, https://www.accessible-archives.com/2011/08/the-black-code-of-louisiana-1806/.

30 A. R. Sumpter, "Segregation of the Free People of Color and the Construction of Race in Antebellum New Orleans", *Southeastern Geographer* 48 (2008) 1, pp. 19–37, at 19–20; 33. Melissa Meyer sees these developments as part of a "transformation of color codes to racial ones". She explains that "[f]rom the thirteenth through the early sixteenth century, terms like *pardo*, *loro*, *negro*, *olivastre*, and *berretino* were employed in Europe to distinguish people with darker skin. Significantly, they denoted *color* differences, not racial or caste differences. In the European colonies, as conquest of Native Americans, Africans, and Asians progressed, terms like *mestizo* and *mulatto*, denoting hybrids of any sort, evolved. Increasingly, Euroamerican colonists emphasized biological or racial categorization of people of mixed descent" (Meyer, "Blood Is Thicker", p. 238).

31 Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, p. 226.

32 Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 146 (original emphasis).

33 Ibid., p. 175.

of course, the Mississippi. On the plantations alongside its shores, a spatial order emerged that defied Jefferson's agrarian vision of non-slaveholding yeoman farmers and instead saw black slaves cultivating lands appropriated from Native Americans, effecting an economic upswing in the cotton, land, and human trafficking industries between 1820 and 1860. Walter Johnson's *River of Dark Dreams* outlines this "cotton kingdom" as the pivotal format at the heart of Louisiana's increasingly global integration: "Wealthy individuals could hire or purchase other people to stake their claims and improve their land for them. The flow of capital into the Mississippi Valley transferred the title of [Jefferson's] 'empire for liberty' to the emergent overlords of the 'Cotton Kingdom,' and the yeoman's republic soon came under the dominion of what came to be called the 'slaveocracy'".[34] The rise of national and global cotton trade networks happened almost simultaneously, demonstrating the consolidation of spatial formats (i.e. patterns, templates, models of thinking spatially) into spatial orders (i.e. stabilized aggregates of formats) on different scales, as well as the interactions among these scales, which in the case of the cotton kingdom have been linked to the rise of industrial capitalism and "the transformation of labour regimes all over the globe".[35] With regards to identity-building processes within these "cottonized" regional orders, white elites in Louisiana and elsewhere in the South saw themselves no longer as operating at the national peripheries but as occupying globally connected nodes of "a 'greater South' reaching out to Brazil and Cuba".[36]

In trying to capture these processes, American authors and artists developed strategies that synthesized Louisiana's sociocultural intricacies into more straightforward narratives of Americanization at a civilizing frontier, guided by the liberating introduction of democratic and affective practices. "Writing into submission" and thus flattening Louisiana's spatial (dis)order made it possible to exert control over an equally-sized spatial Other that threatened to undermine the stability of the fledgling postcolonial republic, albeit at the cost of eroding the pillars of the resultant spatial order. The following analyses unstitch the discursive seams of this order by ungluing the myths of the territory's orderly purchase, exploration, and civilization. In doing so, they also scrutinize

34 W. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013, p. 5.

35 C. Dejung, "Transregional Study of Class, Social Groups, and Milieus", in: M. Middell (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 74–81, at 78; see S. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, New York: Vintage Books, 2015, pp. 234–235.

36 Pisarz-Ramirez, Wöll, and Bozkurt, *Spatial Fictions*, p. 10.

the sustainability of the United States' unilateral projection of power under today's "global condition".

In James Hall's "The French Village" (1835) and George Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Customs and Manners of the North American Indians* (1842), the Louisiana Territory eludes its unifying description alongside a single spatial format or narrative, instead turning into a reference point for agrarian utopianism, scientific discoveries and technological progress, settlement and resources, a socio-economic safety valve for disenfranchised easterners, intercultural conflicts, and fears of or empathy for unruly and ethnically ambiguous populations. As these discourses overlapped and intermingled, they produced a discursive assemblage that reflects itself in the analysed sources. What ordered – and therefore also separated – Louisiana, it becomes clear, was its very discursive assemblage of a multitude of spatial imaginations and identities. The subsequent ordering of the territory as part of the United States might thus be deemed a "spatial Frankenstein": a posthumously and often literarily stitched-together entity, assembled from mismatching parts and designed to resemble the uniform narratives of the expanding nation-state.[37] Similar to Shelley's creature, this was often done with ambiguous or even well-meaning intentions and produced new and unexpected forms that assumed a life of their own. Like the rampages of the Modern Prometheus, the Louisiana Territory and its far western mental extensions created spaces of Otherness, but also room for unexpected encounters. Nationhood in the Louisiana Territory, as it turned out, could not simply be performed behind the shares of a plough, impressing and Americanizing awestruck natives and Frenchmen. Instead, variegated spatial imaginations had to be mediated through real-life and fictional dialogue whose participants were less unified than suggested by the frontier or settler colonialism narratives. The flattening of histories and spatial discourses that informed the organization of the Louisiana Territory hence created a space that appears coherent only when viewed from a comfortable distance.

37 In accordance with common usage, the following uses the name Frankenstein incorrectly by referring to the creature instead of its German-Swiss creator. The Frankenstein metaphor has been used in other space-related contexts, for example as the "transatlantic Frankenstein" (C. S. Garrett, S. Feyock, and M. Lohaus, "The 'transatlantic Frankenstein'", in: M. Sus and F. Pfeifer [eds.], *European Union in the World 2025: Scenarios for EU Relations with its Neighbours and Strategic Partners*, Dahrendorf Forum, 2016, pp. 9–12, https://dahrendorf-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Dahrendorf_Analysis_European-Union-in-the-World-2025.pdf).

Assembling the Western Frankenstein in James Hall's "The French Village"

Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear. Safety Warning

Discursively policing and assembling Louisiana's diverse spatial formats and imaginations into a meaningful and orderly whole presented a task that authors like James Hall who, as seen above, had located the moral fibres of the nation's westering in the Old Northwest, took on with equal fervour. Published in 1835, *Tales of the Border* is a collection of short stories set in the Louisiana Territory and bordering regions. The first indications of Hall's approach to spatializing the Louisiana Territory surfaces in his introductory remarks that directly address his readers. Penned in a defensive tone, the preface reads like a disclaimer intended to deflect responsibility from an author who appears at odds with himself concerning his literary traversals between the lines of reality and fiction:

> Although the garb of fiction has been assumed [...] the incidents which are related in these and other tales of the author are mostly such as have actually occurred; [...] In the descriptions of scenery he [Hall] has not, in any instance, intentionally departed from nature, or exercised his own fancy in the creation of a landscape, or in the exaggeration of the features which he has attempted to draw and if the fidelity of his pictures shall not be recognized by those who have traveled over the same ground, the deficiency will have resulted in the badness of the execution, and not in any intentional deviation from the originals.[38]

It remains unclear if by "originals" Hall refers to geographical accuracy or to some unspecified first-hand accounts of western travellers and settlers "who have traveled over the same ground" and whose genuine experiences he is anxious to misrepresent. In light of the book's publication at a time when interest in (far) western migration began to reach a critical mass, it seems feasible that Hall wanted to exculpate himself from personal liability vis-à-vis emigrants who used his descriptions for lack of official guides during their journeys into uncharted western territories. Equally telling seems his prefixed withdrawal into "the garb of fiction" combined with the insistence of not having "exercised his own fancy in the creation of a landscape". Apart from creating excitement by positioning himself as an unreliable narrator, however, the tension and inner strife underlying Hall's remarks exceed their classification as mere rhetorical devices; instead, they signal a desire to depict accurate physical and human geographies and simultaneously condense these "empirical" facts into more meaningful

38 J. Hall, "Preface", *Tales of the Border*, Philadelphia: Harrison Hall, 1835, pp. 9–12, at 9–10.

and exciting units. These units form narrative backbones in a dual sense: First, as the archetypal patterns or templates that draft thematic spaces, characterized by their implied verisimilitude and regularly magnified by including gruesome or morally liminal details. Second, they represent the moveable pieces of scenery that supplement the subjective interventions of authorial narrators who synthesize them into equally real and imagined mental spaces, thus alleviating the forlornness of readers in unfamiliar spaces such as the Louisiana Territory.

It also seems noteworthy that Hall regularly assumes the tone of a newspaper reporter – a fact that is not simply explained with his editing several journals and gazettes throughout his career. This reporting tone becomes central for Hall's strategy to approximate fictional elements with actual experiences. Historicizing fiction by placing characters in real-life and morally problematic settings was an important stylistic technique of early American novel writing, influenced by Charles Brockden Brown's essays "Walstein's School of History" (1799) and "The Difference Between History and Romance" (1800). For the Scottish Enlightenment and its most influential thinkers like John Locke, observing the difference between fact and fiction was pivotal since misrepresenting the newfound "objective" republican virtues to an impressionable readership was considered unethical. Still, these same republican virtues needed to be disseminated and made palatable to a larger audience than just those interested in the longwinded histories of western politics or military campaigns. Attaching affect, excitement, and belonging while interweaving historical facts into a spatially "orderly" narrative – and thereby creating historical fiction – therefore became the task of "[t]he fictitious historian, not the chronicler, not the political economist or moral philosopher [who] stands best equipped to render the new nation coherent and legitimate by providing a diverse people with a shared past that they do not yet have".[39]

In contrast to Brown's romantic strategies, Hall relies on faux French dialects and western neologisms to fictitiously historicize his characters. Accordingly, he concludes the preface to his *Tales* hopeful that "[t]heir brevity will probably secure them a perusal, in common with the similar productions of the press".[40] This reporting tone would become a common feature of much western literature, demonstrated by the exploration journals of the Corps of Discovery and personal testimonials penned by people from all walks of life, some of which already had

39 A. Emerson, "The Early American Novel: Charles Brockden Brown's Fictitious Historiography", *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 40 (2006–2007) 1/2, pp. 125–150, at 127.
40 Hall, "Preface" to *Tales of the Border*, pp. 11–12.

their say in this book. This balancing act between objectivity and subjectivity, however, "makes us uneasy by its apparently oxymoronic nature – its mixing of reality and fiction".[41] By the turn of the century, this synthesis already threatened to undermine the boundaries between experience and simulation, but it was the film (and now increasingly the video game) industry that "makes the replica more seductive than the original" and "shatters historical distinctions between the real and the unreal by producing faux replicas of experience independent of the activity from which they derive".[42]

The most powerful results of these syntheses between originals and replicas eventually congealed into the stereotyped notions that perpetually inform popular imaginations of the West, notably as a stage for masculine regeneration and violent Otherness "by its separateness from the familiar" and by tracing "only a narrow line across the West, and yet [writing] confidently of the character of the whole region".[43] As Clyde Milner elucidates, the West as a result "has been oversold and oversimplified as a vast vista of mountain, plain, and desert occupied by heroic, often male, archetypes noted for their violent actions".[44] However, time and the endless repetitions of mental patterns have produced the opposite of "authenticity": Overflowing with historical and cultural significance, places like the Grand Canyon and the Niagara Falls appear familiar, evoking emotions and memories even for those who have not been there. In this way, the representational structure of the West collapses onto itself and becomes hyperreal "as reality decamps into the image [and] the image ironically absorbs the space of the real".[45] The unfamiliar West, as it is called and understood here, is grounded in Puritan views of a diabolical wilderness and aggrandized by accounts that view the West as a dangerous but fantastical

41 R. Siegle, "Capote's 'Handcarved Coffins' and the Nonfiction Novel", *Contemporary Literature* 25 (1984) 4, pp. 437–451, at 437.

42 Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, p. 13. Video games today are the largest category of the entertainment sector with an expected global revenue of USD 181,000,000,000 in 2021, more than the book, music, and film industries combined. Researchers must keep up with these developments and engage with games that interactively shape the imaginations of millions of players. While they have become more inclusive in their narratives, games regularly work on expanding the scripted space of the West through their obsessive pursuit of realism. Players of *Red Dead Redemption 2*, for instance, can encounter over 170 different wildlife species and may even witness the testicles of horses shrink in cold weather (J. Wills, "Red Dead Redemption 2: Can a Video Game be too Realistic?" *The Conversation*, 12 November 2018, https://theconversation.com/red-dead-redemption-2-can-a-video-game-be-too-realistic-106404).

43 Limerick, "Seeing and Being Seen", pp. 18–19.

44 Milner, "America Only More So", p. 39.

45 R. G. Smith, *Baudrillard Dictionary*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 96.

space "where wolves are white and bears grizzly – where pheasants are hens of the prairie, and frogs have horns! – where the rivers are yellow, and white men are turned savages in looks. Through the whole of this strange land the dogs are all wolves – women all slaves – men all lords".[46]

As is the case with other semiotic systems, the unfamiliar West (or, in its more widely used but less precise terminology, the "Wild West") has detached itself from its own experiential references to become an arbitrary unit, taking part in a system of familiar and generationally transmitted signifiers.[47] The inflationary reproduction of the unfamiliar West as a canonical format (i.e. lemma) resulted not least from the democratization of writing and "journal-keepers, diarists, impression-recorders, and word-mongers [who] could not look out a train window at a wide open western horizon without reaching for their pens. The result of their compulsive literacy was, by 1900, a western landscape blanketed by words, covered two or three inches deep with the littered vocabulary of romantic scenery appreciation".[48] Arguably, today's West can thus no longer be channelled solely through an author's narrative curating of authentic experiences. In contrast, it can only stay "wild" through its own fictional representations and their real-life imitations. Imitations of western wildness reveal themselves, for example, in contemporary re-enactments of famous battles or shootouts, or at virtual marketplaces that sell "originally western" attire such as cowboy pants, gun holsters, or replicated sheriff's badges.[49] In 1835, although already feeling the urge to reassure his readers of his stories' legitimacy, Hall's personal background at the peripheries and experiences as a circuit-rider in the Old Northwest gave him additional credibility in his literary charting of the still-unfamiliar Louisiana Territory. Hall's stories are hence among the archetypal urtexts of today's simulated western iconographies, making their analysis critical for this book's efforts of retracing spatialization processes to underlying discursive networks.

46 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, pp. 105–106.

47 See S. Wöll, "Inertia and Movement: The Spatialization of the Native Northland in Jack London's Short Stories", *GeoHumanities* 3 (2017) 1, pp. 65–87, at 69.

48 Limerick, "Seeing and Being Seen", p. 20.

49 The "Mojave Muleskinners" are one such re-enactment group that "have received numerous awards for their authentic dress and character portrayal. They have been featured in several books, dozens of magazines, calendars, paintings, music videos, movies, and television productions". Their emulation of authentic westernness goes so far as to frame semi-fictional eulogies for deceased members that are depicted on wanted posters under pseudonyms like "Buffalo Kid", "Sugar Britches", or "Misfire Mel" (Mojave Muleskinners, 2020, https://www.mojavemuleskinners.com [accessed 4 May 2020]).

Thematising the French colonial population, Hall's short story "The French Village" asserts discursive authority over the French as the Louisiana Territory's "other Others", highlighting their anachronistic spatial fixation and suggesting strategies for cooperation between French and Americans in the region's spatial formatting. Hall wastes no time in putting his above-described semiotic blueprints to work by unravelling the complex sociocultural configurations that Americans encountered in their new possessions and reassembling them into a more homogenous narrative. The story begins with a description of an unnamed village, located at unknown coordinates and nestled along the banks of the Mississippi River. The settlement's buildings, Hall writes,

> were scattered in disorder, like the tents of a wandering tribe, along the margin of a deep bayou [where] myriads of musquitoes [sic] filled the air with an incessant hum [and] clouds of miasma rolled over the village, spreading volumes of bile and dyspepsia abroad upon the land and sometimes countless multitudes of musquitoes, issuing from the humid desert, assailed the devoted village with inconceivable fury, threatening to draw from its inhabitants every drop of French blood which yet circulated in their veins. But these evils by no means dismayed, or even interrupted the gaiety of this happy people. When the musquitoes came, the monsieurs lighted their pipes [...] and when the fever threatened, the priest, who was also a doctor, flourished his lancet, the fiddler flourished his bow, and the happy villagers flourished their heels, and sang, and laughed, and fairly cheated death[50]

In this description, the villagers are epistemically subjugated to a childlike people who, instead of reclaiming land and constructing levees to farm and extirpate disease-carrying pests, stoically endure the adversities of their environments, hopelessly entangled in long-obsolete traditions.[51] While their habitat is sweltering and contaminated, it is also a sublime and ancient world frozen in time and constantly on the brink of being swallowed by the surrounding wilderness. In this spatial vision Louisiana is an antithetic sociocultural leftover of pre-republican France. It is metaphorically overgrown by its own anachronisms and defined as an Old-World "logjam" blocking the progress of the democratizing frontier. However, unlike Native Americans, the French in Louisiana are not perceived as existing entirely outside of time and thus in an ahistorical state beyond the pale of civilization and progress. Instead, their pre-modern existence

50 J. Hall, "The French Village", *Tales of the Border*, Philadelphia: Harrison Hall, 1835, pp. 102–128, at 102–104.

51 In *Astoria*, Washington Irving writes that St. Louis' "old French mansions, with open casements, still retained the easy, indolent air of the original colonists; and now and then the scraping of a fiddle, a strain of an ancient French song, or the sound of billiard balls, showed that [...] happy Gallic turn for gayety and amusement" (W. Irving, *Astoria*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, 1836, p. 119).

stems chiefly from spatial practices born out of isolation and inertia. In Hall's story, free-roaming horses symbolize this notion. Beyond the village, the narrator explains, prairies stretch out for endless miles "and here might be seen immense droves of French ponies, roaming untamed, the common stock of the village, ready to be reduced to servitude by any lady or gentleman who chose to take the trouble".[52]

The concept of communal ownership and other precapitalistic subsistence economies collided with American land and property laws codified in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments that are "predicated on the paramount principle that land was first and foremost a commodity for capital gain" of individuals and "a civil liberty instead of a social resource".[53] For Henry Brackenridge, "[t]here was scarcely any distinction of classes" among French Louisianans who had yet to learn that "by industry it was in their power to become rich".[54] Similar considerations would later become the cornerstones of the 1887 General Allotment Act (i.e. Dawes Act) that demonstrated how capitalist epistemologies and law-making could in tandem parcel and police spaces of racial and cultural Otherness. As Melissa Meyer notes: "As part of the U.S. government's forced assimilation campaign, reservations across the country were divided into parcels [...] and assigned to individuals. Policymakers believed that owning private property would magically transform the collective values of most Indians and hasten their assimilation when nothing else had succeeded".[55] At the same time, the attempt of respatializing native customs represented a clear departure from Jefferson's agrarian idea "that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living, that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it".[56]

Commodifying space through a network of laws of descent and distribution became an important spatialization technique, not only on the state level but also for emigrants passing through and settling in the Louisiana Territory. For

52 Hall, "The French Village", p. 104. Hall's narrator cites more examples for communal ownership in French Louisiana such as the "'common field,' in which all worked harmoniously" (ibid., p. 107). In the Oregon Country of the 1840s, Anne Abernethy relates the existence of communal spaces and their gradual transformation into private properties, parallel to the region's developing of commercial ties with the United States. "There was a building put up in the first place for a hospital", she recalls, "but it was turned into a store house & a place for keeping the goods" (Abernethy, "The Mission Family").

53 Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere*, p. 26; see S. B. Warner Jr., *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 15.

54 Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, pp. 135; 144.

55 Meyer, "Blood Is Thicker", p. 232.

56 H. George, "Jefferson and the Land Question", in: A. E. Bergh (ed.), *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 16, Washington: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907, pp. i–xiv, at viii.

example, after discovering an aesthetically pleasing body of water on the Great Plains that had "the appearance of having been formed by art instead of nature [,] it is so perfect", Esther Belle Hanna records some distinctly commodifying business ideas in her diary and summarizes: "This pool would no doubt be worth thousands of dollars in the States".[57] While the West was thus habitually envisioned as a realm of future riches and easy money, the reality of economic losses was felt more directly. After most of their oxen had succumbed to exhaustion and lack of water on the prairies, Hanna reports "throwing away many valuable things. The camp-ground is literally covered with cast away goods. Have seen hundred of dollars worth thrown away within a day or two".[58] On his way to California, emigrant James Cardwell reveals how mobility had to be "bought" when he and his company "resolved in order to facilitate travel to throw a way every thing that was not useful on the road. Consequently there was several thousand dollars worth of property thrown a way".[59] In Hall's narrative, socially accepted deviations from these individualistic and capitalistic spatialization practices effect the Louisiana Territory's formatting as a stage of social romance, or what M. M. Bakhtin describes as "idyllic chronotope", namely a

> little spatial word [that] is limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world. [...] The unity of the life of generations [...] in an idyll is in most instances primarily defined by the *unity of place*, by the age-old rooting of the life of generations to a single place, from which this life, in all its events, is inseparable.[60]

In "The French Village", the social structure of this chronotope was "composed, partly, of emigrants from France, and partly of natives – not Indians – but *bona fide* French, born in America; but preserving their language, their manners, and their agility in dancing, although several generations had passed away since their first settlement".[61] In the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, this romantic but economically backward chronotope was reformed via the (literal) yanking out of its traditions by "Yankees and Kentuckians [who] were pouring in, bringing with them the selfish distinctions" of capitalism and "converting into private property those beautiful regions which had heretofore been free to all who trod the soil or breathed the air".[62] As American settlers, entrepreneurs,

57 Hanna, "Diary", p. 18.
58 Ibid., pp. 22–23.
59 Cardwell, "Emigrant Company", p. 1.
60 M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, M. Holquist (ed.), C. Emerson and M. Holquist (trans.), Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981 [1975], pp. 84–258, at 225.
61 Hall, "The French Village", p. 105.
62 Ibid., p. 125.

and seemingly objective observers like Hall's narrator gained access to this idyll, they were free to investigate it like an archive and mythical gateway to their own colonial past. In perusing this archive, they took close inventory of the cultural artefacts they discovered and esteemed their worth within a larger aesthetic context.

Fixating the status quo of French-Louisianan civilization went hand in hand with the attribution of placemaking authority by Americans. In a similar vein, Hall's narrator discovers the eponymous village shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, intent on reporting about its people and their eccentric manners. After being invited to attend a "king ball" that marks the start of the carnival season, both his colonial and libidinous gazes shine through when he praises "[t]he native ease and elegance of the females, reared in the wilderness and unhacknied in the forms of society [that] surprised and delighted me".[63] The narrator makes some acquaintances at the dance whom he crudely outlines on the following pages. One of them is Monsieur Baptiste Menou, "a bachelor of forty [who] was the most regular of men", except for his "enormous pair of sable whiskers".[64] Menou's love interest, Mademoiselle Jeanette Duval, lives right across the street from him and is an unmarried "spinster" who "unlike him [...] was brisk, and fat, and plump" while "her complexion was of a darker olive than the genial sun of France confers on her brunettes, and her skin was as smooth and shining as polished mahogany".[65] Connecting external features, character trait, and textual authority in this way became an important strategy in the literary spatialization of the Louisiana Territory that largely ignored its rich literary history. In part, this was due to language barriers, but more often based on a bluntly expressed hierarchy that dismissed French culture as inferior and immature.

In *Literature of the Louisiana Territory*, Alexander de Menil declares that "[v]ery little culture and refinement could be expected from the primitive class that lived by hunting, fishing, trapping and trading on a small scale, and that principally with the red man".[66] As a consequence, he went on, their cultural productions could be dismissed because "[u]nder the absolute, monarchical governments of France and Spain, in which the union of Church and State prevailed, and education meant but little more than religious training, a system of free public instruction, based upon social equality, would have been an impossibility". In contrast, "[a]fter the purchase of the Territory

63 Ibid., p. 117.
64 Ibid., pp. 107–109.
65 Ibid., p. 111.
66 de Menil, *Literature of Louisiana*, p. 35.

by the American government, education progressed fast [...] while printing offices and newspapers pressed hard in their wake".[67] In a textbook example of environmental determinism, de Menil's statement equates Louisiana's uncultivated wilderness with the supposedly unrefined intellects of its inhabitants. Another widespread argument proposed that spatial isolation, "false" colonial consciousness, and lack of democratic virtues worked together to suffocate their spatial literacy since "villages and hamlets [...] and rude log cabins, cannot reasonably be expected to harbor poets, essayists, historians and novelists. They may do so in isolated cases, but like the cicade, such cases are perforce voiceless; uncongenial environments strangle utterance".[68] One of these "voiceless cicadas" was Julien de Lallande Poydras, whose epic naturalist poem "*La Prise du Morne Baton Rouge*" (1779) depicts the nymphs and deities of the Mississippi River celebrating Spanish victory over the British garrison at Baton Rouge.[69] Commenting on this paramount example of Louisianan literature, de Menil states: "It makes two hundred and seven lines of absolutely worthless and alleged poetry".[70]

On the one hand, discounting French Louisianans as voiceless and shrugging off their cultural work as the stammering of simpletons was an example of cultural imperialism designed to write the territory into submission and simultaneously defend the fledgling American literary scene. On the other hand, it also represented an effort of asserting hegemony over the usage and interpretation of language itself; significantly, its placemaking parameters and ways in which they shaped popular spatial imaginations regarding the relationship between the eastern nation and its equally sized western additions. American policy and opinion leaders knew that mere political control over Louisiana would not only be insufficient but also threaten to fragment the Early Republic's embryonic cultural landscape and fragile postcolonial spatial order, which was constantly under threat from world powers Britain, Spain, and France. Controlling the language of space and its cultural transmission through literature then worked as the unnamed third pillar (next to politics and economic policies) in ordering Louisiana. First, by discursively subduing its native culture, and second by reassembling it mixed with the mortar of America's spatial metanarratives

67 Ibid., p. 38.
68 Ibid., p. 34.
69 R. A. Caulfeild, *The French Literature of Louisiana*, Gretna: Pelican, 1929, pp. 3–4; P. M. Segura, "The Capture of the Bluff of Baton Rouge", *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 17 (1976) 2, pp. 203–209, at 203–207.
70 de Menil, *Literature of Louisiana*, p. 44.

and tropes. In 1936, Bakhtin outlined the role of language in exerting discursive power:

> Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. [...] It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.[71]

In the Louisiana Territory, this linguistic reframing commenced simultaneously on different scales. The term Frenchman, for instance, turned into an invective used to classify white Louisianans as cultural aliens with aberrant values, corrupted by nepotism and foreign (i.e. aristocratic and Catholic) loyalties.[72] This Otherness enabled policymakers and writers to emphasize American virtues by contrasting them with their imaginary French opposites, namely adjectives such as regressive, colonial, anticapitalistic, flippant, or effeminate. On this basis, obviously colonial spatial performances like the Louisiana Purchase itself could be reframed as anti-imperial, civilizing missions, meant to bring liberty to downtrodden and oppressed colonial subjects. While the lifestyle of New France appeared hostile to American epistemes from the outside, it represented not so much an inbuilt enmity but rather a lack of consciousness and spatial literacy. "The French Village" encapsulates this notion in a single sentence: "Inverting the usual order, to enjoy life was their daily business". Unlike American trailblazers and backwoodsmen, the French hence did not really *live* in Louisiana as a means to an end; they were in fact *caught* in it. This being-caught paints them as the childlike victims of their own ignorance for the dynamic axioms of expansion, mobility, and capitalism. "[A]s happy and as thoughtless souls as ever danced to a violin", they are lost in the metaphorical woods of their own regressive imaginations and lack of future-directed (i.e. westward) visions.[73]

By realigning their disorientation, Louisianans could be taught a "proper" relationship to space with the help of authorial father figures like James Hall and other authors who possessed the discursive tools to correct Louisiana's misalignment in time and space. Prior to the immigration waves of the 1840s

71 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 293–294.

72 Hall suggests that "the 'grand monarque' had not more loyal subjects in his wide domains, [because] he had never condescended to honour them with a single act of oppression" (Hall, "The French Village", p. 106).

73 Ibid., pp. 106; 102.

and 1850s, such "proper" stories could align the territory's spatiotemporal bedlam and prepare its people – at least those with appropriate skin tones and ancestral charts – to reformat their surroundings as if they already had been naturalized American citizens. Before a critical mass of emigrants from the East could replicate agrarianism in the West through the universal languages of Protestant work ethics and business acumen, it became the task of authors like Hall, de Menil, and Brackenridge to pave the roads on which these real-life encounters would take place. When Hall's trailblazing protagonist returns to the village some years after his first visit, he can already witness the benefits of these transformations. Upon his arrival, he finds a paved street leading to the village on which his tired horse "sprung forward with new vigor when his hoof struck the smooth, firm road which led across the plain". By chance, he arrives just as his old acquaintances Baptiste and Jeanette are about to get married as prospective US citizens, drivelling in thick accents: "Dis come for have d' Americain rule de countrie. Parbleu! they make charivary for de old maid and de old bachelor!"[74]

Next to learning the English language (and concomitantly entertaining American audiences through quirky linguistic performances), military careers proved vital in acculturating white Louisianans, creating "opportunities in direct proportion to the limitations on Afro-Louisianians".[75] Brackenridge mentions that "[s]everal of the young [French]men have entered the army of the United States, and have discovered talents. The females are also instructed with more care, and the sound of the Piano is now heard in their dwellings for the first time".[76] While cultural consonance could be achieved through such ethno-political processes, another common strategy formatted the relationship between Frenchmen and Americans by imagining them as "natives of the same land".[77] This meant that the land's actual natives and other non-white inhabitants were in turn discursively unsettled and parcelled out as antagonists working to subvert the territory's precarious imaginative framework. By purchasing Louisiana the US had agreed to respect existing treaties, yet the contract did not preclude the negotiaton of new and more "advantageous" conditions with the Choctaws and Caddos as the region's major confederacies. Simultaneously, leaders of these internally fragmented and heterogenous groups pursued similar goals as their American counterparts, namely the formation of pan-tribal alliances

74 Ibid., pp. 120; 124.
75 Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, p. 107.
76 Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 140.
77 Ibid., p. 139.

and consolidation of territories and resources. Weakened by disease and intermittent warfare they found themselves, however, in increasingly unfavourable bargaining positions. Brackenridge understands the territory's cultural respatialization as a primarily external process that worked alongside appropriations of language and material culture.[78] He equates Louisianans becoming US citizens with the redressing of people whose Otherness was externalized by their outlandish apparel made up of "capots [i.e. capes], moccasins, blue handkerchiefs on the head, a pipe in the mouth, and the hair tied up in a long queue".[79] In the decades after 1803, he notes, tastes and fashion trends quickly adapted and mirrored the Americanization of Louisianans as

> [t]he American costume is generally introduced, amongst the first families, and amongst the young girls and young men universally, [unlike the] Pennsylvania Germans [i.e. Mennonites], who adhere so rigidly to the customs, manners, and language of their fathers. A few years have effected more change with the inhabitants of this territory than has been brought about amongst the Germans in fifty years.[80]

Sporting American fashion, the next generation of Louisianans therefore cleared up doubts of eastern elites regarding the dilution of American culture during the process of territorial expansion. At least on this skin-deep level, it seemed that Jefferson's ideal of the nation's agrarian replication in the West came to fruition, even though the fashion world seemed far removed from the realities of hardworking yeomen farmers and their arduous patriotic performances behind plough handles. Dressing colonial subjects in "the American costume" also points to the covering-up of an underlying cultural complexity for which the French terminology of Edwards' *décalage* becomes a particularly fitting methodological choice. For white Louisianans, economic mobility and prospective civil rights unfolded into a promising future, supported by assurances that the "US do not want colonies – they will disdain to hold others in the same state, which they themselves so nobly despised. They [i.e. French

78 The Frankfort School expressed similar critiques in their reprimands of cultural imperialism and the so-called culture industry. In *Die Kulturindustrie* (1944), Adorno and Horkheimer liken American popular culture to the standardized mass production of industrial goods. The culture industry, they propose, creates mass tastes that reify a system of conspicuous consumption that lacks the educational and uplifting properties of high culture (M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, "Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug", *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*, Amsterdam: Querido, 1947, pp. 144–198, at 144).

79 Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 137.

80 Ibid., pp. 137–138.

and Americans] are in fact, both natives of the same land, and both can claim Freedom as their birth right".[81]

Whereas white Louisianans were able to redress themselves through contacts with cultural centres in the East, Americans consolidated their imagined national community through its expansion into even purer western cores, which Hall and others located in the utopia of the Old Northwest as the nation's "western heart". Both groups hence became "natives" of the unfamiliar West as a result of the French becoming American (with elements of French and Afro-Caribbean cultures preserved in culinary or local traditions, e.g. Mardi Gras in New Orleans) and Americans becoming "truly American" by moving West, respectively. Over the course of this dialectic interaction, its millionfold repetition, and the real-life consequences of Indian removal policies, the Trail of Tears, and designation of Oklahoma as a reservation, the Louisiana Territory's unfamiliarity eventually transmuted into the familiar spatial tropes revolving around whiteness, violence, and masculinity.

At the same time, French Louisianans were considered too spatially illiterate to realize the threat posed by their longstanding cooperation with indigenous peoples. Subsisting in the isolation of their chronotopical idyll, they lacked the nation-building frontier experiences presupposed on axiomatic mobility and perpetual warfare. In "The French Village", the narrator relates an anecdote about Baptiste, who in his youth out of flippancy joined a colonial detachment of the French army. Used to his personal freedom, the Frenchman soon "complained of being obliged to eat, and drink, and sleep, at the call of the drum". After first seeing combat with natives "he began to have some scruples as to the propriety of cutting the throats of the respectable gentry whom he had been in the habit of considering as the original and lawful possessors of the soil".[82] As a consequence of such scruples, the French were deemed incapable of actuating the disruptive potential of heterogenous socio-spatial orders and hence the very reason for their own precarious positionality between a pathogenic wilderness and unpredictable Indians. Still, their familiarity with hazardous environments and native customs

81 Ibid. Ironically, France later adopted a similar strategy of emotional and intellectual appeals in its own colonial possessions. Reacting to uprisings in Indochina and Morocco, general Lyautey aimed at "winning hearts and minds" in order to pacify unruly colonial subjects (P. de Boisfleury Grégoire, "The Origins of Marshal Lyautey's Pacification Doctrine in Morocco from 1912 to 1925", Master thesis, Fort Leavenworth, 2010, https://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/boisfleurythesis.pdf, p. 3). In US foreign policy, winning wars through similar means was attempted – but failed spectacularly – in Lyndon B. Johnson's "Hearts and Minds" campaign during the Vietnam War (J. A. Agnew and S. Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 167).

82 Hall, "The French Village", pp. 108–109.

made them useful assets in the territory's physical ordering, through which they could prove their loyalty by turning into brokers between two divergent eastern and western orders. As Hall ponders:

> [T]he French have invariably been more successful in securing the confidence and affection of the Indian tribes than any other nation. [...] the French alone have won them to the familiar intercourse of social life, lived with them in the mutual interchange of kindness; and, by treating them as friends and equals, gained their entire confidence. This result [...] is perhaps more owing to the conciliatory manners of that amiable people, and the absence among them of that insatiable avarice, that boundless ambition, that reckless prodigality of human life, that unprincipled disregard of public and solemn leagues, which, in the conquests of the British and the Spaniards, have marked their footsteps with misery, and blood, and desolation.[83]

Of course, this tabulation of empire ignores that *La Louisiane* had also been no equal-rights utopia but a colonial extension of France with its own history of injustices, including slavery. Nonetheless, more than other North American colonies, the survival of the colony's small white population depended on alliances and the goodwill of Native Americans. Fragile demographic structures and a lack of female emigrants combined with isolated settlements separated by uncultivated land and accessible only by waterways from the few commercial hubs, strongly incentivized economic cooperation and close-knit social ties with local tribes. In 1809, William Henry Harrison addressed the replacement of these practices with harsher racial hierarchies and exploitative economic practices:

> The happiness they enjoyed from their intercourse with the French is their perpetual theme – it is their golden age. [...] "you call [us]," said an old Indian chief to me "your Children [but] why do you not make us happy as our Fathers the French did. They never took from us our lands, indeed they were in common with us – they planted where they pleased and they cut wood where they pleased and so did we – but now if a poor Indian attempts to take a little bark from a tree to cover him from the rain, up comes a white man and threatens to shoot him, claiming the tree as his own."[84]

83 Ibid., p. 105.

84 Qtd. in M. Kimaid, *Modernity, Metatheory, and the Temporal-Spatial Divide: From Mythos to Techne*, London: Routledge, 2015, p. 145. In *Summer on the Lakes*, Margaret Fuller seconds the notion of French benevolence towards Louisianan natives, commenting that "the French Catholics, at least, did not harm them, nor disturb their minds merely to corrupt them. The French they loved. But the stern Presbyterian, with his dogmas and his task-work, the city circle and the college, with their niggard concessions and unfeeling stare, have never tried the experiment. [...] Our people and our government have sinned alike against the first-born of the soil" (Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes*, p. 184).

When he made this statement, Harrison served as governor of the Indiana Territory and was known for his amicable relations with Tecumseh, the famous Shawnee chief who had organized a pan-tribal confederacy in defiance of American expansionism. In Harrison's words, he was "one of those uncommon geniuses who spring up occasionally to produce revolutions and overturn the established order of things".[85] Nonetheless, in 1811 the alleged philanthropist decided to crush Tecumseh's vision of a pan-Indian West by invading and torching the alliance's capital Prophetstown. Tecumseh was forced to flee across the Canadian border, while Harrison became a national hero.[86]

As already mentioned alongside discussions of the Old Northwest, the spatial format of the middle ground theorizes this notion of a "golden age" of native-settler relations. As intimated by the chief's referencing of the French as "Fathers", kinship and the assurance of intercultural ties played a key role for this mode of coexistence based on "the ceremonies, the rituals of gift giving, the rituals of fictive kinship, which made kinship relations both metaphorically and actually the basis for political and economic relations [by exchanging] medals, commissions, pipes [and other] gifts".[87] In this milieu, illegal squatting and excessive land grabbing represented less tolerable or ostracized spatial practices. From an American perspective and in light of their mild-mannered nature, Louisianans, similar to French-Canadian *voyageurs*, were regarded as liminal actors and indispensable intermediaries by their "forming a kind of link between civilised and savage men".[88] In performing this role, they could assist in negotiating terms that furthered US policies by enforcing racial hierarchies and clearing native land claims. In "The French Village", the latter happens when "[t]heir ancient allies, the Indians, had sold their hunting grounds". However, Hall's narrator also concedes that "their removal" has "deprived the village of its only branch of commerce", causing the exodus of most inhabitants who, "headed by the priest, floated down the Mississippi, to seek congenial society among the sugar plantations of their countrymen in the south".[89]

Interspersed with traces of local colour melancholy, the story embraces the inexorable process of the village's and the territory's progressive respatialization

85 Qtd. in Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 340.

86 A. J. Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007, p. 169. In 1841, Harrison became the ninth president of the United States but died from pneumonia after only 31 days in office, serving the shortest tenure in history.

87 White, *The Middle Ground*, p. 52.

88 Hall, "The French Village", p. 127.

89 Ibid., pp. 125; 127.

and becoming American. The newlyweds Baptiste and Jeanette stay behind to be thoroughly Americanized, eventually moving into a modern log house and enjoying "the honour done them by the American people, in buying the country" whose "beneficial effects were beginning to be widely disseminated. The roads were crowded with the teams, and herds, and families of emigrants, hastening to the land of promise. Steamboats navigated every stream [...] and the plough broke the sod whose verdure had covered the prairie for ages".[90] But Hall also injects spatial tropes that pre-empt literary strategies more readily associated with postbellum sentimentalism and transcendentalist writings, as seen in the previous chapter. Mentioning the dilution of "pure" lineages and demise of inhabitants' intuitive relationship with nature that had characterized the territory, the narrator laments that "their ancient customs, like their mud-walled cottages, were crumbling to ruins around them" and "the ancient heritage of the ponies was invaded by the ignoble beasts of the interlopers".[91] The void left behind by these deplorable yet inevitable developments was ready to be filled with the spatial and cultural discourses of the American West.

In the end, Hall's Frankenstein-esque spatialization of the Louisiana Territory prompts more fundaments questions regarding the current and future stability of spatial orders that juxtapose the triumphalism of western expansionism with the United States' unilateral dominance under the global condition of the post-Cold War era, or what Fukuyama called "the end of history". Connecting Hall's formatting of the Louisiana Territory unbounded and unfamiliar with the contemporary boundedness of its own simulations of familiarity leads to some the discursive kernels of today's US-dominated global ordering. For instance, it evokes the notion that, like the West as the main focal point of its identity, "America, too, has entered this era of undecidability: is it still really powerful or merely simulating power?"[92] This goes to show that spatialization processes are not unidirectional in their projection of power but can also collapse under their own discursive weight. This penchant towards collapse is already inherent in the function of spatial formats to homogenize difference and engender coherent

90 Ibid., pp. 116; 120.

91 Ibid., p. 125. During his extended stays on the prairies, George Catlin traced legends of purebred Arabian horses that roamed the Comanche country and for him symbolized the dignity and unhindered freedom of Native Americans. The animals' vanishing into the realms of fantasy and memory for Catlin became synonymous with the extinction of indigenous cultures and peoples. He notes that "the beautiful Arabian we had so often heard of at the East, as belonging to the Camanchees [sic], must either be a great ways further South than this, or else it must be a *horse of imagination*" (G. Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, vol. 2, New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1844 [1841], p. 62).

92 J. Baudrillard, *America*, C. Turner (trans.), Brooklyn: Verso Books, 1989, p. 115.

narratives about localities, regions, nations, empires, and their global interconnections. Hall's synthesizing of Louisiana's complex socio-spatial landscapes into noble savages, childish Frenchmen, and enterprising Americans then points to an emerging network of spatial imaginations and a lexicon of spatial semantics that sees US hegemony of global discourse unfold from its storied westernness. This scaled linkage is not limited to the past but continues to inform contemporary developments that build upon its signifiers, visible for instance in the fictions of economic mobility and infinite resources that locate Silicon Valley as an epitome of twenty-first-century westernness.

Violence Through Empathy: George Catlin's Native American West

> *Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,*
> *The seat of desolation, void of light* J. Milton[93]

Next to Hall, other spatial entrepreneurs from the US employed different strategies that contributed to but also put into question the national integration of the incommensurable West. George Catlin (1796–1872) approximated western unfamiliarity through his outspoken empathy for Native Americans. He saw the prairies and plains as staging areas for the head-on collision of spatial imaginations and practices, but also for intercultural dialogue and social justice. An artist and author, Catlin's paintings and ethnographic writings influenced public views and visual language of the Native American West on both a national and global scale. Growing up in Pennsylvania, his fascination for the peripheries awakened when he witnessed a group of chiefs who were on a visiting tour to Philadelphia. Impressed by the "stoic dignity" of "these lords of the forest", Catlin realized that

> the simplicity and loftiness of their nature, unrestrained and unfettered by the disguises of art, is surely the most beautiful model for the painter, – and the country from which he hails is unquestionably the best study or school of the arts in the world: such, I am sure, from the models I have seen, is the wilderness of North America. And the history and customs of such a people, preserved by pictorial illustrations, are themes worthy the lifetime of one man, and nothing short of the loss of my life, shall prevent me from visiting their county, and of becoming their historian.[94]

93 J. Milton, *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books*, Boston: Timothy Bedlington, 1820 [1667], pp. 7–8.
94 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, pp. 19–20.

Not long after this pivotal moment, Catlin cut all ties to his life on the East Coast and "broke from them all, – from my wife and aged parents".[95] Between 1830 and 1836, he embarked on five journeys to the Great Plains, Great Lakes, and Florida, first in the company of William Clark and later by himself. In total, he visited around 50 tribes, often being among the first whites to interact with them. During these interactions, he recorded native customs, amassed a substantial collection of cultural artefacts, and produced over 500 paintings. Prior to his western journeys, Catlin expressed his desire of becoming the archivist of native civilizations and "procure the costumes, and a complete collection of their manufactures and weapons, and to perpetuate them in a *Gallery unique*, for the use and instruction of future ages".[96] Compiling such an archive for the use "of future ages" on the one hand meant detaching native culture in a timeless and spaceless vacuum. On the other hand, it points to spatialization processes designed to stabilize and homogenize the native West and thus advance its ordering as part of the nation-state. As Foucault explains, "the *archive* defines a particular level: that of a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated. [...] it does not constitute the library of all libraries, outside time and place".[97] In his travelogues, Catlin promotes western ordering through national parks and reservations as archival spaces designed to regulate and preserve the native West's complexity or "multiplicity of statements". In his two-volume tome *Letters and Notes on the Customs and Manners of the North American Indians* (1842), he keenly promotes the notion of

> a *magnificent park*, where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse with sinewy bow, and shield and lace, amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes. What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A *nation's Park*, containing man and beast, in all the wildness and freshness of their nature's beauty![98]

Based on the tension between nation-state and "nation's Park" as opposing spaces, Catlin practically anticipated the frontier thesis. Similar to James Hall, he

95 Ibid., p. 20.

96 Ibid., p. 21. Visiting the Old Northwest around the same time, Margaret Fuller mentions Catlin's collection and expresses a similar desire to preserve native culture: "We hope, too, there will be a national institute, containing all the remains of the Indians, – all that has been preserved by official intercourse at Washington, Catlin's collection, and a picture gallery as complete as can be made, with a collection of skulls from all parts of the country" (Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes*, p. 233).

97 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 146.

98 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, p. 397.

attributes the development of an American identity to trailblazing Kentuckian backwoodsmen, yet identifies the Mississippi River as the future site of this genesis. The country, he argues, is

> filled up, with people from all parts, tracing their own latitudes, and carrying with them their local peculiarities and prejudices. The mighty Mississippi, however, the great and everlasting highway on which these people are for ever to intermingle their interests and manners, will effectually soften down those prejudices, and eventually result in an amalgamation of feeling and customs, from which this huge mass of population will take one new and general appellation. It is here that the true character of the *American* is to be formed [...] between *literal democracy* and *aristocracy* – between low cunning and self-engendered ingenuousness. Such will be found to be the true character of the Americans when jostled awhile together, until their local angles are worn off; and such may be found an already pretty well formed, in the genuine Kentuckian, the first brace and daring pioneer of the great West; he is the true model of an American – the nucleus around which the character must form, and from which it is to emanate to the world.[99]

More than 50 years before Turner, this passage encapsulates the linear spatialization at the frontier, set in motion by the "genuine Kentuckian" backwoodsman as "the true model" and "nucleus" of a nation that derives its values through the process of its westering.[100] In a letter written during the late 1830s, Catlin writes that this space "in common parlance is denominated the Frontier", which he viewed as "a moving barrier [...] which indefinitely separates civilized from Indian population".[101] During the 1840s, Catlin toured European capitals with his *Gallery unique* (or Indian Gallery), a collection of artefacts he was gifted or had removed during his tours in the West. The gallery was put on display with the explicit goal of engendering empathy and awareness for the troubled situation of American tribes exposed to US expansionism and decimated by "whisky, the small-pox, and the bayonet".[102] The exhibitions, however, proved unprofitable and did not

99 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 159.

100 Arguably, Catlin also prefigured some central tenets of manifest destiny by envisioning himself floating above a continent destined to be ordered by him and his fellow Americans. "I laid open a small pocket-map of North America", he muses, "and excluding my thoughts from every other object in the world, I soon succeeded in producing the desired illusion. This little chart, over which I bent, was seen in all its parts, as nothing but the green and vivid reality. I was lifted up upon an imaginary pair of wings, which easily raised and held me floating in the open air, from whence I could behold beneath me the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans – the great cities of the East, and the mighty rivers. I could see the blue chain of the great lakes at the North – the Rocky Mountains, and beneath them and near their base, the vast, and almost boundless plains of grass, which were speckled with the bands of grazing buffaloes!" (Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, pp. 392–393).

101 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, p. 233; see Juricek, "Usage of the Word 'Frontier'", p. 24.

102 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 22.

even cover the transportation costs for the several tons of materials Catlin had mobilized in an act of transatlantic placemaking. In an article for the *Smithsonian Magazine*, Bruce Watson expounds how these financial troubles eventually changed Catlin's social mission into a sensationalist ethnological enterprise:

> In London, Brussels, and at the Louvre in Paris, he packed houses with his "Wild West" show. He hired local actors to whoop in feathers and war paint and pose in tableaux vivants. In time he was joined by several groups of Indians (21 Ojibwe and 14 Iowa) who were touring Europe with promoters. Such luminaries as George Sand, Victor Hugo and Charles Baudelaire admired Catlin's artistry. But general audiences preferred the live Indians, especially after Catlin convinced the Ojibwe and the Iowa to reenact hunts, dances, even scalpings.[103]

Due to economic pressures, Catlin's approach to western representation thus shifted. Instead of trying to generate awareness for the dignity of indigenous peoples as it materialized in his paintings, he began exoticizing and monetizing the West through reductive and sensationalist performances. As a result, the following suggests that he formatted the Native American West through a peculiar nexus of art, (pseudo)science, social justice, archival preservation, and exploitative spatial entrepreneurship.[104] From the wealth of imaginations found in *Letters and Notes*, however, only some particularly instructive examples will be addressed here. One of them harks back to Catlin's formative encounter with the Indian diplomatic delegation in Philadelphia. Preparing for his first journey in 1832, he met the Assiniboine chief Wi-jún-jon (Pigeon's Egg Head, also known as The Light) in St. Louis, together with other natives that had been convinced by Indian Agent John Sanford to pay a visit to president Andrew Jackson in Washington[105] Despite their initial reluctance, Catlin ultimately convinced them to pose for

103 B. Watson, "George Catlin's Obsession: An Exhibition at the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. asks: Did his Work Exploit or Advance the American Indian?", *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 2002, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/george-catlins-obsession-72840046/.

104 Catlin dedicated much of his later life to selling his *Gallery unique* to the government. Concerning his eclectic methods in formatting the West, James Ronda explains that "[a]rtists like [Charles Willson] Peale, [Karl] Bodmer, and George Catlin saw themselves as combining the disciplines of art and science within the context of geographic exploration" (J. P. Ronda, "Passion and Imagination in the Exploration of the American West", in: W. Deverell (ed.), *A Companion to the American West*, Hoboken: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 53–76, at 66).

105 "The 'Far West,'" Catlin writes, is "the country whose fascinations spread a charm over mind almost dangerous to civilized pursuits. Few people even know the true definition of the Term 'West;' and where is its location? – phantom-like it flies before us as we travel, and on our way is continually gilded, before us, as we approach the setting sun" (Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, pp. 109–110). On the following pages, Catlin drafts a fictional conversation between

portraits, noting that Wi-jún-jon "appeared as sullen as death in my painting-room – with eyes fixed like those of a statue, upon me".[106] In his descriptions of the delegation, Catlin is highly empathic concerning the struggles of their journey to the East, detailing the painful adaption of their worldviews and practices as they faced an increasingly foreign spatial order evolving around them:

> While descending the river [...] from the mouth of Yellow Stone, Wi-jun-jon and another of his tribe who was with him, at the first approach to the civilized settlements, commenced a register of the white men's houses (or cabins), by cutting a notch for each on the side of a pipe-stem, in order to be able to shew when they got home, how many white men's houses they saw on their journey. At first the cabins were scarce; but continually as they advanced down the river, more and more rapidly increased in numbers; and they soon found their pipe-stem filled with marks, and they determined to put the rest of them on the handle of a war-club, which they soon got marked all over likewise; and at length, while the boat was moored at the shore [they] stepped into the bushes, and cut a long stick, from which they peeled the bark; and when the boat was again underweigh [sic], they sat down, and with much labour, copied the notches on to it from the pipe-stem and club; and also kept adding a notch for every house they passed. This stick was soon filled; and in a day or two several others; when, at last, they seemed much at a loss to know what to do with their troublesome records, until they came in sight of St. Louis, which is a town of 15,000 inhabitants; upon which, after consulting a little, they pitched their sticks overboard into the river![107]

A year and a half later, Catlin obtained permission from the American Fur Company (AFC) to accompany the same group on their return journey from St. Louis to their homes in present-day Montana. To his surprise, he found Wi-jún-jon outwardly Americanized, having "exchanged his beautifully garnished and classic costume, for a full dress 'en militaire' [that] was, perhaps, presented to him by the President" (see fig. 4).[108] However, unlike the nation-building performances of French Louisianans who became US citizens by wearing "the American costume", this kind of acculturation here seems impossible as Wi-jún-jon becomes a laughing stock for both his own people and Catlin's national audiences.[109] The artist's initially sympathetic account turns into a grotesque comedy, bereft of native dignity and interspersed with the transcribed laughing fits of Catlin's French companion Ba'tiste, to whom he relates the chief's

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people from different cultures and ethnicities who all claim to be from the West, eventually culminating in a babel of English, German, French, Italian, and Native American expressions.

106 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 196.

107 Ibid., p. 195.

108 Ibid., p. 196.

109 Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, p. 137.

Fig. 4: G. Catlin, *Wi-jún-jon, Pigeon's Egg Head (The Light) Going To and Returning From Washington*, 1837–1839.

metamorphosis in the book. These conniptions extend throughout the description of his transformation and, like the canned laughter of a modern sitcom, mark the sections readers are supposed to find particularly amusing, for instance "Ha-ha-hagh-agh-ah", "Diable!", and "Ha-ha-hagh (pardón, Monsieur Cataline, for I am almost laugh)". Catlin explains that "I could never look upon [Wi-jún-jon] for a moment without excessive laughter, at the ridiculous figure he cut – the strides, the angled, the stiffness of this travelling beau!"[110] He goes on to

110 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 197.

describe the tragicomic repercussions of the chief's cultural uprooting, spatio-cultural hybridity, and the bewilderment of natives who saw him

> paying visits to the lodges of his old acquaintances, swaggering about, with his keg [of whisky, a gift from Jackson] under his arm, whistling Yankee Doodle, and Washington's Grand March; his white shirt [...] had been shockingly tithed – his pantaloons of blue, laced with gold, were razed into a pair of comfortable leggings – his bow and quiver were slung, and his broad-sword which trailed on the ground, had sought the centre of gravity, and taken a position between his legs, and dragging behind him, served as a rudder to steer him over the "earth's troubled surface."[111]

Thus ridiculed, the chief becomes a tragic figure based on a twofold transgression: First, his abandonment of the West's museal space that corrupted his "natural" dignity as an unadulterated "lord of the forest". Catlin's two-panelled painting *Wi-jún-jon, Pigeon's Egg Head (The Light) Going To and Returning From Washington* (1837–1839) visualizes this transfiguration: On the left side, the chief is seen in his traditional attire, headdress, and buffalo robe, standing upright and gracefully looking to the eastern horizon towards a faint outline resembling the Capitol building. He is holding a long ceremonial pipe, likely a gift for Andrew Jackson. The right-hand panel shows him returning to his ancestral home, symbolized by a group of tepees in the background, but all external signifiers that previously connected him to this space have been replaced. Instead, he is wearing an American military uniform complemented by the attire of a Victorian gentleman: white gloves, top hat, and an oversized fan. Cigarette holder in mouth and two whiskey bottles peeking out of his back pockets, the chief's posture seems both snobbish and unstable. His eyes appear blind for his surroundings, smugly marvelling at his fan while "his neck was strangled with a shining black stock, and his feet pinioned in a pair of water-proof boots, with high heels, which made him 'step like a yoked dog'".[112]

The marked contrast of Catlin's side-by-side comparison clearly communicates his view of the Native American West as a natural park and prelapsarian space inhabited by unspoiled people living in artless harmony with nature. Catlin was convinced of the imminent extinction of Native Americans, whom he saw as a part of nature, equal to animals and minerals. "[M]y heart bleeds", he laments, "for the fate that awaits the remainder of heir unlucky race; which is long to be outlived by the rocks, by the beasts, and even birds and reptiles of the country they live in [...] that (to use their own very beautiful figure) 'they are fast traveling to the shades of their fathers, towards the setting sun'".[113] Whereas the

111 Ibid., p. 198.
112 Ibid., p. 196.
113 Ibid., p. 31.

destruction of their pastoral existence represents a lamentable (but ultimately inevitable) tragedy, the expected reaction of the West's noble-savage denizens is to either gracefully fade away or perish in heroic but ultimately quixotic acts of resistance. To uphold this conceptualization of the native West, Wi-jún-jon's intercultural mobility and attempted educational work at home can only be ridiculed and discarded as a form of tragicomic corruption because it threatens to undermine the stability of this Manichean imagination.

The chief's second transgression results from his upending fundamental spatialization dynamics which defies the dominant formatting strategies of the Louisiana Territory. Instead of subjugating himself to a process that exclusively commences alongside an East-West axis, Wi-jún-jon inverts this sequence by moving from West to East, acquiring placemaking agency as well as actual and cultural mobility as a spatial entrepreneur. For Catlin and his contemporaries, this aberration from accepted norms was laughable and cast the Indian into the Shakespearean role of a liminal figure and spatial trickster thrown into a placeless limbo between the East's and West's divergent epistemologies. His misalignment and supposedly derisible disorientation are results of Wi-jún-jon's embracing a looking-glass world that subverts the unidirectional formatting of western expansion; for him, the United States, not the western peripheries, are a space of unfamiliarity and violence with their "forts, and seventy-four gun ships, which he had visited – their big guns [and] the great war parade, which he saw in the city of New York". Arguing from this subversive viewpoint, the Assiniboine chief tries to "instruct his people, by honest and simple narratives of things and scenes he had beheld during his tour to the East" but according to Catlin fails because "unfortunately for him" his reports of the US "were to them [i.e. his tribal peers] too marvellous and improbable to be believed" and therefore discounted as "fiction".[114] In other words, the East as he described it with its military prowess and metastasizing settlements was simply too far-fetched to be believed.[115]

114 Ibid., pp. 197–199.

115 In their attempts of fostering cultural exchange between East and West, the Corps of Discovery faced similar challenges. Returning from the Pacific coast in 1806, they persuaded a Mandan chief named Shahaka (Big White or Gros Blanc) to accompany them to St. Louis and visit Jefferson in Washington, promising to return Shahaka safely afterwards. In the spring of 1807, they tried to keep their promise but were prevented by native war parties that forced them to retreat. In the following year, Lewis personally spent USD 7,000 to hire 125 riflemen and finally managed to return the chief, although against the protests of his own tribe (Z. Leonard, *Adventures of Zenas Leonard: Fur Trapper and Trader 1831–1836*, W. F. Wagner (ed.), Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1904 [1839], pp. 22–23).

Some years after returning home and becoming a foreign body in his native community, Wi-jún-jon was murdered by a young brave who "blew out his brains" because he thought that the chief's power as a "lying-medicine" (i.e. imposter or wizard) was growing too strong.[116] While lamenting the death of this "noble Indian", the moral that Catlin and his companion Ba'tiste take away from his tragic end again brings to the fore a key dynamic of the West's literary spatialization: It becomes the task of the author to carefully amalgamate truth with fiction and create spatial semantics that infer believability by confirming familiar beliefs and simultaneously foster unfamiliar discourses that indicate a need for change and intervention. In other words, this effective literary spatialization strategy makes use of a push-pull dynamic that oscillates between the confirmation biases of the familiar and the fascinating Otherness of the West. Relying on "objective" reportage and only relating straightforward facts – like the chief attempted in front of his unbelieving audience – thus becomes less effective in formatting space. For Catlin, the case of Wi-jún-jon's despatialization presents a cautionary tale that stresses these correlations and, as he explains to Ba'tiste, from which "we may profit [...] if we choose. [...] [T]he fate of this poor fellow, who was relating no more than what he actually saw, will *caution* you against the *imprudence of telling all that you actually know*, and narrating all that you have *seen*, lest like him you sink into disgrace for telling the truth".[117] An author's placemaking agency and success, Catlin implies, hinge on their ability to satisfy existing beliefs and, in the same vein, generate new and exciting mental vectors of a particular place, thus crafting spatiotemporal assemblages that interface proven convictions with mutable future prospects.[118] Viewed in the light of this episteme, the chief's factual report of the United States is unsuccessful as a narrative because it contradicts familiar beliefs and imparts an overwhelmingly negative outlook of the tribe's future.

Another thematic fulcrum in Catlin's work reveals itself in its amalgamation of physical and representational violence. While he shuns the former and frames his obsession with painting natives and "collecting" their cultural products as

116 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 200.

117 Ibid.

118 Fuller asserts that "Catlin's book is far the best. I was afterwards assured by those acquainted with the regions he describes, that he is not to be depended on for the accuracy of his facts, and, indeed, it is obvious [...] that he sometimes yields to the temptation of making out a story. They admitted, however, what from my feelings I was sure of, that he is true to the spirit of the scene, and that a far better view can be got from him than from any source at present existing, of the Indian tribes of the far west, and of the country where their inheritance lay" (Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes*, pp. 30–31; see Birkle, "Travelogues of Independence", p. 505).

affect-driven philanthropic exercises, Catlin's actions regularly appear uncaring and invasive. This becomes evident in the turnaround of his international awareness mission into a sensationalist and violent stage show, as well as his later attempts to monetize the painful memories he recorded by selling his gallery. But Catlin's record also includes more direct violations. In 1836, the artist trespassed on holy ground of the Dakota tribe that provided the red clay used for making calumets. Despite their elders' warnings that the "'red stone was a part of their flesh,' [and that] it would be sacrilegious for white man to touch or take it away", Catlin removed samples for chemical analysis and an estimate of its economic worth in the East.[119] His *Letters* indicate that he was aware of the spiritual significance of the place, not only as a neutral ground but as a shared space of intertribal equilibrium that unified divergent imaginations and was central in upholding a communal spatial order. Before he describes his removing the clay in a cloak-and-dagger operation, Catlin observes

> a majesty in the very ground that we tread upon, that inspires with awe and reverence; [...] Man feels here, and startles at the thrilling sensation, the face of *illimitable freedom* [...] The Great Spirit at an ancient period, here called the Indian nations together, [and] broke from its wall a piece, and made a huge pipe by turning it in his hand, which he smoked over them, and to the North, the South, the East, and the West, and told them that his stone was red – that it was their flesh – that they must use it for their pipes of peace – that it belonged to them all, and that the war-club and scalping knife must not be raised on its ground.[120]

While Catlin's subsequent decision to invade and defile this tabooed space seems perplexing and contradictory, it can partly be explained by his conviction that the integrity of his originally envisaged self-contained and chronotopical "nation's Park" in the Native American West was already beyond saving. For instance, next to the calumet the scalping knife as another symbol of indigenous culture had already been wrested out of its cultural contexts and thoroughly despatialized. Catlin relates that in the 1830s these knives were no longer skilfully crafted tools endemic to indigenous culture, but "common and cheap butcher knife[s] with one edge, manufactured at Sheffield, in England, perhaps for sixpence; and sold to the poor Indian in these wild regions for a horse! [...] [E]very [knife] in [...] the Indian country, to the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean bears on its blade the impress of G. R."[121] The violence ingrained in its

119 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 166.

120 Ibid., pp. 164–165.

121 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, pp. 360–361. The initials G. R. likely refer to the Green River knife, still manufactured today by A. Wright & Sons in Sheffield and advertised as a "traditional no nonsense frontier style knife" (The Famous Sheffield Shop, "Green River Knife", https://www.sheffield-made.com/acatalog/Green_River_Knife.html [accessed 24 April 2020]). Economic

regional, ritualistic functions was thus replaced with the violence of the knife's capitalistic appropriation and integration into global networks of industrial profiteering.

Catlin asserts that the despatialization of scalping as unfamiliar and violent and its respatialization and symbolic reproduction a part of global commodity chains remained opaque for natives, whose spatial imaginations focused on circumscribed localities and regions. Forced to discard traditional techniques in their ordering of spaces around them (for instance, as seen above, by throwing counting sticks overboard after they became insufficient in marking white settlements), their strategic possibilities proved limited and binary: either resist and further augment pre-existing convictions in the East or approximate Euroamerican culture and be seen as corrupted or a laughing stock like Wi-jún-jon. In the context of this discursive and economic integration of the violent West, it comes as no surprise that in the years after Catlin's trespassing, the Dakotas – incited by American traders – abandoned the concept of a neutral ground, instead laying commercial claim to it and selling clay and pipes to neighbouring tribes. Completing the cycle of commodification, the erstwhile holy pipestone was subsequently named Catlinite after the first white man who described and removed it.

Through his painting, writing, and collecting Catlin thus projected American placemaking power. As he witnessed natives vanish from physical existence, preserving them on canvas for him turned into the archival task of aesthetically transmuting their unfamiliar regional histories into the familiar and controllable space of national memory. Although the outcomes were oftentimes idealized, they nonetheless included colourful and life-like renditions of rapidly changing and fragile cultures. In hindsight, Catlin's artistic formatting of the native West proved successful as many of his works today are centrepieces of museal collections, notably the nationwide exhibitions of the Smithsonian. In the sociocultural context of his own time, his view of Native Americans was undoubtedly progressive and rooted in the conviction that Catlin was concomitantly defending "a people who are dying at the hands of their enemies, without the means of recording their own annals" and who became victims of "the wholesale and retail system of injustice, which has been, from the very first landing of our forefathers, (and is equally at

historian Geoffrey Tweedale notes "that Sheffield traders did make some attempt to cater to US needs from a very early date. American-style axes and plantation tools were on sale by the 1820s and [in] 1836, responding to a request on the frontier for scalping knives, Hiram Cutler wrote to the American Fur Co concerning a knife 'that would probably suit Indians'" (G. Tweedale, *Sheffield Steel and America: A Century of Commercial and Technological Interdependence 1830–1930*, Cambridge: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 177).

the present day, being) visited upon" them.[122] "I have flown to their rescue", he writes, "not of their lives or of their race (for they are '*doomed*' and must perish), but to the rescue of their looks and their modes [...]; phoenix-like, they may rise from the 'stain on a painter's palette,' and live again upon canvass, and stand forth for centuries yet to come, the living monuments of a noble race".[123]

In part, however, Catlin's representations themselves worked towards their "doom" by extracting "their looks and their modes" and reassembling them according to his own highly idealized artistic vision and economic needs. He for instance ignored aniconic or iconoclastic belief systems prevalent among many native societies in his conservationist desires by elevating them from their alleged historical backwardness and displacing them onto his canvas, the East, and the world.[124] Catlin himself admits that these displacements regularly incurred a human cost:

> The squaws generally agreed, that they had discovered life enough in [the paintings] to render my *medicine* too great for the Mandans; saying that such an operation could not be performed without taking away from the original something of his existence, which I put in the picture, and they could see it move, could see it stir.[125] [...] they commenced a mournful and doleful chaunt [sic] against me, crying and weeping bitterly through the village, proclaiming me a most 'dangerous' man; one who could make living persons by looking at them: and at the same time, could, as a matter of course, destroy life in the same way, if I chose. [...] that I was to take a part of the existence of those whom I painted, and carry it home with me amongst the white people, and that when they died they would never sleep quiet in their graves.[126]

Some of Catlin's more graphic paintings explicitly emphasize violent scenes, for example his drawings of arrow-pierced, bleeding buffaloes or his infamously bloody renditions of native rituals. In the summer of 1832, he visited the Mandan tribe near today's Bismarck, North Dakota and, as one of very few Euroamericans, witnessed a fertility rite known as O-Kee-Pa (Buffalo Dance). This painful ceremony involved metal barbs being hooked into the chests of young warriors who were then suspended vertically from the ceiling (see fig. 5).

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122 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 27; Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, p. 249.

123 Ibid., p. 36.

124 Aniconism (i.e. the absence or prohibition of materially represented features or figures) is also present in the artistic traditions of Islam that depict patterns instead of human forms. The Amish also avoid paintings and photographs, famously manufacturing child's dolls without facial features.

125 Charles Baudelaire in contrast believed that Catlin's paintings championed native agency and that the artist "has brought back alive the proud and free characters of these chiefs, both their nobility and manliness" (qtd. in B. Eisler, *The Red Man's Bones: George Catlin, Artist and Showman*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2013, p. 326).

126 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 1, pp. 178–179.

"I entered the *medicine-house*", Catlin reports, "as I would have entered a church, expect[ing] to see something extraordinary and strange, but yet in the form of worship or devotion; but alas! little did I expect to see the interior of their holy temple turned into a *slaughter-house*, and its floor strewed with the blood of its fanatic devotees".[127] This "shocking and disgusting custom", he complains, "sickens the heart [...] of a traveller in the country, and he weeps for their ignorance – he pities them with all his heart for their blindness, and laments that the light of civilization [...] cannot be extended to them".[128]

Fig. 5: G. Catlin, *The Cutting Scene, Mandan O-kee-pa Ceremony*, 1832.

In condemning this "disgusting custom", Catlin and similar-minded contemporaries ignored the fact that flagellations and other mortifications of the flesh were (and still are) parts of the Christian and other Abrahamic faiths. Catlin's account hence formatted the West as a vicious space, access to which seemed possible first by the representational assembling of this order, and second by replacing unfamiliar with familiar practices of violence via settlement and commerce. As demonstrated by the first chapter, this logic culminated in the pre-formatted mental landscapes that Margaret Fuller confronted at the Niagara Falls, where

127 Ibid., p. 245.
128 Ibid., p. 285.

she constantly felt the unfamiliar "spirit" of western violence creep up behind her in the guise of "naked savages [...] with uplifted tomahawks".[129] At the same time, Catlin juxtaposed his violent renditions with empathy and compassion and hence progressive discourses for his time. He engendered affective spaces that countered dominant spatial imaginations that still viewed the West as *terra nullius* and Native Americans as savages, a term Catlin despised and publicly excoriated. After attending the Mandan cutting ritual, he confessed: "I could hear the knife rip through their flesh, and feel enough of it myself, to start involuntary and uncontrollable tears over my cheeks".[130] Five years after his visit to the Mandan village, when his painting of the cutting ceremony was displayed in the East, many observers doubted its veracity, not least because of Catlin's known tendencies of merging fact with fiction in his formatting of the West: "'The scenes described by Catlin existed almost entirely in the fertile imagination of that gentleman', a scholarly journal asserted. Although Catlin was unable to prove the veracity of his depictions – smallpox had almost completely wiped out the Mandan tribe shortly after his departure – subsequent research confirmed his stark renderings".[131]

Catlin's bloody renditions and the violence inherent in his artistic performances culminated in the so-called Affair of the Dog. In 1832, he had set down his canvas at Fort Pierre on the west bank of the Missouri River to paint Mah-to-tchee-ga (Little Bear), a chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux. While he worked on the portrait, a member of the rival Bad Arrow Points Band named Shon-ka (The Dog) appeared at the scene and noticed that the portrait showed Little Bear not from the front but in a three-quarter view. Tauntingly, this "ill-natured and surly man" remarked that Catlin had painted only half of Little Bear's face because the chief was only half a man.[132] More precisely, Catlin quotes him saying "*Mah-to-tchee-ga* is but *half a man*. [...] Ask *We-chash-a-wa-kon* (the painter), he can tell you; he knows you are but *half a man* – he painted but one half of your face, and knows the other half is good for nothing!"[133] After the painting

129 Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes*, p. 5.

130 Catlin, Letters and Notes, vol. 1, p. 268.

131 Watson, "George Catlin's Obsession". In his autobiographical narrative, Zenas Leonard attributes the genocide of the Mandan tribe to their being "sacrificed by the almost criminal carelessness of the American Fur Company. The Mandans at the time of the visit of Lewis and Clark numbered about 1,500 or 2,000 souls [...]; after the ravages of this disease [i.e. smallpox], only about thirty persons – mostly old men and boys – were left" (Leonard, *Adventures*, p. 43).

132 Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, vol. 2, p. 190.

133 Ibid.

was finished, an argument ensued between the two men during which Little Bear was shot: "Little Bear lay weltering in his blood [...] with all that side of his face entirely shot away, which had been left out of the picture; [...] carrying away one half of the jaws, and the flesh from the nostrils and corner of the mouth, to the ear, including one eye, and leaving the jugular vein entirely exposed".[134] After Catlin hastily left the scene of the crime, the incident eventually spiralled out of control and escalated into an intertribal war that claimed many lives. Some members of the Hunkpapa blamed Catlin personally for the bloodshed and allegedly condemned him to death, but he had already packed his bags and moved further upriver.

Following a number of similar incidents and hair-breadth escapes, Catlin disseminates his visions of the native West by travelling to the East Coast and Europe, leading him as far as the courts of Queen Victoria and King Louis-Philippe. Accompanied by his daughters, he reached London in 1848 where he tried to generate excitement and raise funding for his newest spatialization project that was intended to make visible the plight of natives in the West. His idea was to move the Indian Gallery onto a ship that would constantly travel the world and in this manner vest his native subjects with a new dimension of global awareness and mobility. What he imagined to be a floating chronotope of native history, however, never came to fruition. In 1852, the 56-year-old Catlin found himself bankrupted and incarcerated in London's debtor prison. Joseph Harrison, an American industrialist, finally cleared Catlin's liabilities and acquired the whole Gallery for USD 20,000. Rather than showing it to the world as Catlin intended, the art collector put the paintings and artefacts in boxes and stored them in the damp basement of a Philadelphia boiler factory. Recovering from his failures and time in jail, Catlin spent the following years travelling across South America. Exhibitions of the resulting portraits of native peoples met only limited interest of the American public. In 1871 – one year before his death – Harrison's widow donated Catlin's works to the Smithsonian Institution, whose existing collection (including paintings by Charles Bird King and John Mix Stanley) had been partially destroyed during a fire.[135]

Catlin's artistic and performative spatializations of the Louisiana Territory, in conclusion, are all-too easily dismissed as one-dimensional expressions of manifest destiny and settler colonialism. Spatially aware analyses of their inner workings and (inter)textual dynamics, however, unveil discursive strands of both their affirmation and subversion of these metanarratives, in addition to a surprising

134 Ibid., pp. 191–192.
135 Watson, "George Catlin's Obsession".

number of fault lines and contradictions between them. In their totality, Catlin's mostly well-meaning renditions of the Native American West did more to paint the Louisiana Territory as a colonial space, the tokens of whose vanishing spatial order they tried to conserve in the national memory. While Hall's stories synthesized the territory's complexity and reformatted it via the axioms of simulated unfamiliarity, Catlin became the archivist who organized and commodified said complexity through his painting, writing, and artefact hunting. While Catlin's legacy undoubtedly engendered public awareness about the forced removal and genocide of Native Americans in the West, it implicitly endorsed these developments as regrettable but inevitable steps towards the westwards-directed formatting of the American nation.

Precarious Destinies: Integrating and Separating the Oregon Country

Whoo ha! Go to it boys! We're in a perfect Oregon Fever*!* — Unknown journalist[136]

Oh, I wish we had never started. — Unknown emigrant[137]

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the term Oregon Country turned into a reference point for the Far West, outlining a region that roughly covered the northwestern Pacific Coast of the continent but lacked clearly defined borders. Early historical accounts of Spanish *conquistadores* mythologized the region as the northern extension of an imagined transamerican gold economy. With its richness in natural resources and precious metals and it being an important node of profitable Asian-Pacific trade networks that developed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Oregon Country came into the focus of colonial powers.[138] Washington Irving writes in *Astoria*:

> While the fiery and magnificent Spaniard, inflamed with the mania for gold, has extended his discoveries and conquests over those brilliant countries scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit and buoyant Frenchman, and the cool and calculating Briton, have

136 Qtd. in V. Bright, "The Folklore and History of the 'Oregon Fever'", *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 52 (1951) 4, pp. 241–253, at 241.
137 Qtd. in Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 504.
138 E. M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007, p. 94.

> pursued the less splendid, but no less lucrative, traffic in furs amidst the hyperborean regions of the Canadas, until they have advanced even within the Arctic Circle.[139]

While the British, Spanish, and Russian empires arrogated their dominance in Oregon based on treaties or historically established rights in the region, the American claim invoked Robert Gray's 1792 expedition to the Columbia River and the subsequent forays led by Lewis and Clark. The Anglo-American Convention of 1818 decreed the joint British-American occupancy of the entire area between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.[140] Like the Louisiana Territory and other barely delimited spaces between the Pacific and the organized states, the Oregon Country was inhabited by ethnically diverse peoples, again planting doubts in Americans who wondered if they could (and should) be integrated into a spatial order whose elites and middle class were overwhelmingly white. Irving's description of Oregon stands representative for these doubts, fears, and racial insecurities by depicting the region as

> a lawless interval between the abodes of civilized man, like the wastes of the ocean or the deserts of Arabia [...] Here may spring up mongrel races, like new formations in geology, the amalgamation of the "debris" and "abrasions" of former races, civilized and savage[...] the descendants of wandering hunters and trappers; of fugitives from the Spanish and American frontiers; of adventurers and desperadoes of every class and country, yearly ejected from the bosom of society into the wilderness. We are contributing incessantly to swell this singular and heterogeneous cloud of wild population [...] by the transfer of whole tribes of savages from the east of the Mississippi to the great wastes of the far West.[141]

In *The Oregon Trail*, Francis Parkman maintains that Oregon's ethnic structure was characterized by "half-breeds, a race of rather extraordinary composition, being according to the common saying half Indian, half white man, and half devil".[142] Adding even more uncharted territories and unknown populations to the already overstretched physical and human geography of the US thus evoked "a fear of boundlessness and a need to impose form on space".[143] Prior to its opening via the Oregon Trail – a key signifier of nation-building through westering – the Oregon Country was deemed too difficult to be accessed overland, mainly due to its isolation by the Rocky Mountains and long communication and

139 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 1.
140 A. F. Hyde, "Transients and Stickers: The Problem of Community in the American West", in: W. Deverell (ed.), *A Companion to the American West*, Hoboken: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 304–328, at 309.
141 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 200.
142 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 407.
143 Baker, *Heartless Immensity*, p. 27.

travel times. The only viable alternative to crossing scorched deserts and towering mountains was passage by ship. With the Panama Canal still 100 years in the future, vessels usually departed from Boston and had to circumnavigate the storm-swept Cape Horn. Navigation was perilous and could take anywhere from weeks to several months. The risks and costs associated with sea travel made it viable only vis-à-vis the high-margin fur trade and the establishment of coastal trading posts, but generally precluded large-scale emigration as well as effective governance from the remote seats of power in Washington, D.C.

In the absence of state power, historically grown local alliances and hemispheric trade networks connected the region with Central American, Asian, and archipelagic spaces in the Pacific such as the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). In the early nineteenth century, competition flared up between American settlers and the preeminent Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) whose trade monopoly had de facto dominated the territory for 200 years in the absence of governmental infrastructures. These tensions exceeded issues of political ordering as Jesuit priests from Canada competed with Methodist and Presbyterian ministers from the US over the formatting Oregon's spiritual landscape and monopoly to convert native denizens.[144] Eastern policymakers and commentators framed Oregon as the final piece in the continental puzzle of the nation's expansion. John Louis O'Sullivan, a New York City lawyer, proponent of Jacksonian Democracy, and editor of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* coined the key concept for this desire of expansion in 1845. "[O]ur manifest destiny", he boasted, is "to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions".[145] In other words, some higher power (or god personally) wished for the US to spread out from Atlantic to Pacific. "At its best", George Tindall comments, "this much-trumpeted notion of Manifest Destiny offered a moral justification for expansion, a prescription for what an enlarged United States could and should be. At its worst it was a cluster of flimsy

144 An early pioneer in the Oregon Country, Jesse Applegate relates that a fellow missionary "changed a nomadic race who had before depended on fish and buffalo meat for subsistence into a settlement of small farmers, making their own bread and vegetables, with plenty of milk and butter. [...] School books were prepared for the Indians in their own language and they read [...] portions of the New Testament [...] in their own language" (J. Applegate, "Views of Oregon History", Yoncalla, 1878, P-A 2, Bancroft Library Western Americana Collection, University of California, Berkeley, p. 2). At times, this space of Protestantism "was invaded by the Catholics, a mission established in [its] vicinity, and by the novelty of new teachers – new modes of worship, and to the simple minds of the savages what appeared to be new Gods, a part of his people were drawn away from him and the rest made restless and discontented" (ibid., p. 34).

145 J. L. O'Sullivan, "Annexation", *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (1845), pp. 5–10, at 5.

rationalizations for naked greed and imperial ambition".[146] In reality, the semantic clothing of colonial ambitions into a thinly veiled piety had less in common with the lofty values championed by O'Sullivan and more with the zealous battle cry *deus le volt* (god wills it) of medieval crusaders on their way to (re)conquer and Christianize the "heathenish" spaces between Europe and Asia. One year after O'Sullivan's declaration, the Oregon Treaty officially put an end to questions regarding the region's political affiliation by establishing the British-American boundary at the 49th parallel.

Even more than the western spaces discussed above, the following analyses reveal the profound challenges the transmontane or Far West presented for American policymakers, authors, and entrepreneurs as the nation-state faced opaque and resilient spatial orders of the Asian-Pacific hemisphere.[147] Integrating the Oregon Country into the nation's spatial metanarratives required discursively repositioning it into an Asian-Pacific matrix and thus unsettling core premises of American exceptionalism that emphasize the differences between American democracy and retrograde Old World epistemes. Historiographies often insist that the discursive transposition of the United States into the Pacific hemisphere became possible via sociocultural code-switching to the metanarrative of manifest destiny, hence resolving this contradiction through metaphysical mental gymnastics that explained transcontinental expansion as an act of god. Hailing the nation's manifest destiny to overstretch the continent, as is commonly proposed, became a central literary and political strategy of spatial formatting during the second half of the nineteenth century, concurrently acting as a rhetorical fig-leaf that justified political and economic exploitation.

What is rarely considered, however, are the underlying dynamics of spatialization that energized – and more often, destabilized – the seemingly "manifest semantics" of expansionism. These issues came to the fore because Oregon's territorial incorporation also required relocating the nation's exceptionalist narratives from the Atlantic to the Pacific hemisphere. This relocation, as will become clear, did not commence as organically and successfully as is oftentimes assumed in more straightforward explanations. On the one hand, positioning Oregon (and California) as the future nexus of an American Empire in the Asian-Pacific hemisphere clashed with opposing interests of other colonial powers and regional independence movements. At the same time, it also perpetually weakened the discursive pillars of the United States' integrity. In praxis, the shifting of

146 Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 492.

147 Giles, *Global Remapping*, p. 232; see R. Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, p. ix.

hemispheric paradigms only came into full swing with the New Imperialism at the end of the century, Spanish-American War of 1898, and annexation of overseas territories. At this point, the (forcible) opening of new markets, religious proselytizing, and colonial "obligations" like the White Man's Burden became the narrative cornerstones that undergirded the nation's imperial ordering of the Pacific space as an imagined spatiotemporal extension of a continental heartland. In the poetic phraseology of Charles Olson, the Pacific became the American "HEART SEA, twin and rival of the HEARTLAND. The Pacific is, for an American, the Plains repeated, a 20th century Great West. [...] With the Pacific opens the NEW HISTORY. [...] America completes her West only on the coast of Asia".[148] Olson's and other authors' attempts of synthesizing hemispheric imperialism with continental expansionism by envisaging the Pacific space as "a 20th century Great West" resulted in various geographic discourses, ranging from the Yellow Peril of Chinese immigration to the global integration of Chinese and American markets. The increasingly complex separation between domesticity and foreignness in American spatial narratives was, and continues to be, subject to contradictions and narrative reconfigurations. Looking at some of the first literary encounters of American authors and emigrants with the Oregon Country and its transpacific circuits then becomes key in understanding ongoing spatialization processes and their literary-historical dynamics.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Native Americans, British, French-Canadians, Spaniards, Americans, Pacific islanders, and Russians found themselves locked in fierce competition in the Pacific Northwest, trapping beavers and sea otters and shipping their valuable pelts to continental, European, and Asian marketplaces.[149] Zenas Leonard warned his government about this volatile situation, noting the region's political and economic disjointedness but also its future significance for the United States:

> The Spaniards are making inroads in the South – the Russians are encroaching with impunity along the sea shore to the North, and further North-east the British are pushing their stations into the very heart of our territory [...]. Our government should be vigilant. She should assert her claim by taking possession of the whole territory as soon as

148 Olson, *Call me Ishmael*, pp. 114; 117.

149 Since their introduction in the late sixteenth century, beaver hats and pelts turned into status symbols in the circles of European royalty and upper classes where "they became very quickly objects of a commodity fetishism unseen elsewhere in the age of Elizabeth" (D. Wallace-Wells, "Puritan Inc", *The New Republic*, 23 November 2011, https://newrepublic.com/article/75603/puritan-inc). After Russian beaver populations were nearly extinct, demand for furs from the American colonies skyrocketed. Because the material was smooth, resilient, and naturally waterproof, it was preferred for the production of top hats like the English Wellington.

> possible – for we have good reason to suppose that the territory *west* of the mountain will some day be equally as import to the nation as that on the *east*.[150]

While the coastal waters north of the Columbia River were frequented by ships from empires and companies competing in the fur trade, the region's interior remained mostly untouched except for dispersed trading stations and insular fortifications. These outposts of Oregon's extractive fur economy became multicultural venues for traders, trappers, as well as native suppliers and guides. Despite their role as multiethnic points of exchange and encounter, these commercial hotspots continuously faced a plethora of adversities. The seasonal nature of beaver trapping meant that occupants of trading posts faced supply shortages and starvation during summers. Additionally, this cyclic economy made white Oregonian entrepreneurs dependent on trade with natives, which in turn hinged on their (often very limited) knowledge of intertribal relations, as well as spatial practices and imaginations that regulated the allocation of property rights, bordering, and diplomacy among local Native American societies.

On the shaky grounds of this spatial order, competition for scarce resources and diplomatic ineptitude constantly threatened the survival of vital economic nodes and therefore the overall business of leviathan corporations like the HBC. Unlike the French inhabitants of the Louisiana Territory, British and American entrepreneurs in Oregon often ignored the customary notion "that gift-giving was part of the cost of doing business with Indian fur-suppliers".[151] The extinction of wildlife populations moreover required the continual relocation of trading posts into ever more remote backwoods, further increasing travel times and stretching out supply routes. As a result, commercial success was closely linked to the geographical knowledge and survival expertise of "exceptional" individuals able to navigate the region's treacherous cultural and physical landscapes. Pathfinders, trailblazers, and mountain men hence became the mythicized and often hyper-masculine characters that dominated the Oregon Country, both in real life and in contemporary writings that celebrated their exploits and tragedies in the Pacific Northwest. This new breed of land-based spatial entrepreneurs eventually supplanted the canoes and water-locked modes of transportation traditionally utilized by French-Canadian *voyageurs* with individual mobility on horseback. For authors like Washington Irving, this increase of spatial agency made "them physically and mentally a more livery and mercurial race than the

150 Leonard, *Adventures*, pp. 192–193.

151 S. Aron, "The Making of the First American West and the Unmaking of Other Realms", in: W. Deverell (ed.), *A Companion to the American West*, Hoboken: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 5–24, at 8.

fur traders and trappers of former days, the self-vaunting 'men of the north.' A man who bestrides a horse must be essentially different from a man who cowers in a canoe".[152]

The prospective members of this "superior" breed that crossed the Rocky Mountains were rarely mobilized by sheer idealism and desires to blaze trails for the nation-state, but entered the service of British, Canadian, or American companies to get a slice of the fur trade's staggering profits. Irving notes that in the exchange of furs for cheaply manufactured goods between native suppliers and white buyers "a clear profit of seven hundred per cent" was no exception.[153] Conversely, Zenas Leonard recounts that this profitability was regularly undermined by hedonistic tendencies as "[s]carcely one man in ten ever think of saving a single dollar of their earnings, but spend it as fast as they can see an object to spend it for. They care not what may come to pass to-morrow – but think only of enjoying the present moment".[154] But Leonard also stresses the American's lack of patriotism and placemaking pride as "neither geographical knowledge, nor the honor won by making new discoveries for the use and benefit of mankind in general, but a mercenary motive – the commercial value of the harmless and inoffensive little beaver" motivated them to enter the Oregon Country.[155] In his memoirs, Jesse Applegate, an early arrival and founder of the Applegate Trail (i.e. an alternative route to the Oregon Trail) explains that while they "were Americans and American in sentiment [they] were wholly dependent upon the HBC for their presence and protection in the country. They were not the class of men who found states and extend empires [but were] more for themselves than for their country".[156] Nonetheless, the seemingly patriotic spatial performances of pioneers such as Jedediah Smith, William Sublette, and Benjamin Bonneville take centre stage in seminal texts like Parkman's *Oregon Trail* or Irving's *Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A.*

While the Oregon Country and the mythical Far West initially entered the consciousness of American audiences via the Corps of Discovery's journals, the region remained sparsely settled. Perusing the records of Alexander Mackenzie's "gigantic thrusts into the unknown" provided a mental blueprint for Jefferson to survey the region and determine "whether the Columbia, the Oregon, the

152 Irving, *Bonneville*, pp. 27–28.

153 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 5.

154 Leonard, *Adventures*, p. 247. As proof, Leonard includes a transaction receipt between the free trapper Johnson Gardner and the AFC, showing that of the total amount "nearly one-third was [spent] for liquor and feasting" (ibid., p. 248).

155 Ibid., p. 8.

156 Applegate, "Views of Oregon History", p. 32.

Colorado, or any other [river] might offer the most direct and practicable water communication across the continent for the purposes of commerce".[157] Setting sights on transcontinental expansion, the Louisiana Territory no longer appeared like a geopolitical dead end that threatened the nation's unity and postcolonial identity, which during the Early Republic "was as uncertain, as provisional, as its cartography".[158] Shifting the paradigm of spatial overindulgence, Louisiana could now be envisioned as a springboard to a grander, more coherent geopolitical destiny.

While this paradigm shift occupied the mindsets of policymakers in Washington, its scaled-down dynamics surfaced in the performances of "minor" spatial actors tasked with the region's integration into the nation's transcontinental schematic. One such performance was the carving of names and dates into prominent locations. At Cape Disappointment, the extreme western headland at the mouth of the Columbia River, William Clark recreated an inscription from Mackenzie's travelogue, noting that "I also engraved my name, & by land the day of the month and year, as also several of the men".[159] The Corps of Discovery's journals in fact unabashedly "emulated, and even plagiarized, many textual passages" from Mackenzie's records.[160] The nation's first encounter with the Pacific sphere, and what was later mythologized as an exceptionally patriotic performance hence replicated the spatialization strategies of the British Empire as the young republic's outspoken geopolitical opposite. What motivated Americans to emulate the spatial formatting of their adversaries was not least economic reasoning. As John Floyd, Governor of Virginia and passionate advocate of Oregon's annexation proclaimed:

> We must govern the Canton trade. All this rich commerce could be governed, if not engrossed, by capitalists at Oregon, making it the Tyre of America, to supply the whole coast below, and thus obtain the silver and gold of those rich countries on that coast [...] The ginseng of the Oregon, the fur trade of that river and that sea, with sandal wood, and other valuable productions of the [Sandwich] Islands, will purchase all we want,

157 B. Gough, *First Across the Continent: Sir Alexander Mackenzie*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997, p. xviii; Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 15.

158 Giles, *Global Remapping*, p. 5.

159 Qtd. in M. Isserman and J. S. Bowman (eds.), *Across America: The Lewis and Clark Expedition*, New York: Facts on File, 2005, p. 132; see W. H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery*, New York: Viking, 1986, p. 113. According to historian David Nicandri, the template for these particular engravings was a message Mackenzie had engraved onto a rock at Bella Coola in 1793 (D. L. Nicandri, "Lewis and Clark: Exploring under the Influence of Alexander Mackenzie", *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 95 [2004] 4, pp. 171–181, at 171).

160 Ibid.

> not only to supply our own wants, but to dispose of in Europe, and return the proceeds to our own country.[161]

Irrespective Floyd's vision of an American commercial empire in the Pacific, for the time being Oregon's commercial landscape was not "the Tyre of America" but remained firmly in the grip of British and French-Canadian companies. Although the US and Britain agreed on the region's joint occupation in 1818, the HBC adopted effective measures that impeded its main competitors, the Montreal-based North West Company (NWC) and John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company, from gaining a permanent foothold in the Far West.[162] Mass emigration to the region only kicked off in the aftermath of the financial Panic of 1837 and John Charles Fremont's discovery of a practicable overland route. In 1848, the territory's definite borders were established and 11 years later the nation's manifest destiny seemed to fulfil itself when Oregon became the 33rd member of the Union, nicknamed the Beaver State.

The subsequent competition for land and resources threatened native communities and led to numerous injustices and massacres. James Cardwell was one of thousands who traversed the region on his way to the Californian gold mines. In his journals, he nonchalantly mentions having "the pleasure of shooting" a native man who had supposedly disrespected him, although to his disappointment the bullet "did not kill him".[163] At the same time, Cardwell seemed aware of the desperate situation of indigenous peoples whose lands were rapidly appropriated, often not by purchases or treaties but through mere speech acts:

> A great many miners came in, and people began to take up land for ranches all over the country, and have them surveyed. While the surveying was in progress, the indians seemed to bee [sic] at a great loss to know how it was that the White men would take

161 Qtd. in J. Eue, *Die Oregon-Frage: Amerikanische Expansionspolitik und der Pazifische Nordwesten, 1814–1848*, Münster: LIT, 1995, p. 81. American trade with China first "began in 1784–1785, when the *Empress of China* sailed from New York to Canton (present-day Guangzhou) and back, around the tip of South America. Profits from its cargo of silks and tea encouraged the outfitting of other ships, which carried ginseng root and other American goods to exchange for the luxury goods of east Asia" (Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 258).

162 Jesse Applegate explains how the HBC discouraged American interlopers: "To the mountain men[,] the van guard of the real founders of our Empire on the Pacific[,] they showed no hospitality – sold them no supplies, except on harder terms and higher prices than those asked of them by the 'enimy' [i.e. Native American entrepreneurs]" (Applegate, "Views of Oregon History", p. 32). At the time of this book's publication, both the HBC and NWC remain in business, maintaining retail stores in Canada, England, and the US.

163 Cardwell, "Emigrant Company", p. 16.

> compass & chain and go round and cry *stick stuck* and set up a few stakes and call the land thair [sic] own, when the government had not paid them for the land.[164]

Responding to these illegal appropriations, natives developed resistance strategies designed to take advantage of the greed of miners and settlers. Cardwell relates that his band employed native "gides [sic] to show where we could find [gold] in [...] large lumps [...] scattered all over the surface of the earth for sevel [sic] miles". However, to the prospective miners' dismay it turns out that the natives purposefully misled them by inventing a tall tale of El Dorado that was supposed to cure their gold fever. When the group arrive at what they imagined as a golden land, they find themselves trapped in a dusty gulch devoid of any resources. Taken aback, they turn to their guide but

> the indian said he could not account for the absence of the gold and [...] that the last time [he] was there was great quantities in sight [...] we discharge[d] him and wen[t] gold hunting on our own book [when] the indians began to show themselves in large numbers on the hills above us and they would yell horribly and roll stones down as if to try to frighten us.[165]

While constantly accusing native actors of malicious intent, settlers normalized their own acts of short-changing as astute business practices, whose profits turned into a source of personal pride. "We got a very fine [Salmon] weighing about 21 pounds for an old shirt belonging to one of our young men", Esther Belle Hanna boasts accordingly, adding that "we could have gotten half a dozen for almost nothing".[166] The French-Canadian ex-revolutionary Francis Matthieu highlights another dimension of native-settlers conflicts. Working for Astor's AFC in the Louisiana Territory, Matthieu grows increasingly frustrated by his witnessing the spread of alcoholism among Native Americans, encouraged by company policies.[167] "The Indians got drunk", he notes. "As long as they had plenty to trade it was all right and we had peace; but when their buffalo robes got scarce their appetite was so great for liquor that they would beg of one another and finally kill one another". Instead of exploiting the situation for his own ends, Matthieu leaves Astor's employ, explaining: "That is what induced me to go to Oregon. I did not know what kind of a country it was but if I did not like it I knew I could go to California".[168]

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164 Ibid., p. 22 (emphasis added).
165 Ibid., p. 11.
166 Ibid., p. 21.
167 S. A. Clarke, "Pioneer Days: A Life Sketch of F.X. Matthieu, of Marion, a Pioneer of 1842", *The Morning Oregonian* 5 (1886) 39, p. 2.
168 Matthieu, "Refugee", pp. 5–6.

After embarking from St. Louis on her half-year-long journey across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains – "the limits, as it were, of the Atlantic world" – Esther Belle Hanna reaches Oregon in the fall of 1852.[169] With palpable relief, she notes: "We are now in oregon proper [...]. My heart arouse in gratitude to God that we were spared to reach this land. Six long months have elapsed since we left our native land and now after having passed through dangers seen and unseen, sickness, trial and difficulty, toil & fatigue, we are here safely landed on the Pacific shores".[170] Before reaching these shores, however, her company had to cross the Powder River Basin, located between today's southeastern Montana and northeastern Wyoming. She is surprised to find the valley bustling with economic activity, leading her to readjust previously held pastoral visions of Oregon, which now appears to her "more like the noise and haste of a city than a remote spot far removed from civilization".[171] Hanna's mental renegotiation between the region she arrived in and the nation she started from allows for different interpretations. On one hand, it projects the Oregon Country as a replica of the East's industrial centres, implying commercial and sociocultural continuity between two disparate spaces. Despite its remoteness Oregon thus becomes a working extension of the nation-state and benchmark for its predetermined transcontinental expansion. Conversely, Hanna's impressions could also point to the region's formatting as a self-contained commercial space able to support and organize itself independently from the far-away United States.

What Hanna saw at the Powder River Basin were the offshoots of a new economic macro-region that developed around the middle of the nineteenth century. During this time, agriculture in the fertile Willamette Valley gradually started to supersede beaver trapping as Oregon's the economic. These changes, to be sure, were not results of Jefferson's agrarian ideals that came to fruition in the farthest reaches of the continent. In a more mundane reality, fashion trends in Europe dictated that headdresses made out of smooth Asian silk instead of rustic beaver pelts were now en vogue, effecting the decline of the fur industry and Oregon's agrarian respatialization.[172] On a

169 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 199.

170 Hanna, "Diary", p. 20.

171 Ibid., p. 26.

172 Ever taller and narrower silk hats like the "stovepipe" or "chimney pot" were popularized by American leaders, most famously Abraham Lincoln. It has been suggested that this change in taste saved North American beaver populations from extinction. Today, some imagine the animals' resurgence as a contributing factor in the creation of biodiverse and ecologically intact spaces, while others view them as pests that cause floods and deforestation (F. Rosell et al., "Ecological Impact of Beavers *Castor Fibre* and *Castor Canadensis* and their Ability to Modify Ecosystems", *Mammal Review* 35 [2005], pp. 1–29).

micro-level, spatial entrepreneurs like Hanna witnessed and participated in these processes. "About noon we hailed the Columbia [River] for the first time", she notes, but also consigns to her diary that "[i]t was with varied emotions that I gazed on its broad bosom":

> Little did I think in my school girl days as I traced out this river that ever I should stand upon its shores or drink of its clear cool water. But so it is, here I am after months of toil & fatigue permitted to see this noble & far-famed river. There is something grand & sublime in the scenery around it, yet I must say that I was disappointed in the scenery, instead of trees with luxuriant foliage, you see massive rocks, pile upon pile which have stood the wreck of time for centuries.[173]

In this portrayal, the top-down triumphalism of reaching the destined land is curbed by the disparity between idealized, "luxuriant" imaginations and their much stonier "grassroots" equivalents. Following the Columbia's shoreline, Hanna complains: "I never could have imagined such a road nor could I describe it for it beggars description!" Her statement then becomes a metaphor for the rocky path of the transcontinental journey and arrival not as triumph but rather as her entering another, even more challenging road that leads "over roots & branches, stumps, rocks, fallen trees and logs, over streams, through sloughs & marshes, up hill and down hill – and in short everything that could possibly tend to make it intolerable".[174]

More powerful spatial actors also struggled with the unexpectedly uneven physical and discursive landscape of Oregon. Even after the victories of the Mexican-American War, president Zachary Taylor was still convinced that "California and Oregon [were] too distant to become members of the Union" and should better "be an Independent Government".[175] Even in today's hardly disputed northwestern border regime, some view Oregon as part of a greater bioregion, detached from the political (b)orderings of the nation-state. In their combination, the following argues, the divergent vectors of formatting the Oregon Country expose its epistemic liminality and the shaky grounds on which the region was integrated into the axiom of manifest destiny. In addition, it shines a spotlight on the aftershocks produced by Oregon's volatile integration that continue to energize present debates about regional autonomy and declining state power under both local and global conditions. The nation's triumphal incorporation of the Far West, it becomes clear, was destabilized by alternative and ongoing spatialization processes that view Oregon through antithetical lenses,

173 Hanna, "Diary", p. 28.
174 Ibid., p. 29.
175 Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, p. 159.

for instance as the easternmost part of Asian-Pacific hemispheric networks or embedded in the Pacific Northwest's peculiar ecosystems. Engaging with these alternatives moreover shows that the paradigm change from continental westernness and the moving frontier towards a hemispheric periphery in the Pacific could not be effectively supported by the tenets of exceptionalism and manifest destiny. Instead, the flattening of Oregon's uneven cultural and human geographies by these axioms perpetually destabilized the nation's overall spatial ordering until today.

Leaving the Course of Empire in Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*

> *With the movement upon us, hope we make it okay*
> *If it takes a life or a couple of days*
> *It's coming together in relative ways* ... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead[176]

Between 1847 and 1849, *The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky-Mountain Life* was serialized in 21 instalments of *Knickerbocker Magazine* and later republished as an abridged edition.[177] The resulting narrative is the first-person account of Francis Parkman (1823–1893), a Harvard graduate, aspiring historian, and eldest son of one of the East Coast establishment's most distinguished families. This status and privilege enabled the young Parkman to travel across Europe in the manner of the Grand Tour, a classicist coming-of-age tradition for aristocratic adolescents "in search of art, culture and the roots of Western civilization".[178] Much to the chagrin of his parents, Parkman however showed little interest in fine arts and culture. Instead, he nurtured an ungentlemanly fascination for nature and the outdoors. As a boy of poor health, he was sent to live on his grandfather's farm, located at the edge of Massachusetts' wilderness, where

176 C. Keely, "Relative Ways", *Source Tags & Codes*, 2002, https://open.spotify.com/track/69Up0rtQOEzLnvda8dfELS.

177 The following uses the 1910 edition of *The Oregon Trail* based on the unabridged serialized version published in *Knickerbocker Magazine*. As Clarence Vail seconds in the book's preface, this is mostly due to the "feeling that Parkman, in revising his work for later editions, was unfortunate in omitting portions which gave greater virility and freer expression of self than are found in the revised form" (Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 3).

178 M. Gross, "Lessons From the Frugal Grand Tour", *The New York Times*, 5 September 2008, https://frugaltraveler.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/05/lesons-from-the-frugal-grand-tour.

he developed a passion for the forests and their cultural history. His European travels only deepened this passion as he trekked through the Alps and climbed Mount Vesuvius.

In the summer of 1846, shortly after finishing his law degree, Parkman and his friend Quincy Shaw started on a two-months-long tour across today's states of Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, and Wyoming. Crossing the frontier in Missouri, Parkman noted excitedly that "in the phraseology of the region [passing it means] to 'jump off!'"[179] On their way westwards, the friends encountered scores of American emigrants on the Oregon Trail but also spent time with the Oglala Lakota and joined them on buffalo hunting excursions. Accompanying Parkman and Shaw was a motley crew that included the French-Canadian guides Henry Chatillon and Lorel (an old trophy hunter from Ireland called the Captain), his brother Jack, an English boaster and know-it-all referred to only as R., two so-called muleteers named Delorier and Wright, as well as eight mules that pulled their canvas-covered wagon. Parkman's resulting narrative of the tour traces the histories and cultures of Native Americans residing in these spaces and their interactions and conflicts with the swelling ranks of Euroamericans that traversed their territories on the Oregon Trail.

Published at the peak of Oregon's figurative "fever curve", the book received much attention in the East, particularly by aspiring emigrants to the Oregon Country. But Parkman's account of the West was also favourably (albeit anonymously) reviewed by Herman Melville who commented that its "style is easy and free, quite flowingly correct. There are no undue sallies of fancy and no attempts at wit which flash in the pan".[180] Nonetheless, the eminent writer also complained about Parkman's depiction of natives and the book's title that "will be apt to mislead" because "[t]here is nothing about California or Oregon in the book; but though we like it the better for this, the title is not the less ill-chosen".[181] In a more abstract vein, Melville recognized the text's role for literary spatialization processes, both in the national-expansionist and hemispheric-colonial contexts, remarking that perhaps "the title is correct after all [...] inasmuch as the route or 'trail' pursued by Mr. Parkman towards the Rocky Mountains would be the one pursued by a traveller bound overland to the Pacific. [...] And it

179 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 46.

180 H. Melville, "Mr. Parkman's Tour", *The Literary World* (1849) 113, pp. 291–293, at 291. Melville's critique likely refers to Parkman's sometimes harsh and dehumanizing descriptions, e.g. of "tribes beyond the mountains, who are scattered among the caves and rocks like beasts, living on roots and reptiles" (Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 214).

181 Melville, "Parkman's Tour", p. 291.

would also be part of the route followed by a traveller bound due West from Missouri to Pekin[g] or Bombay".[182]

In a glowing review in *The Atlantic Monthly*, historian-philosopher John Fiske praised *The Oregon Trail* as an exceptionally patriotic performance of literary history writing that was equally informed by the nation's spatial themes and global epistemic trajectories. Of "all American historians", Fiske states, Parkman "is the most deeply and peculiarly American, yet he is at the same time the broadest and most cosmopolitan. The book [...] clearly belongs, I think, among the world's few masterpieces of the highest rank along with the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Gibbon".[183] At the time of Parkman's death, his historically accoutred account of transcontinental movement towards the Far West had already become a centrepiece of a national historiography that revolved around manifest destiny and the frontier as the spatial formats that sustained the nation's imminent expansion into the Asian-Pacific and Caribbean hemispheres. One of the most outspoken advocates of this New Imperialism, Theodore Roosevelt dedicated his four-volume opus *The Winning of the West* "to Francis Parkman to whom Americans who feel pride in the pioneer history of their country are so greatly indebted".[184]

A must-read for westward-thinking Americans, Parkman's book played a crucial role in compounding the hemispheric Otherness of the Asian-Pacific with the transatlantic exceptionalism of the westering nation. While the endorsement of Melville, Fiske, and Roosevelt positioned *The Oregon Trail* as an epoch-making constituent of US history, the text contains a diversity of spatial imaginations that oppose its commonly cited nationalistic and triumphal readings. Overcoming hardships on the trail for Parkman was not necessarily a spatial performance of American ingenuity, progressive civilization, or racial superiority. More often, it became the cause of individual uprootedness and collective trauma. Confronted with human grief and loss of life on the trail, the sense of mission and destiny that supposedly animated emigrants on their way to Oregon is compromised by violence, anarchy, and greed. Combined with extra-legal spaces of exploitation, the resilience of Native American belief systems, and deviant visions such as the Mormon empire of Deseret, Parkman's textual performances subvert linear spatial formatting through manifest destiny.

As word of Oregon's fertile soil reached the eastern seaboard, literary and personal accounts of the Pacific Northwest energized visions of upwards mobility,

182 Ibid.

183 J. Fiske, "Francis Parkman", *The Atlantic Monthly* 73 (1894) 439, pp. 664–674, at 674.

184 T. Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, vol. 1, New York: The Review of Reviews Company, 1904 [1889]. In 1910, Ginn and Company published an annotated edition titled *The Oregon Trail of Francis Parkman* that was coedited by Frederick Jackson Turner.

cheap land, and fast money. As newspapers commentators put it, Americans had caught "the Oregon Fever".[185] In contrast to reductive depictions found in popular histories, the "fever" that incentivized this frantic movement was no sickness that exclusively afflicted white emigrants. Driven by a variety of motives, an ethnically and culturally diverse assemblage of people from the East, South, and North gathered at the trailhead in St. Louis. To Parkman's own surprise, a multinational and multiethnic group congregated aboard his travel party's vessel, consisting of "Santa Fé traders, gamblers, speculators, and adventurers of various descriptions, and her steerage was crowded with Oregon emigrants, 'mountain men,' negroes, and a party of Kansas Indians, who had been on a visit to St. Louis".[186] This unexpected diversity of emigrants and travellers already contradicts some central postulations of manifest destiny that concede the tokens of mobility and epoch-making spatial agency exclusively to white Euroamericans, while attributing the fate of non-white peoples to displacement and forced (im)mobility.

In the summer of 1843, in what would later be dubbed the Great Wagon Train, around 1,000 emigrants started from Independence, Missouri towards the fertile Willamette Valley and "began their invasion of Oregon, carrying with them all things requisite for the establishment of farms" and encouraging even more emigrants to embark on the trail in the following season.[187] Parkman's use of the term "invasion" gives a first hint of this migration not just being a materialization of god-pleasing progress by spatial entrepreneurs "on [their] way, to found new empires in the West".[188] In several other passages in the text, emigrants actually resemble barbaric hordes socially uprooted from their eastern or European homes and wandering the trail not as personifications of empire, but as a disoriented and destructive force: "Finding at home no scope for their fiery energies, they had betaken themselves to the prairie; and in them seemed to be revived, with redoubled force, that fierce spirit which impelled their ancestors, scarce more lawless than themselves, from the German forests, to inundate Europe and break to pieces the Roman Empire".[189] In this analogy to the Migration Period in ancient European

185 Bright, "Folklore and History", p. 241.

186 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 22.

187 Ibid., p. 17. The Oregon Trail was not a single route but had many offshoots and forks leading in different directions, e.g. the California Trail (from 1843), Mormon Trail (from 1847), and Bozeman Trail (from 1863). While most Oregon-bound emigrants headed for Willamette Valley, the part that led to the Pacific Northwest reached as far as Fort Vancouver, Washington. With the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 the use of all trails declined rapidly.

188 Ibid., p. 108.

189 Ibid., p. 135.

history, the emigrants' movement to Oregon seems less guided by higher principles than by the necessities of sheer survival. Instead of civilization and cleanliness as the centrepieces of imperial discourses in the Pacific hemisphere, the torchbearers of manifest destiny spread chaos and contagious diseases across the continent. In their struggle to survive, they even abandon the material tokens of western civilization that have become utterly useless in this new environment. As a result, erstwhile priceless possessions, heirlooms, and other civilizational achievements litter the trail, signifying regression and loss instead of progress. During his travels, Parkman witnesses

> the shattered wrecks of ancient claw-footed tables, well waxed and rubbed, or massive bureaus of carved oak. These, many of them no doubt the relics of ancestral prosperity in the colonial time, must have encountered strange vicissitudes. Imported, perhaps, from England; then, with the declining fortunes of their owners, borne across the Alleghanies [sic] to the remote wilderness of Ohio or Kentucky; then to Illinois or Missouri; and now at last fondly stowed away in the family wagon for the interminable journey to Oregon. But the stern privations of the way were little anticipated. The cherished relic is soon flung out to scorch and crack upon the hot prairie.[190]

Introducing this spatio-historical simile to the erratic and destructive movement of subaltern peoples during Europe's Barbaric migrations, the book on the one hand devalues the accolades of a manifest destiny which now appears chaotic and ephemeral instead of inevitable and everlasting. On the other hand, Parkman's knowledge of ancient history suggests that he was mindful of how his contemporaries interpreted the events that led to the Western Roman Empire's downfall. Political and moral corruption, it was argued, were introduced through contact with spaces of sociocultural Otherness on the fringes of the empire. Domestically, the transition from polytheistic spiritual landscapes towards Christian monotheism completed the erosion of Roman unity.[191] These are the same cataclysmic forces which nineteenth-century authors such as Hall, Catlin, and Fuller saw at work in dismantling the spatial orders that had structured the coexistence of indigenous and colonial societies. Like Rome was hollowed out by diseases, corruption, and alcoholism, informal native empires now faced the same fate, brought about not by wandering Barbarians but American emigrants as its oftentimes themselves subaltern emissaries, among whom not triumph and pride but "fear and dissension prevailed".[192]

190 Ibid.

191 R. MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis: A.D. 235–337*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 195–213.

192 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 95.

The prairies in this historically permeated vision then become the stage for a Social Darwinist spatial formatting in which the future ordering of white America is exacted not through the noble motives of its patriotic harbingers, but via purely Hobbesian dynamics. "Here the feeble succumb to the brave", Parkman notes accordingly, "with nothing to sustain them in their weakness. Here society is reduced to its original elements, and the whole fabric of art and conventionality is struck rudely to pieces, and men find themselves suddenly brought back to the wants and resources of their original natures".[193] The collision of ethnically and historically antagonistic macro-groups, their encompassing spatial orders and underlying imaginations, the text implies, is destined to culminate in the conquest of one by the other: "Great changes are at hand in that region. With the stream of emigration to Oregon and California, the buffalo will dwindle away, and the large wandering communities who depend on them for support must be broken and scattered. The Indians will soon be corrupted by the example of the whites, abased by whiskey, and overawed by military posts".[194]

In this gloomy vision, the "long train of emigrant wagons [...] in their slow, heavy procession, passed the encampment of the people whom they and their descendants, in the space of century, are to sweep from the face of the earth".[195] Native people whose lives were often predicated on movement and seasonal mobility were thus obliterated by the spontaneous and colonizing mobility of a sedentary people, whose sedentariness was paradoxically also hailed as a hallmark of western civilization. While natives were overwhelmed and immobilized by the seductions and exploitations of this invasion, white emigrants carved out spatial practices designed to guarantee their survival in the Darwinist Far West.[196] Material cultures developed along the trail and formed assemblages that reformatted the artefacts of eastern civilization through their juxtaposition with the objects and symbols of western unfamiliarity, therefore engendering folded,

193 Ibid., p. 105.

194 Ibid., p. 274.

195 Ibid., p. 145.

196 There were, of course, exceptions to this rule as some tribes successfully adopted American business methods. About an entrepreneurial Shawnee chief Parkman writes that he "just arrived from Westport, where he owns a trading establishment. Besides this, he has a fine farm and a considerable number of slaves. Indeed, the Shawanoes [sic] have made greater progress in agriculture than any other tribe on the Missouri frontier" (Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 39). In contrast, Pawnees who actively resisted the influx of white settlers Parkman calls "a treacherous, cowardly banditti, who by a thousand acts of pillage and murder have deserved summary chastisement at the hands of government" (ibid., pp. 102–103).

hybrid, and transitory formats alongside East-West trajectories. After reaching an isolated trading post on the prairies, Parkman observes that its collection of

> sofas, chairs, tables, and a well-filled bookcase would not have disgraced an Eastern city; though there were one or two little tokens that indicated the rather questionable civilization of the region. A pistol, loaded and capped, lay on the mantlepiece; and through the glass of the bookcase, peeping above the works of John Milton, glittered the handle of very mischievous-looking knife.[197]

Reformatting the material symbols of their culture in this manner, American emigrants laid the epistemic foundations for the Turnerian frontier as the birthplace of a newfound national character reassembled from the fragments of different ideas and practices and developed through utilitarianist necessity. While this equation could work on the abstract level of national historiography, the human realities Parkman observes on the trail turn out to be much more tangible and complex. In reality, it becomes clear, many who may have cradled these or similar notions did not live to see them realized. With widespread malnutrition and unsanitary conditions, the majority of the up to 30,000 deaths on the Oregon Trail were caused by cholera, typhoid, dysentery, and the dreaded "mountain fever", a bacterial disease transmitted by ticks. Constantly exposed to the elements, some adopted indigenous techniques and constructed underground sod shelters or burned buffalo chips for heat and cooking. Edith Ammons, a homesteader in South Dakota, recounts weathering a blizzard inside a haphazard shelter on the plains, feeling "defenceless against the elemental fury of the storm, was like drifting in a small boat at sea, tossed and buffeted by waves, each one threatening to engulf you".[198] Outside the realms of fiction, attacks by hostile natives proved to be a minor threat that accounted for less than one per cent of fatalities. Many more died from drowning during river crossings, stampeding livestock, gunpowder explosions, violence among emigrants, accidental shootings, and suicide.[199] Falling off the wagon and getting run over was a tragedy that befell unsupervised children and contributed

197 Ibid., p. 50.

198 Qtd. in L. S. Peavy and U. Smith, *Pioneer Women: The Lives of Women on the Frontier*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998, p. 60.

199 Gun accidents often happened at night when nervous wagon guards fired at fellow travellers or family members. The breakup between the realities on the trail and their pre-formatting through violent discourses made emigrants dread nightly assaults by natives.

to "an average of ten graves per mile" on the 2,000-mile-long trail.[200] Parkman notes that at these sites of suffering

> [t]he earth was usually torn up, and covered thickly with wolf-tracks. [...] One morning a piece of plank, standing upright on the summit of a grassy hill, attracted our notice, and riding up to it we found the following words very roughly traced upon it, apparently by a red-hot piece of iron:
>
> MARY ELLIS.
> DIED MAY 7TH, 1845.
> AGED TWO MONTHS.
>
> Such tokens were of common occurrence. Nothing could speak more for the hardihood, or rather infatuation, of the adventurers, or the sufferings that await them upon the journey.[201]

For Parkman, these tragedies reify the human cost of mobility and victims of the incommensurable West's spatial formatting. Sordid and less than triumphal grassroots performances and experiences counterpointed the overarching mission of bringing prosperity, enlightenment, and Christianity to supposedly uncivilized spaces. Western histories and literary studies show a certain aversion to addressing issues of migrant poverty and subalternity because they complicate basic axioms and ethnic binaries of settler colonialist narratives. While the indisputably exploitative colonization of the American West would not be conceivable without the element of westward migration, the role of migrants in these spatialization processes, however, must be examined in conjunction with aspects of poverty, trauma, and desperation that existed parallel to ideological narratives and theoretical placemaking axioms. Contrary to categories like ethnicity or gender, Gavin Jones points out that poverty as a mainspring of nineteenth-century mobility has been neglected as a "critical discourse in the study of American literature and culture", not least because it also threatens to diminish "those assumptions of freedom and universality that underpin a liberal market economy".[202] According to a longstanding consensus, there was no widespread poverty among Americans prior to the economic upheavals of the 1930s. Like the fever curve of a stock chart, American mobilities always seemed to point upwards and westwards, until these stock values figuratively and literally collapsed over the course of

200 US Department of the Interior, "History and Educational Resources: The Oregon Trail", *National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center*, https://www.blm.gov/learn/interpretive-centers/national-historic-oregon-trail-interpretive-center/history-and-educational-resources (accessed 7 May 2020).

201 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, pp. 93–94.

202 G. Jones, *American Hungers: The Problem of Poverty in U.S. Literature, 1840–1945*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. xiii; see Giles, *Global Remapping*, p. 229.

a week in 1929. The ensuing Great Depression immobilized not only subaltern bodies in the US but paralyzed spatial orders on a global scale. As Julia Leyda explains,

> geographic mobility could no longer be equated with nation-building progress; rather, the migration, displacement, and homelessness of millions of unemployed Americans during the Depression constituted a real threat to the nation itself. Instead of signifying upward social mobility, geographic movements during the Depression resulted from involuntary relocation in search of work, food, and shelter. Up to this point in American history, westward movement had always implied progress, development, and opportunity, and thus been linked ideologically with upward class mobility. [...] Territorial expansion – moving west, homesteading, and building railroads – was replaced in the national imagination with this new kind of negative mobility motivated by economic survival[203]

The traumas of nineteenth-century migrants and their "negative mobilities" continue to reverberate in contemporary discourse, an infamous example being that of a specific group of emigrant families on the Oregon Trail. After taking a shortcut via the Great Salt Lake on their way to California, a wagon train headed by James Frazier Reed and George Donner was snowed in during an early Sierra Nevada winter. Frostbitten and starving, desperate party members resorted to consuming their companions and relatives. H. A. Wise provides some disturbing (and perhaps exaggerated) details in his memoirs *Los Gringos* (1849). "The women", he starts his account,

> held on to life with greater tenacity than the men. One of them feasted on her good papa, but on making soup of her lover's head, she confessed to some inward qualms of conscience. The young Spaniard, Baptiste, was the hero of the party, performing all labor and drudgery in getting food and water, until his strength became exhausted; he told me that he ate Jake Donner and the baby, "eat baby raw, stewed some of Jake, and roasted his head, not good meat, taste like sheep with the rot; but sir, very hungry, eat anything," – these were his very words.[204]

During his time on the trail, Parkman met some members of the Donner Party before they embarked on their ill-fated journey. "As the [drunken] Colonel spoke", he recounts, "I looked round on the wild assemblage, and could not help thinking that he was but ill qualified [...] Fearful was the fate that months after overtook some of the members of that party. [...] They were interrupted by

203 J. Leyda, *American Mobilities: Geographies of Class, Race, and Gender in US Culture*, American Culture Studies, Bielefeld: transcript, 2016, pp. 12–13.

204 H. A. Wise, *Los Gringos: or, An Inside View of Mexico and California, with Wanderings in Peru, Chili, and Polynesia*, New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849, pp. 74–75; see K. Johnson (ed.), *Unfortunate Emigrants: Narratives of the Donner Party*, Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996, p. 132.

the deep snows among the mountains, and maddened by cold and hunger, fed upon each other's flesh!"[205] Esther Belle Hanna also had to come to terms with disturbing and traumatic experiences while travelling on the Oregon Trail. At one point, she mentions her attending a wayside funeral for an anonymous emigrant and the marks it left on her psyche:

> No mother, wife or sister was near him in the last trying hour to wipe the death damp from his brow or close his eyes in death. Not a tear was shed as the coffin was lowered into the deep damp vault. [...] The last shovel ful[l] of earth was placed upon the mound – the sound of the retreating footsteps of the crowd have died upon the air and the poor sojourner is forgotten. The solemn scene made a deep impression on my mind; I too am a wan[d]erer, a sojourner, a pilgrim and little know how soon my poor frail body will be laid by the wayside.[206]

On her way to Oregon, Hanna confronts death and dying to such a degree that counting graves turns into a narrative backbone of her diary. For instance, she reports seeing "another new grave yesterday & 2 today. [...]. There have been several deaths from cholera. I feel a little discouraged, but will try to be calm & submissive. [...] Have heard of several more deaths from cholera. 3 men of Perry's train buried in one grave. Passed 5 more graves today".[207] In a letter to his wife, Edmund Botsford Calvin Park, travelling on the same route towards California, expresses his grief after a friend succumbed to cholera. For Park, conquering the trail and moving westwards appear less like the fulfilment of a greater mission than a deeply traumatic journey shaped by a series of emasculating

205 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 191. The drunken colonel Parkman refers to is probably James F. Reed, one of the leading figures of the Donner party. Reed had fought with Abraham Lincoln in the Black Hawk War of 1832 but, contrary to Parkman's belief, held no military rank.

206 Hanna, "Diary", pp. 2–3. Kenneth Holmes collected a plethora of autobiographical writings that record women's experiences on the Oregon Trail. For instance, Amelia Steward Knight notes in her diary on 6 May 1853: "Pleasant [weather], we have just passed the Mormon graveyard, there is a great number of graves on it, the road covered with wagons and cattle, here we passed a train of wagons on their way back, the head man had been drowned a few days before, in a river called Elk horn while getting some cattle across, and his wife was lying in the wagon quite sick, and children were mourning for a father gone and with sadness, and pitty, I passed those who perhaps a few days before had been well and happy as ourselves" (qtd. in K. L. Holmes, *Best of Covered Wagon Women*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008, p. 202).

207 Hanna, "Diary", pp. 4–5. *The Oregon Trail* (1971), one of the earliest and best-known American-made video games, was designed to educate school children about the realities of western emigration. In the game, players assume the role of wagon leaders who must make difficult economic and ethical decisions while guiding their party from Independence to the Willamette Valley. Along the way, laying to rest fictional family members (which players often named after actual friends and family) becomes a disheartening if regular occurrence (see https://archive.org/details/msdos_Oregon_Trail_Deluxe_The_1992 for a playable version [accessed 7 May 2020]).

and dehumanizing calamities that culminate in his laying to rest a man named Carter who "yielded his manly form to his conqueror [...] with a pillow under his head to take his long and awfully silent rest amidst this desolation".[208] He goes on to confide his emotional oppression to his wife in the East:

> *You* have no idea [how] sad and sorrowful [it is] to witness the struggles of the strong man on the cold earth, in this deep solitude as he grapples with death, with neither wife or mother, sister or daughter to minister his wants. Then, when the struggle is over, to leave him, so rudely buried, to sleep so far away from family and friends. It is truly painful.[209]

This "truly painful" migration with its human cost of mobility and victimizing propensities inform Parkman's book, whose overall tone, in contrast to common interpretations, is reluctant to transpose individual experiences on the Oregon Trail to the national vectors of manifest destiny. "I have often perplexed myself", he ponders, "to divine the various motives that give impulse to this strange migration" and goes on to wonder "whether [it is] 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".[210] Although the book sometimes displays merciless and Darwinist attitudes towards the tribes Parkman encounters, it acknowledges the impacts of hardships and shared sites of suffering. At these sites, imagined boundaries between ethnic groups dissipate as the social structures, spiritual landscapes, and communal bonds among spatial actors, whose histories intersect on the Oregon Trail, unravel. Similar to white emigrants who saw their hopes shatter and fall to the wayside, the Oglala chief White Shield becomes "the victim of his own imagination" after being afflicted by a throat infection:

> The White Shield was a warrior of noted prowess. Very probably, he would have received a mortal wound without the show of pain, and endured without flinching the worst tortures that an enemy could inflict upon him. [...] But when he feels himself attacked by a mysterious evil [...] when he can see no enemy to resist and defy, the boldest warrior falls prostrate at once. [...] When suffering from a protracted disorder, an Indian will often abandon himself to his supposed destiny, pine away and die [...].[211]

208 Park, "Letters to His Wife", p. 1.

209 Ibid., p. 2.

210 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 28.

211 Ibid., pp. 332–333. Parkman mentions berserk and kamikaze-like practices among desperate natives in which "the sufferer has been known to ride into the midst of an enemy's camp, or attack a grizzly bear single-handed, to get rid of a life which he supposed to lie under the doom of misfortune" (ibid., p. 333).

As already mentioned, Parkman accompanied a band of Dakotas on several buffalo hunting expeditions. These journeys shaped his opinions about the character and organization of Natives Americans that settled in and transmigrated the region of today's Midwest. On the macro-scale of spatial orders, as becomes clear in *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman largely discards potentialities of coexistence and interculturation. Unlike French Louisianans who established common ground through their adoption of the slave economy and military service in the War of 1812, the scattered regionalisms of native societies largely prevented similarly integrative processes. For Parkman, the disunity ingrained in tribalism itself engendered less stable spatial orders whose heterogenous policies and lack of unified narratives could not compete with the powerful frontier and manifest destiny ideologies. "Indians cannot act in large bodies", he concludes. "Though their object be of the highest importance, they cannot combine to attain it by a series of connected efforts. King Philip, Pontiac, and Tecumseh all felt this to their cost".[212] Despite these famous leaders' visions of greater pan-tribal orders, measures taken by single communities or fragile coalitions either remained ineffective against the onslaught of white migration or backfired when American policymakers exploited opposing interests and long-standing rivalries among tribal communities.

Depicting the moral and aesthetic dimensions of native society, Parkman's book upholds the classic binaries between the chastity of noble savages and depravity of "bad Injuns". With similar undertones as George Catlin, it views the former as existing (or having existed) within far western conservatories of ethnic and moral purity that form a distinct counterpoint to the United States and its increasingly complex urban spaces. "[N]ever have I seen in any Indian village on the remote prairies such abject depravity, such utter abasement and prostitution of every nobler part of humanity", Parkman laments, "as I have seen in great cities, the center of the world's wisdom and refinement. The meanest savage [...] would seem noble and dignified compared with some of the lost children of civilization".[213] To underscore this moral purity, the text idealizes the prairie tribes via their spatiotemporal juxtaposition to classicist Grecian and Roman ideas of beauty. Stating that "I do not exaggerate when I say, that only on the prairie and in the Vatican have I seen such faultless models of the human figure", Parkman expresses this by establishing a global assemblage. Simultaneously, he likens these archetypal "models of the human figure" to exhibition pieces that personify a caprice of nature and an oddly aesthetic synthesis of history, geography,

212 Ibid., p. 211.
213 Ibid., p. 222.

and physiognomy: "With his free and noble attitude, with the bow in his hand, and the quiver at his back, he might seem, but for his face, the Pythian Apollo himself. Such a figure rose before the imagination of Benjamin West, when on first seeing the Belvidere [sic] in the Vatican, he exclaimed, 'By heaven, a Mohawk warrior!'"[214] Finding analogies and externalizations of antique virtues in tribes like the Mohawks reveals Parkman's view of the Far West as a counter-space or "live-cell therapy" for the crumbling morals of urbanizing East Coast societies, comparable to Hall's symbolic location of the West as the unsullied "heart" of the nation.

At the same time, Parkman's constant anticipating and thus mentally framing of the Oregon Trail as a space of looming danger, passage through which could only be attained by the perpetual simulation of threats, subverts this pastoral vision. This goes as far as him stating "we all earnestly hoped that we might not meet a single human being, for should we encounter any, they would in all probability be enemies, ferocious robbers and murderers". Whether real or imagined, violence hence becomes a prerequisite for mobility on the trail; in fact, it turns into the de facto "admission card" to California and the Oregon Country as spaces of Otherness to which "our rifles would be our only passports".[215] In contrast to the ethereal beauty Parkman spots in the guise of Mohawk warriors, members of the Arapahoe nation in this space turn into "ferocious barbarians, of a most brutal and wolfish aspect".[216] During the return journey he writes that "I looked in vain among this multitude of faces to discover one manly or generous expression; all were wolfish, sinister, and malignant, and their complexions, as well as their features, unlike those of the Dahcotahs [sic], were exceedingly bad".[217] Fusing geographical determinism with early phrenological impulses, Mexicans, ethnically ambiguous people, and certain tribes are seen as incompatible with the clear-cut racial hierarchies of the US and thus as nonparticipants, antagonists – or, like the unremembered emigrants buried on the wayside of the Oregon Trail – as the human cost of western expansion.

Next to these conflicting imaginations, the trail's formatting as the nation's physical and discursive interface to Oregon and California under the auspices of manifest destiny appears equally contradictory. In the text, the author-narrator and his protagonists regularly assess Oregon in terms of its commercial value, whereas appeals to nationalism and patriotism become semantic strategies that frame the trail as an extension of the imagined community in the East. On the one

214 Ibid., pp. 227–228.
215 Ibid., p. 410.
216 Ibid., p. 334.
217 Ibid., p. 450.

hand, thinking of the Oregon Trail as an interface between an emerging continental nation and its future Pacific extensions served to further the geopolitical agendas of policymakers in Washington. On the other hand, migrants and travellers who found themselves uprooted and exploited alongside said interface hoped to bolster their precarious situation by publicly hailing these agendas, for instance by hoisting the star-spangled banner or intoning patriotic hymns. Despite these symbolic placemaking performances, Parkman makes plain that "traveling in that country, or indeed anywhere, from any other motive than gain, was an idea of which [Americans] took no cognizance".[218] Patriotism hence turned into a catalogue of ritualized performances that identified the spatial actors of a commonly shared but decidedly individualistic and capitalistic order that became profitable for its participants, regardless of parameters such as nationality and race.

Transmitting national realpolitik into the Far West, eastern power brokers began to channel their influence chiefly through local strongholds. Places like Fort Laramie at the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie rivers were geographic markers of political expansionism, military policing of the West, and the Americanization of the overland fur trade by entrepreneurs such as John Jacob Astor. In 1851, the fort became a venue for a performance that permanently altered mobility regimes that previously ordered communal life on the prairies. Over 12,000 members of the Dakota, Mandan, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, Assiniboine, and Arikara nations attended a ceremony during which their leaders agreed to receive annual reimbursements in exchange for their granting rights to construct roadways and outposts across the Great Plains. In tandem with these infrastructural developments, US policymakers continued to strive for the determination of precise territorial boundaries for plains nomads, already "hinting at the reservation system that would become the hallmark of federal Indian policy".[219] Prior to these developments and during Parkman's travels, forts and trading posts came to symbolize spatial assemblages of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They provided shared marketplaces for the trade of goods but also for exchanges of spatial ideologies and imaginations, albeit regularly marred by disparate power hierarchies and unequal circumstances.

The exploitative vein of these places, however, did not confine itself to exclusively targeting non-American nationalities or non-white ethnicities. Instead, control over and knowledge of commercial flows and sometimes artificially created

218 Ibid., p. 141.
219 Hine and Faragher, *Frontiers*, p. 88.

shortages of essential goods and sought-after luxuries like alcohol and tobacco enabled companies and their local agents to profit from the fragile position of both emigrants and natives. Powerful actors like the AFC advertised commerce as a performance of patriotism that bolstered the emergence of an American Empire based on economic prowess. While this virtue-signalling of corporations served a lobbying function in the acquisition of official licences, it did not concurrently engender "fair trade" spaces for American citizens in the West. Conversely, Parkman denounces business practices along the Oregon Trail through which "a most base advantage was taken of the ignorance and the necessities of the emigrants. They were plundered and cheated without mercy. In one bargain concluded in my presence, I calculated the profits that accrued to the fort, and found that at the lowest estimate they exceeded *eighteen hundred per cent*".[220] Abuses of market power, local monopolies, and quasi-hegemonic practices thus turned outposts like Fort Laramie into virtually extra-legal spaces where the AFC's "officials rule with an absolute sway; the arm of the United States has little force; for when we were there the extreme outposts of her troops were about seven hundred miles to the eastward".[221] Trading posts and forts, however, did also serve as nexuses of entirely different spatial imaginations: For natives, their surroundings could turn into safe havens whose proximity to forts prevented the desecration of graveyards as a strategy of psychological warfare used by some prairie tribes. Parkman describes Fort Laramie evolving into a

> place of sepulture of some Dahcotah chiefs, whose remains their people are fond of placing in the vicinity of the fort, in the hope that they may thus be protected from violation at the hands of their enemies. Yet it has happened more than once [...] that war parties of the Crow Indians [...] have thrown the bodies from the scaffolds, and broken them to pieces amid the yells of the Dahcotahs, who remained pent up in the fort, too few to defend the honored relics from insult.[222]

Parallel to the state-supported narrative of divinely ordained migration of white American protestants, other religious groups used the Oregon Trail to pursue their own spiritual destinies. At a turnoff near Bent's Fort in today's southeastern Colorado, Parkman encounters members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) who are on their way to the Utah Territory, seeking refuge from religious prosecution they had faced in the US. "As we came up", he recounts, "the Mormons left their work and seated themselves on the timber around us, when they began earnestly to discuss points of theology,

220 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, pp. 165–166.
221 Ibid., p. 156.
222 Ibid., p. 159.

complain of the ill-usage they had received from the 'gentiles,' and sound a lamentation over the loss of their great temple at Nauvoo".[223] At the time of Parkman's journey, rumours of immoral practices circulated after Brigham Young succeeded Joseph Smith as leader of the movement's growing following. In response to critiques about the disenfranchisement of Mormon women, Young drafted the United States' second (after Wyoming) universal women's suffrage bill in 1870. Mormon women enthusiastically participated in nationwide suffrage movements and founded the *Woman's Exponent* journal as a platform to voice their opinions on political issues. Still, eastern commentators argued that these women only voted as their husbands told them, thus doing a disservice to the overall movement. In 1887, the federal government made the issue superfluous by taking away women's suffrage rights altogether.[224] As a result of this and other struggles between local and national institutional powers, the Mormons were forced to abandon their settlements in Ohio, Missouri and Nauvoo, Illinois, accompanied by violent clashes with other settlers that led to several massacres and small-scale wars.[225] Like many of his contemporaries, Parkman viewed the Mormons as secessionist apostates and aberrant spatial actors. Agreeing with their continual displacements, he notes his being "happy that the settlements had been delivered from the presence of such blind and desperate fanatics".[226] Despite these resistances, Mormons managed to integrate their decades-long continental exodus into their own spiritual landscapes, resulting in mental counter-spaces that opposed dominant spatial discourses and collided with federal laws and land policies.

The founding narrative of the LDS holds that in the town of Palmyra, New York, an angelic vision directed the 14-year-old Joseph Smith to the location of a buried book printed on golden plates.[227] Helped by higher powers, Smith

223 Ibid., p. 428.

224 S. B. Gordon, "Law and the Contact of Cultures", in: W. Deverell (ed.), *A Companion to the American West*, Hoboken: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 130–142, at 132; R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 92.

225 Conflicts included the Missouri Mormon War in 1838 and Mormon War in Illinois 1844–1845. After the Mormons established their settlement in Salt Lake City, decades of raids and skirmishes with local tribes ensued, including Black Hawk's War 1865–1872 (Tindall and Shi, *America*, pp. 464–465).

226 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 428.

227 Palmyra is named after the ancient Syrian oasis town that was mostly destroyed by Islamic State extremists in 2015. A hotbed of religious revivalism and the Second Great Awakening, western New York was also referred to as the "burned-over district". As historian John H. Martin notes: "Just as a forest fire can sweep all before it, the religious and reforming urges swept their way across the Ontario Plain between Albany and Lake Erie, changing the religious and social

translated the plates' inscriptions and in 1830 published *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*. Mormon, the book's alleged author, according to Smith lived during the fourth century. Apart from being a historian and prophet, he belonged to the native tribe of the Nephites who after falling from god's grace left Jerusalem and emigrated to the Americas in 589 BCE.[228] In the millenarian spatial visions of Brigham Young and his disciples, the task that this descendant of one of the ten lost tribes of Israel bestowed upon them was to construct a new Zion in the wilderness of the American West. Before Smith was killed by a lynch mob and his disciples expelled from Illinois, the town of Nauvoo was chosen as the site of this heavenly-inspired act of respatialization, set in motion by a semi-literate New Englander's vision based on the translation of a Jewish Native American's exegesis of the Old Testament. Following in the footsteps of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young imagined the realization of this spatio-temporal assemblage in a theodemocratic empire. This empire was to materialize in the State of Deseret as a kingdom of god whose governmental organization blended scripture-based theocracy with principles of US republicanism.

On their way to attaining this exceptional space, Mormon pioneers used the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails on their trek to the Southwest and California, some pulling handcarts in lieu of oxen, while later emigrants arrived by train after the completion of the southwestern sections of the transcontinental railroad.[229] In the midst of the Mexican-American War, their final destination in what would later become Utah was still under Mexican jurisdiction. Young sent a letter to president James Polk, informing him about his plans to send some of his followers across the Rocky Mountains to settle in the Mexican territory of Alta California. If they would receive no support from the United States, Young warned the president, they would offer their services to the Mexicans instead. Concerned about thousands of armed fanatics joining enemy forces, Polk decided to control the mobility of these unpredictable spatial agents by putting them under the command of his most reliable officers. On 3 June 1846, he noted in his war diary that "Col. [Stephen W.] Kearney was also authorized to receive into service as volunteers a few hundred of the Mormons who are now on their way to California, with a view to conciliate them, attach them to our country, & prevent

approaches to life (J. H. Martin, "Saints, Sinners and Reformers: The Burned-Over District Re-Visited", *The Crooked Lake Review*, Fall 2005, http://crookedlakereview.com/articles/136_150/137fall2005/137martin.html).

228 G. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 89–90.

229 Brigham Young referred to on-foot emigrants as the "handcart brigade", over 200 of whom perished during a blizzard in 1856.

them from taking part against us".[230] Polk's decision resulted in the establishment of the Mormon Battalion as the only explicitly religious military unit in US history, consisting of around 550 volunteers who served between 1846 and 1847.

The battalion assumed a dual and contradictory role, simultaneously furthering the nation-state's territorial expansion during the war and concurrently working towards their own vision of an autonomous Mormon empire in the West. The Mormon Battalion, however, never encountered Mexican troops and was never directly engaged in combat. Instead, it was renowned for its nearly 2,000-mile-long march from Iowa to San Diego, where the gruelling performance of mobility is still commemorated with several monuments and mythologized by the church's proponents.[231] Nearing the end of his travels on the Oregon Trail, Parkman encounters the main body of the battalion and reports that "[t]he Mormons were to be paid off in California, and they were allowed to bring with them their families and property. There was something very striking in the half-military, half-patriarchal appearance of these armed fanatics, thus on their way with their wives and children, to found, it might be, a Mormon empire in California".[232] The search for the capital of the Mormon empire came to an end with Brigham Young's famous declaration "this is the place" and subsequent founding of Salt Lake City in 1847.[233] After the war, Young drafted the provisional boundaries of Deseret, which encompassed most of the territorial gains fixed in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, including parts of California and the Oregon Country.[234] While Young's proposition of a vast and autonomous empire inside the continental body of the US appeared fantastical, it was seriously considered by Congress and president Taylor. They conceived the merger of Deseret and California into one political entity as a way of restoring the balance between free and slave states and prevent further strife over the country's "peculiar institution".[235] The issue was resolved by the Compromise

230 J. K. Polk, *The Diary of James K. Polk During His Presidency, 1845 to 1849*, M. M. Quaife (ed.), vol. 1, Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Company, 1910, p. 444.

231 B. J. Metcalf, "Four Things to Know about the Journey of the Mormon Battalion: An Expedition of Faith and Sacrifice", *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, 24 January 2018, https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/historic-sites/journey-of-the-mormon-battalion.

232 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, pp. 515–516.

233 L. Arave, "This Is the Place Monument Isn't Quite at Actual 'Place'", *Deseret News*, 24 July 2009, https://www.deseret.com/2009/7/24/20330678/this-is-the-place-monument-isn-t-quite-at-actual-place.

234 Tindall and Shi, *America*, p. 465.

235 R. K. Crallé (ed.), "Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions, Feb. 6, 1837", *The Works of John C. Calhoun*, vol. 2, New York: Russell & Russell, 1851, pp. 625–633, at 626.

of 1850 that admitted California as a free state and left the introduction of slavery in the newly organized territories of Utah and New Mexico up for vote.[236] In spite of their ephemeral cooperation during the war, tensions between the government and LDS Church erupted in the following decades, mainly over the constitutionality of theocratic rule and plural marriage, bringing the region to the brink of war several times, until Utah joined the Union in 1896 as its 45th member state. However, before gradually aligning themselves with their surrounding spatial order during the twentieth century

> the Mormon faithful signaled their difference from mainstream American culture by attempting to farm, merchandise, and manufacture with commonly owned and worked lands, products, and cash. Everything from railroad building, banking, stock grazing, sugar production, and lumbering was undertaken with two related goals: to make the Mormons entirely self-sufficient so that they could cease all contact with the unfriendly United States and so that they could create the Kingdom of God on earth where all people shared according to their abilities and needs in work, profits, and grace.[237]

In praxis, Brigham Young's spatial imagination of a heavenly kingdom of Deseret was to come about through hard work and a strong, self-sufficient economy. The Mormons hence embraced a spatial narrative that not only emphasized its historical origins by harking back to millennialist traditions of spiritual elation through self-improvement but that was also a practical necessity in the inhospitable topography of Utah's salt deserts. By becoming "the owner of mercantile outlets, sugar and woolen factories, a bank, and a life insurance company [...] [t]he Mormons succeeded spectacularly, proof to them of God's blessings. Communitarian theology was happily wedded with economic development".[238] A constant challenge for Mormons in upholding their commercially driven utopia was balancing the exploitation of their environment with the spiritual ensoulment of work and industry. In an instructional letter cited in James Godson Bleak's memoirs, Elder George A. Smith urges the need for 100 workers in the construction of a fort near the Colorado River. Although severe labour shortages in the Southwest complicated the already difficult undertaking, he insists on only "selecting such men as are willing to work for Israel, and do not worship the Almighty Dollar".[239] Smith's concerns about the undermining of

236 M. van Frank, "Creation of the Utah Territory", *The Beehive Archive*, 17 September 2010, https://www.utahhumanities.org/stories/items/show/196.

237 Hyde, "Transients and Stickers", pp. 315–316.

238 Hine and Faragher, *Frontiers*, p. 150.

239 Qtd. in G. Bleak, *Annals of the Southern Utah Mission*, 1847–1877, P-F 335, Bancroft Library Western Americana Collection, University of California, Berkeley, p. 138. Not all Mormon leaders were convinced of abstaining from capital gain. Bleak quotes a letter penned by Erastus Snow, a

his congregation's money-driven yet anticapitalistic and commonwealth-based spatial order by the lure of "the Almighty Dollar" were not entirely unfounded. As Bleak's records reveal, in the previous year

> Apostles Amasa M. Lyman and Charles C. Rich were called by President Brigham Young to organize a company in Salt Lake City to go to California and form the nucleus of a settlement at Cajon Pass, where they were to cultivate the olive, grape, sugar-cane and cotton. The original intention was to have twenty in the company. The number, however, reached over five hundred. This rush to travel to California was not approved by President Young, as it evidently was prompted by the gold-craze.[240]

Ultimately viewing Mormons as sectarian and unreliable spatial entrepreneurs, Parkman remains unsure about their multiscalar role in the spatial ordering of the United States, of which "[n]o one could predict what would be the result".[241] As equally unpredictable actors, climate and weather in the text become antagonistic forces that stand in stark contrast with the familiar and predictable conditions on the East Coast. "The thunder here", Parkman writes, "is not like the tame thunder of New England".[242] While he and other American authors attempted to assert discursive power over the West's disparate environments, Parkman relates that its indigenous inhabitants were engaged in their own campaigns against the adversities of nature:

> Whenever a storm which they wished to avert was threatening, the thunder-fighters would take their bows and arrows, their guns, their magic drums, and a sort of whistle, made out of the ringbone of the war-eagle. Thus equipped, they would run out and fire at the rising cloud, whooping, yelling, whistling, and beating their drum, to frighten it down again.[243]

Short of attacking nature itself, by introducing familiar transcontinental associations the book develops equally symbolic strategies to come to grips with the West and its peoples' unpredictable movements. These associations manifest themselves, for instance, in the description of features alongside the trail that

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principal figure in the colonization of Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico, in which Snow reports that "a few apostates and gentile miners who were exploring in that region [i.e. northwestern Utah] professed to have found much more [precious metals]. [...] [R]eports from that region say they making new discoveries; not only of lead and silver, but of cinnabar and gold-quartz [...]. In view of this state of things I have selected from twenty-five individuals that were comparatively foot-loose in the Southern settlements, to go [...] and claim, and hold claim to the most desirable locations in those upper valleys" (qtd. in ibid., p. 184).

240 Bleak, *Annals*, p. 11.

241 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 67.

242 Ibid., p. 78.

243 Ibid., p. 279.

resemble places from Parkman's youth yet are uncannily enmeshed in a hostile environment. "Objects familiar from childhood surrounded me" he contemplates: "The objects were the same, yet they were thrown into a wilder and more startling scene, for the black crags and the savage trees assumed a grim and threatening aspect".[244] In contrast to the eerie likeness evoked by these objects, familiar tastes and olfactory impressions help in connecting the West to Parkman's native New England: "I made a welcome discovery, no other than a bed of strawberries", he reports enthusiastically, "and I sat down by them, hailing them as old acquaintances; for among those lonely and perilous mountains they awakened delicious associations of the gardens and peaceful home of far-distant New England".[245] At other occasions, he allows his mind to wander to the conversant places he visited during his European coming-of-age tour, for example when the western sky "seemed more like some luxurious vision of Eastern romance than like a reality of that wilderness; all were melted together into a soft delicious blue, as voluptuous as the sky of Naples or the transparent sea that washes the sunny cliffs of Capri".[246] After descending into a hidden ravine awash with otherworldly illumination, he experiences a dream-like vision as "[t]he genius of the place exercised a strange influence upon my mind", engendering a plethora of hemispheric connections:

> In that perilous wilderness, eight hundred miles removed beyond the faintest vestige of civilization, the scenes of another hemisphere, the seat of ancient refinement, passed before me like a succession of vivid painting than any mere dreams of fancy. I saw the church of *St. Peter* illumined on the evening of Easter-Day, the whole majestic pile, from the cross to the foundation stone, penciled in fire and shedding a radiance, like the serene light of the moon, on the sea of upturned faces below. I saw the peak of *Mount Etna* towering above its inky mantle of clouds and lightly curling its wreaths of milk-white smoke against the soft sky flushed with the *Sicilian* sunset. [...] and the grated window from whence I could look out, a forbidden indulgence, upon the melancholy *Coliseum* and the crumbling ruins of the *Eternal City*. The mighty glaciers of the *Splügen* too rose before me, gleaming in the sun like polished silver, and those terrible solitudes, the birthplace of the *Rhine*, where, bursting from the bowels of its native mountains, it lashes and foams down the rocky abyss into the little valley of *Andeer*. These recollection, and many more, crowded upon me, until remembering that it was hardly wise to remain long in such a place, I mounted again and retraced my steps.[247]

Evoking these hemispheric linkages and spatial analogies to the East then becomes a strategy of discursively controlling the human and environmental

244 Ibid., p. 351.
245 Ibid., pp. 351–352.
246 Ibid., p. 421.
247 Ibid., pp. 379–380 (emphasis added).

Otherness that exists alongside the seemingly straightforward path to Oregon, California, and what Melville in *Moby-Dick* described as "the possibilities of the immense Remote, the Wild, the Watery, the Unshored".[248] In order to exact this control, Parkman establishes the eastern states and Europe as counterweights to the spectres of western Otherness, projecting the imaginative genius of these places onto the Oregon Trail to tame its epistemic wildness. Taking recourse to these familiar geographies, in turn, conflicts with the progressive narrative of manifest destiny by conjuring a regressive style of spatial formatting that tries to "easternize" the West instead of (as Hall, Drake, and others proposed) reforming the postcolonial order of the East by hailing purer forms of western identity. In contrast to the book's more conventional readings, these spatializing processes further remove *The Oregon Trail* from ostensibly celebrating the transcontinental mobilization of the nation-state. Parkman in fact often shrinks from viewing the transmontane West and Asian-Pacific hemisphere as destined spaces of the United States' expansion.

After he awakens from his daydream in the otherworldly ravine, he regains his sense of place and rides his horse to the top, from where he "could look down on the savage procession [of Native Americans] as it passed just beneath my feet" and his "imagination might have tasked itself in vain to have conceived a more striking spectacle than that wild scene, with wilder men who animated it".[249] Following the trail to the Southwest, his party encounters ever more unfamiliar scenes that defy Parkman's mental transposition of European picturesqueness and New England tranquillity into the ferocious Far West. This ferocity manifests itself in his equation of environmental with human Otherness when he remarks seeing "squaws and Spanish women, and a few Mexicans" that looked "as mean and miserable as the place itself".[250] In contrast, native tribes like the Delaware could very well be imaginatively transposed into the East Coast's romanticized mindscape. "There was no village bell, for the Delawares have none", Parkman ponders, "and yet upon that forlorn and rude settlement was the same spirit of Sabbath repose and tranquility as in some little New England village among the mountains of New Hampshire or the Vermont woods".[251]

As a result, examining *The Oregon Trail* through the lens of spatialization processes undermines historical truisms and makes accessible new understandings of manifest destiny, revealing the non-canonical workings of spatial literacy within a seemingly triumphalist key text of American expansionism. In this way,

248 Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 539.
249 Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 380.
250 Ibid., p. 424.
251 Ibid., p. 42.

formerly hidden discursive layers and spatial imaginations come into view that can be decoded through spatial semantics. Parkman's textual encounter with partly antagonistic, partly overlapping spatial imaginations and attempts of spatial formatting by subaltern emigrants, Native Americans, traders, Mexicans, and Mormons subverts the apparently unambiguous narrative of the trail as a direct path towards transcontinental and transhemispheric empire. The formatting of the nation-state through manifest destiny is further challenged by Parkman's allegorical recourses to Europe and New England that emphasize the contradictions between the transatlantic trajectory of American exceptionalism and the paradigm change needed for the nation's imperial outreach into the Asian-Pacific hemisphere. The above analyses demonstrate that parallel and oftentimes subversive spatialization processes accompanied the emergence of an American Empire. Instead of turning into a highway to empire, scrutinizing Parkman's rendition of the Oregon Trail under the lens of spatialization processes demonstrates its concomitant formatting alongside themes of subaltern mobility, trauma, exploitation, and liminal human performances that destabilize the book's dominant interpretation as an urtext of manifest destiny.

Confronting the Limits of Empire in Washington Irving's *Astoria*

> *There is no pride so jealous and irritable as the pride of territory.*
> *As one wave of emigration after another rolls into the vast regions of the west,*
> *and our settlements stretch towards the Rocky Mountains,*
> *the eager eyes of our pioneers will pry beyond,*
> *and they will become impatient of any barrier or impediment*
> *in the way of what they consider a grand outlet of our empire.* W. Irving[252]

A decade before Parkman's account of the Oregon Trail received national acclaim, an already more established author chronicled the story of an immigrant entrepreneur and his vision of planting the seeds of empire on the Pacific coast. Washington Irving's (1783–1859) *Astoria* (1836) came into being as a result of the writer's friendship with John Jacob Astor, the famously rich German-American fur dealer, real estate mogul, and the country's first multi-millionaire.[253] Astor

252 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 473.

253 Adjusted for inflation, Astor's net worth amounted to USD 138,000,000,000 as of 2013, making him the third-richest American in history, trumped only be Cornelius Vanderbilt and John D. Rockefeller (S. Hargreaves, "The Richest Americans in History", *CNN Money*, 2 June 2014, https://money.cnn.com/gallery/luxury/2014/06/01/richest-americans-in-history).

commissioned Irving to write a book that would detail the history of his Pacific Fur Company (PFC) and its establishment of Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. The businessman was convinced "that the true nature and extent of his enterprise and its national character and importance had never been understood".[254] Johann Jakob Astor was born in 1763 in the village of Waldorf near Heidelberg, Germany.[255] At age 16, he moved to London where he found employment as an instrument maker at his brother's workshop. In 1783, Astor emigrated yet again, this time to Baltimore in the newly independent United States, where he became familiar with the potential profits of the fur trade. He set up headquarters in New York City and began importing and exporting furs. The operation expanded quickly, funnelling goods from Canada and the Great Lakes region to the East Coast and Europe, until in 1807 Jefferson's Embargo Act against Britain caused a nation-wide depression and threatened to disrupt the exponential growth of Astor's business.

After the embargo was lifted, he acquired the permission to launch the American Fur Company with a starting capital of USD 1,000,000. With the objective to gain access to the lucrative Chinese market, Astor began to scout shipping routes and global trade networks in the Pacific and soon managed to establish a transcontinental trade empire that integrated the fur, silk, and tea markets of North America, Europe, and Asia. Intrigued by the opportunities of expanding his activities into the Asian-Pacific hemisphere, Astor turned to the government to canvass diplomatic and military support for a new venture on the far western limits of the continent. Strategically located at the juncture of the Pacific Ocean and Columbia River, he envisioned Fort Astoria as the starting point of "a line of trading posts from the Mississippi and the Missouri across the Rocky Mountains, forming a high road from the great regions of the west to the shores of the Pacific".[256] Beaver and otter pelts harvested at the nodes of this network were to be transported to the fort, from where Astor's merchant fleet would ship them via Hawaii to Guangzhou, China. The profits from these transactions would then be used to purchase Chinese luxuries including tea, porcelain, and nankeens to be unloaded onto the European and American markets.[257]

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, American policymakers were painfully aware that British and Canadian enterprises controlled almost the entire

254 Irving, *Astoria*, p. vi.

255 John Jacob Astor is not be confused with his great-grandson John Jacob Astor IV, who died during the sinking of the *Titanic*, being not only the richest passenger on board but also among the wealthiest people on the planet.

256 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 472.

257 Ronda, "Passion and Immigration", pp. 18–33.

continental fur trade. This made them receptive to Astor's plans, which would not only challenge the duopoly of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company but also give the US political leverage over the continental West and the Asian-Pacific hemisphere with its untapped resources and geopolitical benefits. Captivated by the potential of Astor's envisaged colony, president Jefferson calculated that a strong presence in the Far West would bolster the young republic's delicate position among the concert of European powers. In turn, increased leverage in the international arena would support future claims to the Oregon Country with its fertile soils as described in the Corps of Discovery's journals.[258] In Irving's words, Astoria would become the country's "embryo metropolis" in the Pacific hemisphere.[259] In a letter addressed to the Scottish mapmaker John Melish, Jefferson envisions Astoria as the centrepiece of an American Empire in the Pacific: "If we claim that country at all, it must be on Astor's settlement near the mouth of the Columbia, and the principle of the *jus gentium* [i.e. the international law of nations] of America, that when a civilized nation takes possession of the mouth of a river in new country, that possession is considered as including all its waters".[260]

Reversing the imaginary trajectory of annexing and colonizing the Oregon Country and West Coast, Jefferson also considered formatting Astoria as an independent replica and "sister democracy to the United States that looked out to the Pacific".[261] Irving explains that "Astoria might have realized the anticipations of Mr. Astor, so well understood and appreciated by Mr. Jefferson in gradually becoming a commercial empire beyond the mountains, peopled by 'free and independent Americans, and linked with us by ties of blood and interest'".[262] While Astor considered both options for his envisaged trade empire, the main hurdle to these visions remained more practical, namely "the stern barriers of the Rocky Mountains, the limits, as it were, of the Atlantic world".[263] In a shrewd example of geopolitical manoeuvring, the millionaire strategically selected what he thought was the most favourable moment to realize his scheme on the Pacific coast. In 1810, the HBC and NWC were pitted against each other in a North American

258 See Hyde, "Transients and Stickers", p. 309.

259 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 78.

260 T. Jefferson, "To John Melish", in: A. E. Bergh (ed.), *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 16, Washington: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1907 [31 December 1816], pp. 93–95, at 94.

261 P. Stark, *Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire: A Story of Wealth, Ambition, and Survival*, New York: HarperCollins, 2014, p. 2.

262 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 472.

263 Ibid., p. 199.

sideshow of the Napoleonic Wars, while at the same time a privateering war sweltered between the American and British fleets.

After receiving Astor's request for military protection of his "patriotic" venture, Jefferson was unwilling to stretch his already understaffed forces across the continent, hence risking to expose commercial hubs like New Orleans that were under constant threat of British invasion. Despite being turned down by the government, the entrepreneur nonetheless went ahead and established the PFC as a subsidiary of the AFC. Its goal was nothing less than to assemble a new spatio-economic order that conjoined the Pacific Northwest, Russian America, Great Lakes region, East Coast, Europe, and China into a global trade empire, sanctioned by US policy and controlled from the mogul's hometown of New York. Irving describes the blueprint of Astor's envisioned establishment of a liberal-democratic but decidedly monopolistic global empire as consisting of

> a line of trading posts from the Mississippi and the Missouri across the Rocky Mountains, forming a high road from the great regions of the west to the shores of the Pacific. We should have had a fortified post and port at the mouth of the Columbia, commanding the trade of that river and its tributaries, and of a wide extent of country and sea-coast carrying on an active and profitable commerce with the Sandwich Islands, and a direct and frequent communication with China.[264]

Next to unruly natives and the colonial proxies of Spain, France, and Russia, the London-based aristocratic agents of the British Empire and HBC were the central antagonists of Astoria and "held a lordly sway over the wintry lakes and boundless forests of the Canadas, almost equal to that of the East India Company over the voluptuous climes and magnificent realms of the Orient".[265] In contrast to the progressive ideals of democracy and free trade, the European monarchies' commercial activities here appear arrested in the past, with British and Canadian companies ruling over the Pacific Northwest in the authoritarian and pompous manner of medieval despots. In *Astoria*, the visits of these "royal capitalists" resemble regal processions, awkwardly transplanted into the wilderness as "[t]hey ascended the rivers in great state, like sovereigns making a progress, or rather like Highland chieftains navigating their subject lakes. They were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by

264 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 472.

265 Ibid., pp. 7–8. The NWC was the other main competitor of Astor's envisioned trade imperium with strongholds in Montreal and Fort William Henry at Lake George. The fort features in J. F. Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* as the site of a massacre by Huron tribes against British soldiers in 1757.

Canadian voyageurs, as obedient as Highland clansmen".[266] After the outbreak of the War of 1812, US policymakers found themselves pitted against this powerful adversary and its fur-clad assets in the Far West. Pitted against the British fleet and other adversarial circumstances to be discussed below, the loss of 40 per cent of ship crews to starvation and accidents, the sinking of the *Tonquin*, and other calamities put an end to the transhemispheric dreams of the Oregon Country as embryo of Astor's nascent empire. When the first ships sailing under the Union Jack entered the bay, Astor's agents seemed unwilling to sacrifice their lives in order to uphold the millionaire's aspirations and surrendered the garrison without resistance. Increasing the wrath of Astor, they also sold off all remaining pelts and valuables to the NWC.[267] On 12 December 1812,

> the fate of Astoria was consummated by a regular ceremonial. Captain Black, attended by his officers, entered the fort, caused the British standard to be erected, broke a bottle of wine, and declared, in a loud voice, that he took possession of the establishment and of the country, in the name of his Britannic Majesty, changing the name of Astoria to that of Fort George.[268]

Although the United States used Astoria's brief existence from 1810–1812 to substantiate their claims to the Oregon Country, the fur trade remained under British control until the opening of the region via the South Pass in 1813 and the Oregon Trail during the 1840s. Although the Treaty of Ghent in 1815 forbade British trade in the region, the American government – thousands of miles away from the scene – was powerless to enforce the ban, "which, in effect, was a dead letter

266 Ibid., pp. 11–12.

267 J. P. Ronda, *Astoria & Empire*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990, p. 265; see D. Drabelle, "'Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire' by Peter Stark", review of *Astoria: John Jacob Astor and Thomas Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire: A Story of Wealth, Ambition, and Survival*, by P. Stark, *The Washington Post*, 21 March 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/astoria–john-jacob-astor-and-thomas-jefferson s-lost-pacific-empire-by-peter-stark/2014/03/21/61c53796-a2dd-11e3-a5fa-55f0c77bf39c_story.html. The rogue deal of his officers with the NWC not only enraged Astor but also the crews of the British ships who "conquered" Astoria hoping to collect spoils of war, and whose "disappointment [...] may easily be conceived, when they learned that their warlike attack upon Astoria had been forestalled by a snug commercial arrangement; that their anticipated booty had become British property in the regular course of traffic, and that all this had been effected by the very [North West] Company which had been instrumental in getting them sent on what they now stigmatized as a fool's errand. They felt as if they had been duped and made tools of, by a set of shrewd men of traffic, who had employed them to crack the nut, while they carried off the kernel" (Irving, *Astoria*, p. 460).

268 Ibid., p. 462.

beyond the mountains".[269] In its recounting of Astoria's history, Irving's book is based on the letters and journal entries of the so-called Astorians who pioneered the fur trade in the Oregon Country. Astor avidly collected these documents and handed them to Irving together with the task of writing the definitive history of his venture. Many sources, however, contained only information pertaining to numbers and business practices, hence making for rather dull reading. In addition, their semi-literate composers relentlessly plagiarized each other while also taking cues from already "published journals of other travellers who have visited the scenes described [such as] Lewis and Clark, Bradbury, Breckenridge, Long, Franchere, and Ross Cox".[270] Unlike Irving's first-hand account of the Far West in *A Tour on the Prairies* released four years prior, *Astoria* represents an exercise in retrospective historical constructivism, loosely based on semi-fictional letters and questionable journal entries. In view of its mostly unreliable narrators, the text can thus either be approached as an adventure novel assembled from historical facts, tall tales, and randomly recorded factoids, or conversely as a "narratively embellished" work of early American history.

Irrespective of these issues, the resulting book quickly became a bestseller among East Coast readers and also shaped the younger generations' spatial imaginations when it appeared on the syllabuses of history classes.[271] Simply titled *Astoria*, it presented an eye-catching exception to the sentence-long subtitles that often adorned of the period. No subtitle took away attention from Astor and his eponymous global vision. Edgar Allan Poe, who graced the book with a lengthy review in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, accordingly complimented "the modesty of the title affording no indication of the fulness, comprehensiveness, and beauty, with which a long and entangled series of detail, collected, necessarily, from a mass of vague and imperfect data, has been wrought into completeness and unity".[272] In contrast to this "modesty", in the mind of the businessman and in Irving's narrative reflections, the actual Astoria should have been a shining City Upon a Hill that prefigured the nation's destiny in a Pacific Empire, replacing the agrarian "myth of the yeoman farmer and the

269 Ibid., p. 469.

270 Ibid., p. vii.

271 Stark, *Astoria*, p. 282.

272 E. A. Poe, "Astoria", *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 4, New York: Redfield, 1857, pp. 420–447, at 420–421. Later editions, however, were subtitled and published as *Astoria: or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains*.

family cow" with "thousand-acre wheat farms and vertically integrated corporate feed lots" that catered to the profitability of far western markets and globally connected economies.[273]

To stabilize this envisioned spatial order, the entrepreneur framed the imaginative opening of this economic macro-space as a decidedly patriotic exercise. Irving relates that while "Mr. Astor had been obliged to have recourse to British subjects experienced in the Canadian fur trade [...] it was his intention, as much as possible, to select Americans, so as to secure an ascendency of American influence in the management of the company, and to make it decidedly national".[274] The book positions US trade and commerce as factors that could integrate the aberrant imaginations and populations of the Asian-Pacific sphere into the economic and racial hierarchies of United States. Apart from its obvious financial allure, the transcontinental fur trade became an arbiter of an overarching civilizing mission postulated through literary discourse. As Irving summarizes, Astor "considered his projected establishment at the mouth of the Columbia as the emporium to an immense commerce: as a colony that would form the germ of a wide civilization; that would, in fact, carry the American population across the Rocky Mountains and spread it along the shores of the Pacific, as it already animated the shores of the Atlantic".[275]

In literary historiographies, *Astoria* has long-since been approached in the light of these grand and epochal narratives that posited the colony as a symbolic place for the struggles of imperial powers over the natural and strategic resources of the North American continent, but also opened up the Far West for the spatial imagination of writers, politicians, and emigrants. Undoubtedly, the textual manifestation of these notions in Irving's text contributed to the groundwork of manifest destiny and its infrastructural reifications on the Oregon Trail and later the transcontinental railroad. Complicating this dominant reading, the following unearths a much broader bandwidth of local, regional, and global vectors that stood in the way of Astor's and Jefferson's visions of commercial and national empires, respectively. Implicitly or explicitly, *Astoria's* protagonists suggest different, oftentimes more flexible and practicable spatial formats, many of which build upon the region's cultural diversity and the anational integration of the Pacific Northwest with Asian-Pacific and archipelagic frameworks.

Entrusted by his friend to bring said dreams of an American-controlled global economic order to paper and disseminate them to a national audience,

273 D. D. Quantic, "The Great Plains", in: C. L. Crow (ed.), *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*, Hoboken: Blackwell, 2003, pp. 213–230, at 213.
274 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 332.
275 Ibid., p. 26.

Irving's literary renditions bring to the fore their epistemic origins and political appeal but also their limitations and epistemic contradictions. Approximating *Astoria* through the semantics of spatialization processes unfolds complex cultural geographies animated by heterogenous ideas and agendas of actors that operated alongside, beneath, or outside the formats of empire and nation-state. In the introduction, Irving acknowledges his aspiration of delivering a "work [that] actually possesses much of that unity so much sought after in works of fiction, and considered so important to the interest of every history".[276] Conversely, Irving's equally strong desire to embellish a seemingly straightforward story into a momentous work of literature by introducing a wealth of themes and protagonists provides an interface to spatialization processes that proposed alternatives to or resisted this very "unity".

The ultimate failure of Astoria, it becomes clear, was not merely a result of the outbreak of war with the leviathan of the British Empire or betrayal by unpatriotic agents who "instructed [their] men to pass themselves for Americans or Englishmen, according to the exigencies of the case".[277] In turn, Canadian *voyageurs*, Native American traders, Hawaiian policymakers, and Russian bureaucrats were at least equally important spatial actors in their envisioning Astoria as part of alternative models of region, nation, and empire. Placed in the context of present-day debates revolving around spatial ordering under global conditions, Astoria (both Irving's book and the colony) becomes an early showcase of the conflicting dynamics and ongoing tensions between global and local cultures and identities. Taking recourse to literary discourses then provides insights not only into the real or imagined globalization of regions but also to routinely overlooked discourses concerning the re-localization of globalized power and knowledge structures.

Before he could connect the continental nodes of his envisaged empire to his coastal colony and the oceanic spaces that lay beyond, Astor first had to build the fortified trading post called Astoria. Since Lewis and Clark had not found a viable overland route, the only remaining way of reaching the Oregon Country was by sea. A fleet of commercial vessels was hence to establish the PFC as the market leader in the international fur trade. Supporting its flagship *Tonquin*, the *Beaver* and the *Lark* started to the Far West from the eastern seaboard. Over 100 years before the Panama Canal linked Atlantic and Pacific, the trailblazing *Tonquin* had to sail around the storm-swept Cape Horn. Late in 1810, the ship left New York City under the command of Jonathan Thorn and

276 Ibid., p. vii.
277 Ibid., p. 459.

with the mission to construct Fort Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River, explore the region, establish ties with local traders, and carve out a dominant position among competing colonial powers whose ships traversed the coastline in search of furs. But before a suitable place for the fort was found, attempts to locate a safe anchoring place for the *Tonquin* had already cost the lives of eight sailors whose boat capsized in the tumultuous waters between Chinook Point and Cape Disappointment.

Already during the first legs of the journey and before rounding Cape Horn, social dynamics on the *Tonquin* created their own idiosyncratic and highly mobile spatial configurations and human geographies. Captain Thorn, an aristocratic American who grew up during the colonial period and tried to enforce strict hierarchies aboard the vessel, found himself pitted against a group of younger and mutinous crew members. They took a stance against the verticality of Thorn's despotic spatial ordering, arguing that flat hierarchies and popular votes were more democratic and therefore the proper way of running an American ship. Irving identifies one of the insurgents as Elder Stuart, a well-travelled Canadian *métis* and *voyageur* who incurred Thorn's anger with his contempt for ranks and racial hierarchies. Stuart's "gossiping familiarity shocked the captain's notions of rank and subordination", Irving notes, as "nothing was so abhorrent to [Thorn] as the community of pipe between master and man".[278] The crew's anti-authoritarian tendencies moreover became apparent in divergent spatial imaginations that wallowed in the myth of limitless mobility and fantasies of a borderless global order, as opposed to their captain's "bordered" mindset that adhered only to facts, commands, and nautical measurements:

> That craving desire, natural to untravelled men of fresh and lively minds, to see strange lands and to visit scenes famous in history or fable was expressed by some of the partners and clerks, with respect to some of the storied coasts and islands that lay within their route. The captain, however, who regarded every coast and island with a matter-of-fact eye, and had no more associations connected with them than those laid down in his sea-chart, considered all this curiosity as exceedingly idle and childish. "In the first part of the voyage," says he [Thorn] in his letter, "they were determined to have it said they had been in Africa, and therefore insisted on my stopping at the Cape de Verds. Next they said the ship should stop on the coast of Patagonia, for they must see the large and uncommon inhabitants of that place. Then they must go to the island where Robinson Crusoe had so long lived. And lastly, they were determined to see the handsome inhabitants of Easter Island."[279]

Although their superior stood in the way of their spatial imaginations' materialization – of course, the ship did not divert from its planned route to the Oregon

278 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 43.
279 Ibid., pp. 44–45.

Country to visit these places – the *Tonquin's* crew found alternate ways of satisfying their desire to see, experience, and also appropriate exotic locations. This led to some early examples of high-impact "tourism" when the ship anchored at Hawaii's Kealakekua Bay, the place where the famous Captain Cook was killed by natives in 1779. After landing on the rocky beaches of the island, crew members immediately began to collect artefacts as souvenirs, "knocking off pieces of the rocks, and cutting off the bark of the trees marked by the balls" of British muskets.[280] While they did not see themselves as tourists in today's understanding of the word, their place-making performances turned the *Tonquin's* crew into proto-touristic actors that formatted (and partly erased) an archipelagic space commensurate with their imaginations of the exotic Far West and its affective networks.

Having read about the Far West's ethnic heterogeneity and the diplomatic intricacies of the Pacific fur trade in the journals of Scott, Lewis and Clark, and others, Astor realized that the success of his enterprise depended on its successfully tapping into, dominating, and expanding business connections that already existed among European companies and local merchants. On the first page of the book, Irving historicizes – and essentializes – the spatial order that the millionaire's agents encountered in the Oregon Country:

> While the fiery and magnificent Spaniard, inflamed with the mania for gold, has extended his discoveries and conquests over those brilliant countries scorched by the ardent sun of the tropics, the adroit and buoyant Frenchman, and the cool and calculating Briton, have pursued the less splendid, but no less lucrative, traffic in furs amidst the hyperborean regions of the Canadas, until they have advanced even within the Arctic Circle.[281]

Still a part of New Spain, Alta California in the early 1800s was a sparsely populated region whose economy was less driven by "the mania for gold" as Irving believed, but instead based on agriculture and the open range horse and cattle industries. Controlled by Franciscan priests and stretching along the coast to San Francisco, a Catholic mission system thrived on indentured servitude and forced labour of Native American subalterns. Although Alta California plays only an ephemeral role in *Astoria*, the region with its commercial and cultural centre San Francisco later overtook the Oregon Country as the discursive hotbed

280 Ibid., p. 54. This respatialization of the island's environment contradicts historiographies that view tourism as the final phase of western conquest and the point when "the violent history of conquest ended, and a new, tame history of buying souvenirs and taking photographs began. [...] the war was over; white people had won; the West was subdued; the West was an occupied terrain; and the tourists were the army of occupation" (Limerick, "Seeing and Being Seen", pp. 21–22).

281 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 1.

of the United States' Pacific empire, albeit this time energized by the gold fever of American and global citizens. In *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), Richard Henry Dana traces San Francisco's transformation from the sleepy and dusty hamlet he had visited during the travels of his youth to "one of the capitals of the American Republic" on his return to the West Coast in 1859. "When I awoke in the morning", Dana ponders,

> and looked from my windows over the city of San Francisco with its storehouses, towers, and steeples; its court-houses, theatres, and hospitals; its daily journals; its well-filled learned professions; its fortresses and light-houses; its wharves and harbor, with their thousand-ton clipper ships, more in number than London or Liverpool sheltered that day, itself one of the capitals of the American Republic, and the sole emporium of a new world, the awakened Pacific. [...] I could scarcely keep my hold on reality at all, or the genuineness of anything, and seemed to myself like one who had moved in "worlds not realized."[282]

Following Fort Astoria's establishment in May 1811, a botched trade deal dealt the first blow to the "worlds not realized" of Astor's own envisaged empire. Manned by a crew of 24, the *Tonquin* had dropped anchor at Clayoquot Sound near Vancouver Island to build trade relations with local Nootka tribes. After making first contact, captain Thorn, known for his hot temper and lack of tact, accused a chief of the Tla-o-qui-aht nation of inflating prices for otter pelts and in a fit of rage reportedly threw him overboard.[283] The natives immediately attacked the crew, killing most them with the new knives they had just received in exchange for furs. After the bloodbath, a mortally wounded sailor named James Lewis hid away until the next morning. When a large group of natives boarded the ship to plunder its goods, he allegedly set fire to the *Tonquin's* powder magazines, making him one of the first recorded suicide bombers in US history.[284] "Arms, legs, and mutilated bodies were blown into the air", Irving quotes Joseachal, a Quinault interpreter Thorn had recruited to communicate with the Tla-o-qui-aht. Joseachal was the only surviving crew member and made his way back to Astoria by land after witnessing the ship's explosion. He later claimed that "[u]pwards of a hundred savages were destroyed by the explosion, many more were shockingly mutilated, and for days afterwards the limbs and bodies of the slain were thrown upon the beach".[285] While the text depicts the massacre as a spectacularly

282 R. H. Dana Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911, p. 465.

283 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 93.

284 C. Cornwall, "The Suicide Bomber of Clayoquot Sound, Revived", *The Tyee*, 14 March 2008, https://thetyee.ca/Life/2008/03/14/SuicideIn1811/.

285 Irving, *Astoria*, pp. 98–99. Loosely inspired by these events, the movie *This Woman is Mine* was released in 1941 whose plot revolves around three fur traders who fall in love with a (fictional) female stowaway hiding aboard the *Tonquin*.

brutal event meant to shock and impress readers, its commercial consequences proved equally dire. Losing the *Tonquin* significantly curtailed the PFC's mobility and diminished the sphere of activity of the prospective Astorian empire.

Unmentioned in Irving's itemization of colonial powers cited above are the possessions of the Russian Empire, even though they also contributed to Astoria's troubles. North of the fort lay the far-eastern outposts of Russian Alaska with its administrative centre in Novo-Arkhangelsk (New Archangel), today's town of Sitka, Alaska.[286] Around the turn of the century, Russia had made some important contributions to global exploration and development of trade networks, for instance Ivan Fyodorovich Kruzenshtern's circumnavigation of the globe from 1803 to 1806.[287] At the time of Astoria's foundation, the state-sponsored Russian-American Company (RAC) had all but abandoned its colonizing of the continent's interior through the founding of Orthodox churches and missions. Among other difficulties, the Russians were facing increasing resistance from Alaskan tribes that traded with the NWC and independent Canadian *voyageurs* and exchanged furs for firearms. Astor's proxies knew about the Russians' problems and offered their cooperation in ousting native interlopers together with pirates and seal poachers, whose activities destabilized the Tsar's transpacific sphere of influence. In return, the PFC "was to have the exclusive right of supplying the Russian posts with goods and necessaries, receiving peltries in payment at stated prices. They were, also [...] to convey the furs of the Russian company to Canton, sell them on commission, and bring back the proceeds".[288] To finalize these agreements, the PFC sent the *Beaver* to Alaska in August 1812. Aboard the ship was Astor's agent Wilson Price Hunt with the mission of attaching Astoria to Russian trade at the peninsula. These ambitious plans, however, were based in fantasy. In reality, Fort Astoria's supplies were running dangerously low and barely allowed for the subsistence of the garrison itself. Instead of disrupting northwestern trade networks, the opposite happened as the Americans became more and more dependent on Russian outposts to supply their trading vessels. Irving notes that Hunt

> would come, in a manner, empty-handed to New Archangel. Here his ship would be furnished with about fifty canoes and a hundred Kodiak hunters, and fitted out with

286 The Russian Empire also possessed some smaller trading posts dispersed along the Californian coastline.

287 Melville mentions Kruzenshtern in *Moby-Dick*, whose narrator emphasizes the importance of whaling ships as spatial entrepreneurs and truly global trailblazers that should be "celebrate[d] [like] the heroes of Exploring Expeditions, your Cookes, your Krusensterns" (Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 121).

288 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 405.

> provisions, and everything necessary for hunting the sea-otter on the coast of California, where the Russians have another establishment. The ship would ply along the Californian coast from place to place, dropping parties of otter hunters in their canoes, furnishing them only with water, and leaving them to depend upon their of the own dexterity for a maintenance. When a sufficient cargo was collected, she would gather up her canoes and hunters, and return with them to Archangel; where the captain would render in the returns of his hear, voyage, and receive one half of the skins for his share.[289]

Cultural relations between Americans and Russians also did not play out on equal footing, further inhibiting economic cooperation and the creation of shared visions between the spatial actors. Apart from language barriers and discrepancies between Orthodox and Protestant worldviews, morals and ceremonial customs turned into obstacles among the prospective business partners. In many ways, count Alexander Andreyevich Baranov personified these obstacles. A senior manager of the RAC, the aristocrat had founded Novo-Arkhangelsk and Pavlovskaya, today's Kodiak. Given the sporadic communication with the government in St. Petersburg, he was in all but name the acting governor of Russian Alaska. Baranov was also in charge of the important trading post in Kamchatka, where he had built a reputation for his eccentric mannerisms and alcoholic rituals that he put in front of any business activities.[290] Captain Hunt, his American counterpart, was Baranov's exact opposite: a devout Protestant and abstinent teetotaller. Quoting from Hunt's personal journals, Irving relates that Baranov was "continually [...] giving entertainments by way of parade, and if you do not drink raw rum, and boiling punch as strong as sulphur, he will insult you as soon as he gets drunk, which is very shortly after sitting down to table". Defying these conventions, the "temperance captain" Hunt "stood fast to his faith, and refused to give up his sobriety".[291] While Irving tries to reframe Hunt's abstinence as an example of American moral superiority, he is forced to conclude that Astor's officer had no choice but to "go elsewhere for a market, for he stood no chance with the governor".[292]

289 Ibid., p. 439.

290 Ronda, *Astoria & Empire*, p. 283. Baranov's antics became so legendary that they found their way to Europe. In an article titled "The Carousals of Count Baranoff" , the London-based *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* praised his powers of recovery from a drunken stupor: "The count, in the meantime, was undergoing a process which soon qualified him for a prolongation of the revels. Evaporation was going on rapidly with him; wine, rum, and punch, rolled in streams from his pores, and in half an hour he seemed as good as new again" ("The Carousals of Count Baranoff", *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* 7 (1838) 343, p. 247).

291 Irving, *Astoria*, pp. 439–440.

292 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 440.

While Hunt's temperance and Protestant work ethic spoiled the trade deal and thwarted Astoria's attachment to Russian Alaska, it created common ground with several Native American tribes that abhorred drinking as much as Hunt. Irving writes that even though the coastal tribes were "altogether inferior in heroic qualities to the savages of the buffalo plains on the east side of the mountains" they nonetheless "showed superior judgment and self-command to most of their race [...] in their abstinence from ardent spirits, and the abhorrence and disgust with which they regarded a drunkard".[293] This imagined solidarity among abstainers, however, did not mean that American entrepreneurs and policymakers refrained from using alcohol as a means of subduing indigenous resistance. After the United States purchased Alaska from Russia for USD 7,200,000 in 1867, distributing cheap liquor quickly became a popular method to stifle growing discontent among Alaskan locals who suffered under the highly exploitative respatialization of their region. Faced with price increases of basic foodstuffs that impoverished natives overnight, alcohol became a tool with which the Alaskan territory was formatted according to its authoritative function as an uninhabited container of "free" natural resources like pelts, gold, and later oil. The San Francisco *Commercial Herald* reported on 22 August 1868 under the headline "Terrible Distress in Alaska"

> that the incoming [American] agent, immediately proceeded to eject the inhabitants from the houses, and drove them to the shelter of the woods where they improvised tents; that the price of flour, which had been furnished them for fifty cents by the Russian [American] Company, had been raised to two dollars by its successors; and that the new company, when appealed to by the people to supply their wants at former prices, were denied and told to go to work for the company at fifty cents a day. [...] The Russian schools have been closed and the children allowed to go at large. Intoxicating liquors are sold to boys eight years of age by American storekeepers, and they are fast becoming addicted to the vice of drunkenness.[294]

In marked contrast and 56 years prior, Irving denotes Hunt's sobriety as an example of morally superior American placemaking, even if it caused the loss of profitable networking opportunities on which the success of Astoria ultimately depended. Located offshore from Baranov's headquarters in Novo-Arkhangelsk, the seal station of St. Paul Island in the Bering Sea was one of the businesses that consequently stayed out of Hunt's and the PFC's reach. According

293 Ibid., pp. 319–320.

294 Qtd. in A. Honcharenko, *Alaska Scrap-Book: 1868–1876*, San Francisco, 1909, P-K 10–11, Bancroft Library Western Americana Collection, University of California, Berkeley, p. 1. Father Agapius Honcharenkow was a Russian missionary in Alaska and an avid collector of newspaper clippings.

to Irving, Russian sealing enterprises in the Sea of Kamchatka became profitable and sustainable ventures because "the Russians take only the small [seals], from seven to ten months old, and carefully select the males, giving the females their freedom, that the breed may not be diminished".[295] This knowledge about the fragility of ecosystems and their importance for commercial networks meant that little tolerance was afforded to those who disturbed them. Poachers caught in the territorial waters of the Russian Empire were regularly punished with forced labour in the Siberian salt mines.[296] This business attitude collided with that of American spatial actors who rarely paid regard to the preservation of the ecosystems they traversed or did business in. During her journey to Cape Horn, for instance, the *Tonquin* stopped at the Falkland Islands to take on fresh water and provisions. Once on land, sailors "passed their time merrily in rambling about the island, and coasting along the shores, shooting sea-lions, seals, foxes, geese, ducks, and penguins" for their personal amusement. An incident that led to the complete destruction of a previously intact ecosystem was reported by the survivors of the *Essex*, the ill-fated American whaler that inspired *Moby-Dick*. In August 1819, the ship

> anchored at Charles Island in the Galapagos, where the crew collected sixty 100-pound tortoises. As a prank, one of the crew set a fire, which, in the dry season, quickly spread. [The] men barely escaped, having to run through flames, and a day after they set sail, they could still see smoke from the burning island. [...] Many years later Charles Island was still a blackened wasteland, and the fire was believed to have caused the extinction of both the Floreana Tortoise and the Floreana Mockingbird.[297]

Newly arrived in the Oregon Country, one of Astor's agents named Bradbury entertains himself by indiscriminately shooting wild pigeons and "in the course of a morning's excursion, shot nearly three hundred with a fowling-piece".[298] His pointless killing is reminiscent of a chapter titled "The Slaughter of Pigeons" in Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823). There, white townspeople come together to shoot migrating pigeons with an arsenal of weapons ranging from rifles, pistols, bow and arrow, to an artillery cannon, while Natty Bumppo remarks: "It is much

295 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 441.

296 Jack London's story "An Odyssey of the North" (1900) relates a similar incident when its native protagonist Naass is forced into slave labour in Siberia after his crew are caught poaching seals in the Bering Strait.

297 C. King, "The True-Life Horror That Inspired Moby-Dick", *Smithsonian Magazine*, 1 March 2013, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-true-life-horror-that-inspired-moby-dick-17576/.

298 Irving, *Astoria*, pp. 46; 139.

better to kill only such you want, without wasting your powder and lead, then to be firing into God's creatures in this wicked manner".[299] While referring to it, Irving leaves the Americans' barely civilized ecocide uncommented but thematizes the fate of native communities that are uprooted as a consequence of the indiscriminate extermination of wildlife and rapid deforestation in the path of western settlement. In doing so, the text evokes an apocalyptic tension between the Americas and Asia:

> Some may gradually become pastoral hordes, like those rude and migratory people, half shepherd, half warrior, who, with their flecks and herds, roam the plains of upper Asia but others, it is to be apprehended, will become predatory bands, mounted on the fleet steeds of the prairies, with the open plains for their marauding grounds, and the mountains for their retreats and lurking-places. Here they may resemble those great hordes of the North, "Gog and Magog with their bands," that haunted the gloomy imaginations of the prophets.[300]

Alluding to the haunted "imaginations of the prophets", the text constructs a spatiotemporal conjuncture between the movements of mythical Asian and contemporary Alaskan tribes. Gog and Magog were kings of the so-called Unclean Nations, perhaps a marauding Scythian tribe that migrated through the area of today's Iran during antiquity. Their allegedly cannibalistic members, or what Irving calls "their bands", were driven beyond a mountain pass and walled off by the armies of Alexander, as depicted on various medieval *mappa mundi* (i.e. cosmological maps). Millennialist prophecies in the Old Testament also discuss Gog as a possible site of the Second Coming, whereas John Kirtland Wright sees Gog and Magog as an anthropologic key narrative that shaped the cross-cultural archetype of terra incognita:[301]

> [A]lthough our stone-age ancestors and their descendants down until the dawn of modern times moved back the rim of terra incognita bit by bit, their "known world" was only a

299 J. F. Cooper, *The Pioneers, or The Sources of the Susquehanna; a Descriptive Tale*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899, p. 255.

300 Irving, *Astoria*, pp. 200–201.

301 Wright is the founder of geosophy as the concept of geographical subjectivity, which stresses the duality between reality and geographical imaginations informed by cultural, often theological discourses. Using the metaphor of terra incognita, Wright argues for interdisciplinary extensions of traditional geography to highlight the humanities' potential in the analyses of cultural spaces: "Scholarship, moreover, embraces not only the natural sciences and social studies but also the humanities – the arts and letters – inquiring no less into the world of subjective experience and imaginative expression than into that of external reality. The *terrae incognitae* of the periphery contain fertile ground awaiting cultivation with the tools and in the spirit of the humanities" (J. K. Wright, "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 37 [1947] 1, pp. 1–15, at 15).

> pool of light in the midst of a shadow – limitless, for all that was definitely understood and proven. Voyages into this shadow became a favorite theme of poets and story tellers – the theme of the Argonautic myth and the *Odyssey*, of the legends of Sinbad and Saint Brandan. Out of its darkness wild hordes poured forth from time to time to carry fire and sword across Europe – Scyths, Huns, Tartars; it was a mysterious shadow, whence came rumors of strange men and monsters, of the priestly empire of Prester John, of the Apocalyptic tribes of Gog and Magog shut behind Alexander's wall until, on the day of judgment, they shall burst out to ravage the world.[302]

However, the apocalyptic discourses emanating from Irving's tribal analogy are by no means limited to scripture or cultural theory; they also permeate geopolitical ordering processes during the Cold War. Ronald Reagan, for instance, was convinced that an upcoming nuclear Armageddon would take the form of a clear-cut battle between good and evil on Judgment Day. The former actor perceived Soviet Russia as the weaponized incarnation of Gog and Magog, which constantly threatened to "burst out to ravage the world".[303] In *Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Paul Boyer quotes one of Reagan's informal speeches held during a dinner with legislators in 1971, in which the then-governor of California suggests that the Book of

> Ezekiel tells us that Gog, the nation that will lead all of the other powers of darkness against Israel, will come out of the north. Biblical scholars have been saying for generations that Gog must be Russia. What other powerful nation is to the north of Israel? None. But it didn't seem to make sense before the Russian revolution, when Russia was a Christian country. Now it does, now that Russia has become communist and atheistic, now that Russia has set itself against God. Now it fits the description of Gog perfectly.[304]

Both Irving and Reagan – in a rather unexpected discursive continuity – take recourse to apocalyptic rhetoric in order to give discursive weight to their spatial imaginations, namely by positioning antagonists as ultimate Others, hell-bent on destroying the familiar (spatial) order of things: either as uncivilized marauders who menace the nation's imperial and commercial projects on the West Coast, or as ungodly Communists that subvert NATO's democratic global ordering through their internationalist formatting of developing countries that fall like dominoes to the lure of dialectical materialism.

Still dealing with the Tsar's officials in Alaska, a rare stroke of luck finally befell Astor's PFC. After weeks of back and forth, Baranov changed his mind

302 Ibid., p. 1.

303 S. D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 180.

304 P. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 162.

and agreed to trade his seal furs with Hunt. However, in yet another unfortunate coincidence, a storm had damaged the *Beaver* that was supposed to transport the wares to Canton, while Hunt was still resisting Baranov's alcoholic advances in Novo-Arkhangelsk. It was decided to haul the leaking ship to Hawaii, make repairs, and start for China afterwards. Once on the islands, Astor's proxies were stunned by the diplomatic adroitness of Hawaiian policymakers. Emperor Kamehameha was well aware that his archipelagic kingdom represented a vital repair and wintering port that enabled mobility between the American and Asian-Pacific hemispheres for travellers and companies. To the chagrin of PFC officials, the Hawaiian leadership took a neutral standpoint that pitted the interests of American and British actors against each other, instead of accepting a subordinated role within global trade networks. Determined to profit from its beneficial position and increasing commercial activities in the Pacific, the island kingdom acquired European ship-building expertise and sent its own merchant ship, loaded with sandalwood and sailing under the Hawaiian banner, to China.

To secure the kingdom's status as an independent geopolitical actor, Kamehameha worked towards the unification of the various native communities that inhabited the Hawaiian archipelago, partly through diplomatic means and partly by force.[305] Curiously, one of the islands had a British governor. Irving mentions the case of John Young (Olohana) who was left for dead in 1790 by British-American surveyor Simon Metcalfe and subsequently made his home on the islands, "thinking it better, perhaps, to rule among savages than serve among white men".[306] In the following years, Young befriended Kamehameha and became an important figure in Hawaiian politics, advising the king in questions of trade, naval strategy, and foreign policy. He planned fortifications, trained a militia, purchased firearms from both British and American merchants, and eventually acquired the formula for making gunpowder, whose recipe conveniently includes sulphur, potassium nitrate, and charcoal and thus abundant resources in Hawaii's volcanic ecosystems. Until today, these placemaking impulses towards autonomy as well as a liminal sense of national loyalty manifest themselves in the Hawaiian banner as the only US state flag that depicts the insignia of a foreign power, namely the Union Jack in addition to eight stripes that represent the major islands. Responding to Hawaii's shifty allegiance and independent geopolitics that blockaded his wealthy commissioner's trade routes, there is nothing left to do for Irving

305 R. Tregaskis, *The Warrior King: Hawaii's Kamehameha the Great*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973, p. 203.
306 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 57.

but to ridicule the diplomatic synthesis of the Hawaiian and British monarchies. "The reader cannot but call to mind the visit", he scoffs, "which the royal family and court of the Sandwich Islands was, in later years, induced to make to the court of St. James; and the serio-comic ceremonials and mock parade which attended that singular travesty of monarchal style".[307]

Further expanding its position as a power broker in the Asian-Pacific space, the kingdom leased the *Albatross* from Astor's company. Transporting sandalwood to Canton, the ship brought back news in the summer of 1813 that confirmed rumours of a war with Great Britain. PFC agents on the islands immediately realized the danger for Fort Astoria but found themselves stranded in lieu of a seaworthy vessel. The *Lark*, another one of Astor's apparently cursed ships that shuttled between Oregon and Hawaii, was supposed to bring the agents back but suffered shipwreck on the Oregonian coast. "The horrors of their situation were increased by the sight of numerous sharks, prowling about the wreck, as if waiting for their prey" Irving writes about their desperate fate.[308] Eventually, negotiations restored the agents' curtailed mobility when Hawaiian authorities agreed to lease the *Albatross* back to the PFC, albeit for appropriate payment.

These events further underlined the PFC's lack of spatial agency as well as the precarious situation of the Oregon Country, which some imagined as not only geographically remote but also as temporally cordoned off from the progressing histories in the East. As late as 1878, immigrant Jesse Applegate expressed this view of the region as an ahistorical space by stating: "Oregon has no history. It has added no newer fact to human knowledge, has provided no high illustration of any fact already known, has produced no statesman, warrior, or scholar in any branch of human knowledge, in fact not a *single* name that for any merit or act of its possessor *deserves* to live in the memory of mankind".[309] Applegate's sweeping statement is part of his review of Frances Fuller Victor's *The River of the West: Life and Adventure in the Rocky Mountains and Oregon* (1871), whose author admits of retroactively historicizing the Oregon Country while he was "absorbed in the elegant narratives of Washington Irving, reading and musing over *Astoria* and *Bonneville*, in the cozy quiet of a New York study".[310]

307 Ibid., p. 51.

308 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 451.

309 Applegate, "Views of Oregon History", pp. 23–24.

310 F. F. Victor, *The River of the West: Life and Adventure in the Rocky Mountains and Oregon*, New York: Columbian Book Company, 1871, p. iii.

Some decades earlier and formatting the region from the comfort of his own New York study, Irving's task given to him by Astor was also to historicize the region, which he attempted through Oregon's discursive linkage with more familiar (mental) geographies. In *Astoria*, the Orient often assumes this function, for instance when Irving muses that "the Indian in his native state [...] has the hospitality of the Arab: never does a stranger enter his door without having food placed before him and never is the food thus furnished made a matter of traffic", or that "in the number of his horses consists the wealth of an Indian of the prairies who resembles an Arab in his passion for this noble animal".[311] Like the people of the Orient, Native Americans are hence viewed as a part of nature due to their supposed lack of historical agency and inability to articulate themselves meaningfully. This assumed deficit of representational power is a central tenet of Said's concepts of Orientalism. It effectively compresses the space in which Orientals, or in this case, indigenous peoples, subside into an ahistorical non-place. Fulfilling what Rudyard Kipling called the "white man's burden", it becomes the responsibility of western authors to speak vicariously "*faute de mieux* [for want of a better alternative], for the poor Orient [because:] 'Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden' [they cannot represent themselves, they have to be represented], as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*".[312] Because their identities are fixed by the inertia of their historically static environments, Orientalized spatial actors thus cannot actively participate in the progressive sequence of placemaking.

Instead, the Orient becomes an "enclosed space" and "a theatrical stage affixed to Europe" and western civilization.[313] Accordingly, Irving casts American citizens for the few roles vested with spatial agency and mobility in Orientalist discourses, for instance by calling pioneers "Sindbads of the wilderness".[314] Installing Astor's hemispheric empire in the Oregon Country then turns into an endeavour of breaking through the alleged inertia of Orientalized peoples by "erasing" timeless space and subsequently reformatting it by introducing capitalist business practices. The book envisions the erection of Fort Astoria as the first spark in a chain reaction that vitalizes the static far western wilderness and awakens its inhabitants through their exposure to and integration into trade and commerce practices. "The establishment of a trading emporium at such a point", Irving encapsulates this notion, "was calculated to cause a sensation to the most remote parts of the vast wilderness beyond the mountains. It in a manner struck

311 Irving, *Astoria*, pp. 189; 183.
312 E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, p. 21.
313 Ibid., p. 63.
314 Irving, *Astoria*, p. v.

the pulse of the great vital river, and vibrated up all its tributary streams".[315] In turn, native dissenters that lack sufficient enthusiasm regarding the "sensation" of private property are represented as morally flawed, for example when Irving complaints about "the laws of *meum* and *tuum* being but slightly respected among them".[316]

Instead of acknowledging the agency of native actors in foiling Astor's plans concerning their economic exploitation as subaltern suppliers of cheap furs, the text resorts to discourses of native corruption, either because of an overabundance of resources or by the introduction of Euroamerican customs: "[W]henever an Indian of the upper country is too lazy to hunt, yet is fond of good living, he repairs to the falls, to live in abundance without labor", Irving remarks, while simultaneously "[t]he habits of trade and the avidity of gain have their corrupting effects even in the wilderness".[317] Ignoring the significance of long-standing economic traditions based on communal ownership of resources, this imagination regards natives as passive recipients of manifest destiny and similarly irresistible ideologies, which their Orientalized immobility prevents them from aligning with. Put otherwise, the inbuilt ahistoricity of native societies proves incompatible with the forward-directed, uni-temporal spatial formats of the frontier and manifest destiny. Efforts to combat this "stubbornness" regularly ended in failures. For example, to ensure the loyalty of Canadian *voyageurs* who entered his service, the millionaire required these spatial actors, whom he saw as chaotic and unreliable, to prove their loyalty by "tak[ing] the oaths of naturalization as American citizens. To this they readily agreed, and shortly afterward assured him that they had actually done so. It was not until after they had sailed that he discovered that they had entirely deceived him in the matter".[318]

Other measures designed to convince resilient natives to fall in line with Astor's visions included more nefarious methods on the part of the PFC's officials, one of whom Irving calls "The Great Small-pox Chief" of Astoria. Worried about (likely non-existent) plans of local tribes to plunder the fort, agent Duncan McDougall called a meeting with native leaders during which he exploited their fear of smallpox that had decimated their communities in previous years.[319] "'[I]n this bottle I hold the small-pox, safely corked up,'" he declared in front of them: "'I have but to draw the cork, and let loose the pestilence, to sweep man,

315 Ibid., p. 300.
316 Ibid., p. 78.
317 Ibid., p. 90.
318 Ibid., p. 37.
319 McDougall was a Scottish native who worked for the PFC starting in 1810. Throughout the book Irving misspells his name in various ways.

woman, and child from the face of the earth'". Irving explains that "[f]rom this time [...] he was much dreaded by the natives, as one who held their faith in his hands, and was called, by way of preeminence, 'The Great Small-pox Chief'".[320]

Reading *Astoria* through the lens of spatialization processes, however, also makes visible a multitude of opposing visions and acts of spatial formatting on the part of Native Americans who subverted their singular interpretation as passive victims, as implied by the narrative of settler colonialism. While some of these resistances directly diminished the enterprise's agency, others manifested themselves less apparently via symbolic performances or spiritual discourses. Indigenous economic networks reacted to the introduction of capitalist practices by restructuring supply chains according to increasing demands for certain goods. In contrast to the monopolies that made prairie trading posts into spaces of exploitation for both settlers and natives on the Oregon Trail, native communities on the Pacific coast used their leverage over rare commodities as a strategy to resist the introduction of American business practices and, at least in part, reformat the region's commercial landscape on their own terms. Irving mentions several such occurrences, explaining that "[a]t one place the natives had just returned from hunting, and had brought back a large quantity of elk and deer meat, but asked so high a price for it as to be beyond the funds of the travellers, so they had to content themselves with dog's flesh".[321] During an inland expedition in winter, agent Donald McKenzie encountered members of the "rascally" Tushepaw nation "who possessed innumerable horses. [...] Game being scarce, he was obliged to rely, for the most part, on horse flesh for subsistence, and the Indians discovering his necessities, adopted a policy usual in civilized trade, and raised the price of horses to an exorbitant rate, knowing that he and his men must eat or die".[322] In this manner, natives were not only able to beat traders at their own game but also upended their own Orientalized reduction as non-actors without agency.

Sepulchre rites and burial sites played a pivotal role for Native American spatial orders that perceived death not as the end but beginning of mobility and spatial agency. For the Cowlitz people, mountains were key for the extension of agency into the afterlife. Mount Coffin in today's state of Washington was one such place. Named after the graveyard on its summit, here members of the Skillute tribe were "wrapped in [their] mantle of skins, laid in [their] canoe, with [their]

320 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 103.
321 Ibid., p. 298.
322 Ibid., p. 418.

paddle, [their] fishing spear, and other implements beside [them]".[323] In the 1920s, the mountain was levelled and turned into gravel used in the construction of the nearby port of Longview. Americanist Stefan Krause suggests that "[t]he slow destruction of Mount Coffin and the replacement of this geographical landmark by colonial landmarks – such as factory buildings and logging bridges – illustrate the different ways of claiming, shaping, and stewarding land by indigenous and colonial agents".[324] In a way, Mount Coffin thus still stands: First, as a symbol for the erasure of sacred landmarks in the service of profit. And second, as an example of spatial formatting that did not stop at the displacement and extermination of people but also included un-placing and un-naming the geographic centrepieces of their cultures and belief systems.

Unexpectedly, *Astoria* thematizes montane burial sites as symbols of native dignity, economic power, and indomitable control over the far western landscape. Irving mentions the biography of Blackbird, an Omaha chief who, after being buried on a mountain sitting on his war horse, posthumously overlooks the Missouri River and the profitable business of his tribe with American fur merchants. In the 1830s, "the hill of the Blackbird continues [to be] an object of veneration to the wandering savage, and a landmark to the voyager of the Missouri; and as the civilized traveller comes within sight of its spell-bound crest, the mound is pointed out to him from afar, which still encloses the grim skeletons of the Indian warrior and his horse".[325] Irving acknowledges that the western landscape can assume an affective function for both whites and natives, while the latter believed that "[i]f they have acquitted themselves well while living, they will be permitted to descend and enjoy this happy country; if otherwise they will but be tantalized with this prospect of it".[326] Protecting this divine spatial order against the onslaught of its commodification for Irving becomes a worthwhile goal. First, like George Catlin's life mission, as a museal space that preserves the "mementoes of the primitive lords of the soil, of whom in a little while scarce any traces will be left". And second, for semantic reasons

323 Ibid., p. 85. Excavations of graves on top of Mount Coffin have garnered interest of early anthropologists and curiosity hunters particularly because the Skillute practiced infant head flattening. Irving speculates that "this flattening of the head has something in it of aristocratical significancy, like the crippling of the feet among the Chinese ladies of quality. At any rate, it is a sign of freedom. No slave is permitted to bestow this enviable deformity upon his child; all the slaves, therefore, are roundheads" (ibid., p. 75).

324 S. Krause, "Mount Coffin – Ein bemerkenswerter Fels", *Rostock University*, 3 September 2016, https://www.iaa.uni-rostock.de/forschung/laufende-forschungsprojekte/american-antiquities-prof-mackenthun/project/places/mount-coffin/.

325 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 150.

326 Ibid., p. 230.

when he laments the erasure of traditional place names by "stupid, commonplace, and often ribald names entailed upon the rivers and other features of the great West, by traders and settlers".[327] The naming of places, Peter Larkin elucidates, was an important theme that structured the ways in which American authors formatted the expanding nation:

> Bartram had visited Mount Hope on his travels, a site itself christened by his own father some fifteen years before, and Crevecoeur mourned the loss of old tribal place-names which seemed to enshrine the secrets of the land as no European labels could. For Whitman the names of places were magical tokens of reality charged with creative energy, a way of subsuming history within a new spiritual geography. But Wordsworth, too, in his P*oems on the Naming of Places* had invented a similar geography out of his favourite sites, places made new and renamed by the imagination, the journey of exploration having gone "underground" as it were within the more confined European landscape. His inscriptional poetry retains a sense of the place in which or onto which it is written (even if only notionally), and one can as well say that the leading fantasy of early American literature is to constitute itself as one vast inscription upon the American landscape.[328]

In *Astoria*, Big River in Missouri becomes an example of "the wretched nomenclature inflicted upon it, by ignorant and vulgar minds".[329] Irving's affective attachment to and fervent advocacy for the creation of "a map, or maps, of every part of our country, giving the Indian names wherever they could be ascertained" here overtakes his original task of praising Astor's commercial forays, whose vulgar-minded proxies' ineptitude reflects itself in their unimaginative defacing of semantically intact spaces.[330] The failures of Astor's entrepreneurs to effectively format the Oregon Country and its hemispheric connections then becomes explainable by their incapacity to meaningfully respond to the multifariousness of its physical, cultural, and semantic geographies.

To recover from these failures and the financial losses of his ambitious venture, Astor engaged in yet another high-risk, high-margin global undertaking: the smuggling of Turkish opium to China and the British Isles, parts of whose profits he invested in the growing real estate market of his hometown. When he passed away in 1848, the patriarch and his family were known as "the landlords

327 Ibid., p. 205.

328 Larkin, "Landscape Sailing", p. 56.

329 Big River was no malapropism of a native name but translated from the French *Grande Rivière*, the name assigned to the river by Philippe Renault in 1720 (A. P. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785–1804*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002, p. 799). Still, Irving was right in believing it to be a particularly generic name as there exist at least eight other Big Rivers in Alaska, California, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin, respectively.

330 Irving, *Astoria*, p. 205.

of New York City", having attached their name to places like the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan, the Astoria neighbourhood in Queens, and Astor Avenue in the Bronx. But Astor's name exerted an influence in the country's geographical history that went far beyond the circles of East Coast aristocracy. Districts, towns, and institutions that bear his name can today be found in Iowa, Georgia, Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, Oregon, and Florida. Ultimately, the imagined empire of Astoria remains one of the earliest explicitly American attempts of spatialization aimed at unfolding on a global, transhemispheric scale. As demonstrated by this chapter, the ultimate failure of this vision, however, was not solely a result of the War of 1812 or incompetence of Astor's agents, but was accelerated by more successful spatial formats and practices grounded in ethnic and cultural diversity and cooperation that counteracted the PFC's implementation of racial hierarchies and exploitative business practices. Divergent and diverse spatial imaginations of Native Americans, Russians, Hawaiians, and others curtailed American mobility and agency in the Oregon Country and adjacent regions, ultimately shattering Astor's and Jefferson's dreams of an American Empire in the Asian-Pacific hemisphere.

Defiance and Disorder: Bioregionalism, Separatism, and Constitutional Safe Spaces

> *What will be the Government of the people of Western America?*
> *Are they to be subject to English laws? Is the United States to establish her jurisdiction there? Is Russia to maintain her power in that quarter? Or, last, is the country to be free, its inhabitants independent of any authority except their own.* W.[331]

Contrary to the visions of politicians like Jefferson and entrepreneurs like Astor, political and economic affiliation with the United States for Oregonian settlers was only one of several options in the spatial formatting of the Oregon Country. Some of these options regained popularity in recent decades, while others have remained on minor scales and in historically liminal discourses. While the literary accounts of Parkman and Irving in less spatially literate readings are merely directed at integrating the Far West into the linear narratives of statehood, empire, and manifest destiny, other writers envisioned regional autonomy as a solution to Oregon's entanglement in the geopolitics of colonial powers, including

331 W., "Present Condition and Future Prospects of Oregon", *The Oregonian, and Indian's Advocate* 1 (1839) 5, pp. 146–149, at 146, https://oregonhistoryproject.org/media/uploads/indians_advocate_r2fZN0n.pdf.

the United States. Such spatial imaginations range from revisionist histories of Oregon's political attachment, calls for an independent Pacific republic, conceptions of an anational and anti-imperialist bioregion in the Pacific Northwest, to the virtue-signalling of national loyalty by the so-called State of Jefferson. These formats emerged and continue to emerge in moments of crisis that put to question the stability of overarching spatial orders, for instance during the Mexican-American War, Civil War, ecological crises since the 1970s, and most recently Donald Trump's election. Proneness to instability, the following demonstrates, continues to be a feature of Oregon's imaginative regime that acts both as a laboratory for different spatial formats and benchmark for the soundness of superordinate spatialization processes.

Prior to the influx of settlers on the Oregon Trail, Americans, French-Canadians, and British subjects negotiated local policies during the Champoeg Meetings (also known as Wolf Meetings) between 1842 and 1845. Next to issues like the legality of slavery and bounties for killing wolves and other dangerous wildlife, the meetings were grassroots attempts of carving out legislative ground rules in the contested territory. Eventually, they engendered Oregon's Organic Law system that declared the intent to be annexed by the United States, which was subsequently framed as a veritable performance of patriotism and democracy. The decisive meeting was scheduled for 2 May 1843 and put the future political organization of the territory to the vote of 102 French-Canadian, American, and British participants. While agreeing to form a provisional governmental body, the electorate was split concerning its future affiliation with the US or the British Empire. The man whose vote broke the stalemate in favour of the Americans – supposedly persuaded by Joseph Meek's passionate appeal to the Stars and Stripes – was none other than the former gun smuggler Francis Matthieu, who in his youth rebelled against oppressive British rule in Canada before traversing the Old Northwest, Louisiana Territory, and finally arriving in the Oregon Country.[332]

Matthieu's decisive vote caused his mythical ascent from a subaltern foreigner and refugee to the celebrated spatial entrepreneur whose patriotic performance enabled the geopolitical ordering of the nation according to its manifest destiny. His free and westwards movement across the continent became tantamount to his own Americanization, culminating in his vote to endorse Oregon's federation. Matthieu's mobility beyond the physical and mental boundaries of

332 Joseph Lafayette "Joe" Meek was a patriotic trapper and politician from Virginia who played a prominent role during the Champoeg Meetings, where he was elected sheriff. He later petitioned president Polk for Oregon's organization as a federal territory and was appointed its first Federal Marshall in 1848.

the country's colonial past hence turns into an archetypal spatial performance and blueprint for its large-scale replication on the Oregon Trail and transcontinental railroad system. When he passed away at age 96 in 1914, *The Oregon Daily Journal* put his portrait on the front page together with a lengthy obituary that praised Matthieu as the "hero [...] whose vote saved Oregon to [the] Union".[333] A death notice in *The San Juan Islander* described him as the spatiotemporal linchpin for the ordering of the nation and "the most picturesque link between the old Oregon of trading posts and canoes and the new Oregon of railroads, steamships and department stores".[334] Today, symbolic markers of the region's integration with the nation-state remain visible in Champoeg State Park or the epic mural behind the speaker's desk at Oregon's State Capitol in Salem.[335]

Questioning this authoritative narrative, the former Episcopal priest and regional historian J. Neilson Barry proposed a different version of the proto-democratic performances at Champoeg that highlights the "contradiction[s] between the valid, authentic primary sources and the secondary literature".[336] The decisive meeting during which the future organization of Oregon was decided, he argues, was a product of a posteriori myth-making. Instead, a total of 17 meetings took place, only two of them in Champoeg. The meeting on the second of May, Barry maintains, was selectively mythologized but was less democratic than commonly believed, with only a third of the actual "356 [...] settlers on the 'American side' of the Columbia river" in attendance.[337] In addition, he asserts that the gatherings were fraught with distrust, conspiracies, and regularly escalated into bilingual shouting matches. Finally, a scheme was concocted among the Americans to expel the "French [who] were a very unpopular minority [...].

333 "Francis Xavier Matthieu Dead: Pioneer Last Champoeg Patriot: His Vote Saved Oregon to Union", *The Oregon Daily Journal*, 4 February 1914, pp. 1; 4, https://newspapers.com/image/77159068/ (accessed 10 May 2020).

334 "Francis Xavier Matthieu, Pioneer of the Northwest", *The San Juan Islander*, 13 February 1914, https://newspapers.com/image/201668514/ (accessed 10 May 2020).

335 Located in the Willamette Valley halfway between Salem and Oregon City, Champoeg was the seat of Oregon's provisional government until 1848. After a flood in 1861, it was abandoned and today is an overgrown ghost town dotted with stone pillars that mark former street corners.

336 J. N. Barry, "Letter to Eloise Ebert", Portland, 13 January 1960, fol. 1016, Boise State University Library.

337 J. N. Barry, "How Oregon Was Acquired", Portland, 1936, P-W 15, Bancroft Library Western Americana Collection, University of California, Berkeley, p. 4.

They were Catholics, and did not understand the English language. But worse – they had the best land".[338] Prior to the meeting, American

> conspiritors [sic] signed a written agreement to drive them out. [...] It leaked out, and the shocked and harrified [sic] normal Americans stayed away[.] Very few attended [...]. So many Canadians came that they far outnumbered the few Americans. They did not understand the English language so [they] prevented the few Americans from doing ANYTHING by outshouting the minority for anyything [sic] and everything.[339]

Even before the Champoeg Meetings, public opinion was split between integrating and separating the Oregon Country. Next to private debates, newspaper commentaries, op-ed columns became a stage where actors weighted arguments regarding the spatial formatting of the still sparsely populated region. In February 1839, an article titled "Present Condition and Future Prospects of Oregon" appeared in *The Oregonian and Indian's Advocate*.[340] In the opinion piece, the author (who remains anonymous, only identifying himself as "W.") argues that the Oregon Country was destined to form an independent republic, perhaps together with California.[341] "Whoever holds Oregon", W. announces, "rules the North Pacific, and whoever rules the North Pacific, governs Eastern Tartary, and checks the encroachments of Russia upon South Easters Asia".[342] After the Napoleonic Wars and weakening of the French and Spanish empires, the two remaining powers competing over Oregon "are those of Russia and Great Britain". Although the HBC and NWC effectively controlled all trade in the Pacific Northwest, W. asserts that "[i]t is in vain that [they] have established themselves in Oregon [...]. The moment the Hudson Bay Company commences military operations, their trade is ruined and their capital begins to waste; their forts are destroyed, their traders cut off, and all their resources wasted".[343] The

338 Ibid.

339 Ibid.

340 C. Allen, "A Pacific Republic", *The Oregon History Project*, 17 March 2018, https://oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/a-pacific-republic/. The *Advocate* was a short-lived journal published by the Boston-based Oregon Provisional Emigration Society whose mission statement proclaims: "Our Object, the Elevation of the Indian Race – Our Means, a Christian Settlement in Oregon" (ibid.).

341 Regarding the author's gender, a disclaimer at the end of the article states that "[w]e do not wish to be considered at all responsible for the opinions or statements of our correspondent, in the preceding article. He speaks for himself, and will defend his own views" (W., "Present Condition", p. 149).

342 As was common at the time, W. likely uses the reference to "Eastern Tartary" as a blanket term for the uncharted regions of Central and Inner Asia, believed to contain a cornucopia of natural resources to be distributed among colonial powers in the future.

343 W., "Present Condition", p. 146.

author here perhaps alludes to the lessons about the fragility of ecosystems and commercial networks that the PFC had to learn during John Jacob Astor's unsuccessful attempts of (re)ordering the Oregon Country.

In a lucid assessment of the geopolitical situation, the author goes on to speculate that British policy "endeavors to keep between her possessions and those of the Autocrat [i.e. the Russian Tsar], some third power which may answer as a washer to prevent too much friction".[344] American annexation of the Oregon Country, W. thus foresees, would actually serve British interests by establishing a buffer to its Russian rival in Alaska and simultaneously relinquish political responsibility for future conflicts over Oregon to the diplomatically inexperienced Americans. With Britain seeking "a washer to prevent too much friction" and the Tsar struggling with a disjointed and corrupt administrative system and indigenous resistance in Alaska, only two alternatives remain: Either "Oregon will fall into the limits of the United States, or an independent transmontane nation will be raised up".[345]

Apart from cunning schemes concocted by Britain imperialists, the author mentions additional barriers that might frustrate the acquisitive intentions of American policymakers. First, economically by asking: "What would the great majority of American merchants care for the North West Coast? They have no trade there, no interest of any kind there". And second, concerning the nation's (in)ability to control territorial sprawl and thus the Manichean question of expansion versus consolidation that haunted Americans since the Louisiana Purchase. For W., however, this question has already been answered by popular consensus: "It is in every one's mouth, 'We have territory enough, what do we want of more?'"[346] As a result of these hurdles, he lays down an alternative version of manifest destiny in which the Far West and its adverse topography are not conquered as part of a triumphal nation-building performance. Instead, physical barriers like the Rocky Mountains become the preordained limits of the nation's expansionist impulses, naturally dividing the continent into two discrete spheres destined to be governed separately from one another:

> Nature itself has marked out Western America for the home of an independent nation. The Rocky Mountains will be to Oregon, what the Alps have been to Italy, or the Pyrenees to Spain. The nation which extends itself across them, must be broken in the centre by the weight of the extremities. When we merely glance at a map, it seems absurd to suppose that Oregon is to belong to a nation whose capital is on the Atlantic seaboard. What! must the people of that land be six months journey from the seat of Government? Must

344 Ibid.
345 Ibid., p. 147.
346 Ibid., pp. 147–148.

> they send their delegates four thousand miles to represent them in the legislature of a nation with whom they can have but few common interests or sympathies?[347]

For W., Oregon's future detachment from the eastern seats of power is moreover underlined by political divisions over the United States' "peculiar institution" that had already begun to destabilize the integrity of its own spatial order. "The North and the South are well nigh asunder by their sectional feelings", he explains, "but what is the party strife between these compared to that which must arise between the East and the West, when the East is on the Bay of Fundy, and the West at Nootka Sound?"[348] In addition, W. imagines nature and natives working together to frustrate American annexation of the Far West as

> several hundred thousand hostile Indians lie between [Oregon] and the United States, [and] for centuries the populations of the East and West cannot meet, however rapidly the tide may flow on, and that there must, therefore, be so long an uncultivated and savage land lying between them; that a lofty mountain chain has been reared by the God of Nature, as if to break the force of eastern ambition, and mark the limits of dominion.[349]

W.'s geographic vision shares with expansionist agendas the concept that Native Americans are a part of nature, on the one hand as a timeless civilization transfixed in the chronotope of unchanging traditions; yet also, on the other hand, as "human shields", able to absorb the violent movements of eastern expansionism and western separatism. In this manner secured from transmontane encroachment, developments at the West Coast would favour regional cooperation between Oregon and California, engendering a common spatial identity of "one people [that] must have trade and constant intercourse with each other. The herds of the South must supply the plains of the North, and the products of the Columbia must feed the Californians". Regional interdependence in turn forges affective human geographies as "people will blend together [and] will become one in feeling, in sympathy, in interests; and having been thus socially united, the political compact will follow as an easy consequence".[350] This alliance of convenience grows organically according to its interests and needs, requiring no ideological or metaphysical linkage between regions separated by the undeniable spatial ordering of nature itself and its inbuilt limitation of mobility and agency, irrespective of nationality or ethnicity. Eventually, W. ponders, "Oregon and California will be united in a common cause and destiny. Then will come the realization of the event which Mr. Jefferson predicted, and the whole extent

347 Ibid., p. 148.
348 Ibid.
349 Ibid., p. 149.
350 Ibid.

of that coast will be covered with free and independent Americans, unconnected with us, but by the ties of blood and friendship".[351]

Six years after the publication of W.'s article and only months before the outbreak of the Mexican-American War, a Democratic congressman once again brought up the question of an autonomous Pacific republic. Oregonian independence, he proposed, would be advisable to consolidate the overstretched boundaries of the nation that was growing too fast to be controlled and defended, particularly against its southern neighbour. *The Morning Post*, a conservative mouthpiece of the British court, later printed parts of his speech. "Where is Oregon?", the congressman asks, and goes on to answer his own question:

> On the shores of the Pacific, three thousand miles from us, and twice as far from England. Who is to settle it? Americans mainly; some settler undoubtedly from England, but all Anglo-Saxon – all men educated in notions of independent government, and all self-dependent. And now let me ask if there be any sensible man in the whole United States who will say for a moment than when fifty or a hundred thousand persons of that description find themselves on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, that they will long consent to be under the rules either of the American Congress or the British Parliament. They will raise a standard for themselves, and they ought to do it. [...] I believe that it is in the course of Providence and human destiny, that a great state is to arise, of English and American descent, whose power will be established over the country on the shores of the Pacific: and that all those rights of natural and political liberty, all those great principles that both nations have inherited from their fathers, will be transmitted through us to them, so that there will exist [...] a great Pacific Republic, a nation where our children may go for a residence, separating themselves from this Government, and forming an integral part of a new government, half way between England and China, in the most healthful, fertile, and desirable portion of the globe, and quite too far remote from Europe and from this side of the American continent to be under the control of either country.[352]

After Oregon's admission to the Union in 1859, discursive strands of the Pacific republic resurfaced in various moments of crisis. At the brink of the Civil War, its spatial semantics shifted from formerly positively connoted terms such as autonomy and independence towards the spectres of secession and slavery as acute threats to the integrity of the nation's overall spatial order. In January

351 Ibid., p. 148.

352 Qtd. in "Relative to the Oregon Question. Conclusive Views of the Administration", *The Morning Post*, 1 December 1845, p. 2, https://newspaperarchive.com/london-morning-post-dec-01-1845-p-2/. Published from 1772 to 1937, *The Morning Post* gained international notoriety when it printed a forged antisemitic pamphlet titled *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1920, which prompted theories about a Jewish world conspiracy and propped up fascist movements in Europe. The assassins of Walter Rathenau, for instance, were convinced that the German politician was an Elder of Zion (N. Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933–1945*, New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1968, p. 39).

1861, the *Weekly Oregon Statesman* printed a fervent editorial under the headline "Madness Rules the Hour", whose uncredited author set out to debate "[t]he paramount question of our existence as a nation". For him or her, the Pacific republic has turned into a spatial format that can no longer be framed alongside terms of equal coexistence. Instead, the impending collapse of republican unionism also unravels the epistemic groundwork of Oregon's imagined independence, replacing it with the menace of war among "discordant, independent States [which] would be at once a hopeless night of despair to all who have indulged a faith in the power of the American people to govern themselves".[353] Secession and war consequently replace independence and cooperation as the semantic fulcrum of far western spatial semantics. For the author of the *Statesman* article and many Oregonians, ideas about separation became obsolete as soon as they could be juxtaposed with the secessionist reordering of the South into an autonomous, slave-holding Confederacy, leaving "a Pacific republic [as] the object of [...] stupid, unprincipled ambition".[354] Changing gears towards loyalty to the Union did not even spare Oregon's state motto *Alis Volat Propriis* (she flies with her own wings) that had expressed its independent spirit and history of grassroots democracy. During the war, a more straightforward vow of national allegiance replaced the motto and plainly declared: "The Union".[355]

In the two-party system of the Reconstruction Era, autonomous spatial configurations like those on the West Coast became shibboleths in the strife over the spatial semantics of union and disunion. Accompanied by a host of partisan newspaper editorials, Republicans and Democrats accused each other of working towards undermining the Union. The author of a piece titled "Pacific Republic!" chastises Democratic politicians like John Birch and Harry George who "advocated the formation of a 'Pacific Republic,' in the event that the Republican party should continue to hold the reins of government". The essay accuses Democrats of abusing the imaginative potential of Oregon and other potentially independent regions to score political points with disgruntled southerners, implying they would rather welcome another violent breakup of the Union than see the South's slave-based spatial order reformatted by "progressive" Jim Crow laws. "Disunion", the author warns, creates "a division of our country into two, three or four Confederacies or Republics [and] is the great objective point which many

353 "Madness Rules the Hour", *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, 14 January 1861, p. 2, https://newspapers.com/image/81516962/.

354 Ibid.

355 "The Union" was officially adopted as Oregon's state motto in 1957, but 30 years later changed back to *Alis Volat Propriis* as legislators felt it better reflected the state's penchant for innovation and independent thought.

Democrats, foiled in their last attempt at national destruction, are now looking forward to".[356] Apart from partisan conflicts rooted in the struggles of southern Democrats to stay relevant, the commentator evokes hemispheric connections that draw attention to the exposed position and military weakness of far western states, whose survival he deems unlikely outside the framework of the nation-state:

> A Pacific Republic! Think of it. Leaving out of consideration the treasonable idea that the suggestion conveys to every patriotic mind, how absurd is the scheme. The population of the Pacific States and Territories was less than three-quarters of a million when the last census was taken [i.e. 1870]; our seaboard is nearly two thousand miles in length, and we would be about as impotent to make a successful defense in case of war with even one of the weakest powers as would be the Sandwich Island or Iceland.[357]

In yet another example of the pushes and pulls in the Pacific republic's imaginative regime, the American pioneer, historian, and newspaper editor Harvey W. Scott advocates Oregon's independence in *History of Portland, Oregon* (1890). In the book, he claims that Portland would soon become a window to the Asian-Pacific hemisphere that mirrored the function of New York's projection of American power into the transatlantic space. For Scott, the paradigm shift towards the Pacific in fact made the eastern metropolis redundant. In an allegory that confounds the Roman Empire and Shakespeare, he states that "[t]he Roman Empire without Rome would be like Hamlet without Hamlet. But America without New York City would still be America, lacking only some million and a half people.[358]" Scott invites readers to join him in averting the nation's gaze from the eastern seaboard and instead "focalize our view" on Oregon by asking

> if we draw a line from the Gulf of California to Mt. St. Elias in Alaska, by this chain of valleys and waterways, where do we find a cross line opening from the ocean to the Rocky Mountains, and allowing trade and travel to pass east and west as well as north and south? This cross line has been determined by the channel of flowing waters drawn from the Rocky Mountains across the Cascade and Coast Ranges to the Pacific – the Columbia River. A line of two thousand miles, a cross line of five hundred miles – these will ever be the thoroughfares of commerce for the commercial metropolis of the region. At the point of intersection of the two this is the geographical position of Portland. Although on the banks of the Willamette, she is also, practically on the banks of the Columbia, her business portion constantly extending towards the imperial river. This,

356 "Pacific Republic!", *Petaluma Weekly Argus*, 3 November 1876, p. 2, https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/275395315/.
357 Ibid.
358 H. W. Scott, *History of Portland Oregon*, Syracuse: D. Mason & Co, 1890, p. 53.

> then is the most comprehensive description of Portland's geographical situation – at the crossroads of a natural depression from California to Alaska and of the pathway of the Columbia from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.[359]

Locating Portland at an imagined intersectional "cross line" between regional and continental epistemes, "Scott is here both a loving regionalist and a universalist [who] stress[es] the uniqueness of the Pacific Northwest's physical character and the perfect geographical position of Portland within that microcosm. Much like the nineteenth-century French, taught to believe their country was a perfect hexagon".[360] What clearly shines through in Scott's spatial imagination, however, are the roots of the United States' increasingly expansionist and chauvinistic formatting of the Asian-Pacific hemisphere as an extension of a continental homeland, often subsumed under the umbrella term New Imperialism. "Note our situation on the Pacific seaboard", Scott urges in a journal article that underscores "the changes of recent times [that] virtually made the Pacific an American sea. The active theatre of the world's new effort is now in Asia and Western America. The two hemispheres, heretofore in communication only across the Atlantic, are now rapidly developing an intercourse over the Pacific".[361] This statement demonstrates that for Scott and many of his contemporaries around the turn of the century, the Pacific was firmly circumscribed as part of the nation's sovereign territory and in their minds had therefore already become "an American sea".

At the same time, Scott's remarks also emphasize that this new conceptualization of global ordering no longer respected the traditional division of spaces separated by vast distances and natural barriers. Bolstering this notion of unbounded transoceanic interconnectedness, Scott "daily read the most timeless and placeless writer, William Shakespeare, drowning himself in what he considered the playwright's 'oceanic' mind".[362] As trains and steam-powered ships diminished the distances of a subjectively de-magnified world, they concurrently inspired the discursive enmeshment of geographically and culturally disparate spaces like the transpacific and circum-Caribbean into a single, homogenous extension of the continental heartland. On 15 August 1914, this transhemispheric spatial imagination, whose allure perhaps first became latent in

359 Ibid., p. 59.
360 R. D. Gastil and B. Singer, *The Pacific Northwest: Growth of a Regional Identity*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2010, pp. 44–45.
361 H. W. Scott, "The Pioneer Character of Oregon Progress", *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 18 (1917) 4, pp. 245–270, at 258.
362 Gastil and Singer, *The Pacific Northwest*, p. 45.

the spatialization projects surrounding the Oregon Country, materialized itself in the opening of the Panama Canal.[363]

Almost 100 years later, *Time* magazine published an article about the "Top 10 Aspiring Nations" that outlines ongoing pushes for independence in regions such as the Basque Country, Kurdistan, and Tibet. Included in this list is the Republic of Cascadia as an aspiring nation that aims to "bring together Washington State, Oregon and British Columbia. Proponents of the new country [...] say the approximately 14 million residents of 'Cascadia' should demand their freedom from the oppressive governments of Canada and the U.S."[364] The movement focalizes the spatial format of the bioregion through Cascadia as a space defined not by legal bordering (e.g. at the 49th parallel) but through the identification of regionally shared features.[365] The Cascadian community thus defines itself through common environmental, climatic, and topographic features that together establish a habitat delimited by rivers and watersheds. Its calls for independence hence are not based on (imagined) "personal" communalities like genealogies or ethnicity but from the formats of the bioregion and biome as "natural" placemaking parameters.[366]

363 The Panama Canal also reified much older visions of hemispheric connectedness whose discursive strands are traceable well beyond American imperial projects. In his encyclopaedia *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), the English philosopher-physician Thomas Brown speculates "that some Isthmes have been eat through by the Sea, and others cut by the Spade: And if policie would permit, that of *Panama* in *America* were most worthy the attempt: it being but few miles over, and would open a shorter cut unto the *East-Indies* and *China*" (T. Brown, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: Or, Enquiries Into Very Many Received Tenents, and Commonly Presumed Truths*, London: Edward Dod, 1658 [1646], p. 394).

364 K. Webley, "The Republic of Cascadia", *Time*, 10 January 2011, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2041365_2041364_2041373,00.html. Cascadia's name stems from the "cascading waters flowing from the Pacific to the western slopes of the Rockies and Cascades where water cycles back to the Pacific" (A. Baretich, "A Definition of Cascadia", *The Microfreedom Index*, 11 February 2015, http://www.angelfire.com/nv/micronations/cascadia.html).

365 Bioregions signify spaces "whose limits are naturally defined by topographic and biological features (such as mountain ranges and ecosystems)" ("Bioregion", *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bioregion [accessed 23 April 2020]). Buell et al. explain that bioregionalism "holds that the planetary future hinges on strengthened allegiance to the ecological unit, often defined [...] as against the jurisdictional unit – an allegiance that entails commitment to bioregion as personal habitat [...] in cognizance of the interdependences between one's particular ecosystem and the wider world" (Buell, Heise, and Thornber, "Literature and Environment", p. 420).

366 According to *Merriam-Webster* a biome represents "a major ecological community type (such as tropical rain forest, grassland, or desert)" that has formed within a shared physical

Cascadia's map consciously disregards national, state, or county borders and spans across parts of Oregon, California, Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Utah. This bioregion is imaginatively formatted not based on political demarcation but because "it is geographically, culturally, economically and environmentally distinct from surrounding regions and has unique flora and fauna, topography, and geology. These natural, geographical borders create the Cascadia bioregion".[367] Concurrently, Cascadia is set apart from eastern regions by the isolating mountain ranges of the Rocky Mountains, positioning it as a conservatory of a unique biodiversity that houses such rare species as the northern spotted owl, Pacific tree frog, geoduck, and giant Pacific octopus. The bioregional visions of CascadiaNow are closely linked to social activism and aimed at implementing alternatives vis-à-vis dominant spatial narratives that – explicitly or implicitly – build upon histories of conquest and ethnic hierarchies. For its proponents, Cascadia therefore materializes predicated on

> the realization that those borders are based on nation-state concepts and imperialism. This realization is that these lines on a map are dictated by the conquerors and oppressors who have destroyed so much diversity. This comes to an awakening that Cascadia the bioregion is based on watersheds or river drainage systems that flow all the way to the Rockies or continental divide. Then a deeper layer of consciousness hits that the flow of water is crucial to a bioregion and that life is based on that water. After that comes the realization that Cascadia or any bioregion is not just a place, but a living complex of interactions and interconnectedness to many communities, human and nonhuman. That at that realization we are not a human in a vacuum separated from Nature, but are extensions of each other and dependent on the health and dynamic interactions with each other. It becomes a consciousness of living dynamic being and is no longer stuck in banal nationalism, but is an awakening to being part of a bioregion which is part of the biosphere which is the living Earth (Gaia).[368]

One of Cascadia's key texts, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) envisions the emergence of a fictional new nation assembled from the secessionist states of Washington, Oregon, and northern California. Told from a first-person perspective, the novel chronicles the journey of an investigate journalist named William Weston who works for the imaginary *Times-Post* from a dystopian, economically depressed United States into the titular ecotopian nation. As he crosses the border, Weston encounters a space of social experimentation

climate ("Biome", *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/biome [accessed 24 April 2020]).

367 CascadiaNow! "About Cascadia & Bioregionalism", https://www.cascadianow.org/bioregionalism (accessed 24 April 2020).

368 Baretich, "Definition of Cascadia".

designed to reveal and remedy the abuses of the nation-state in terms of race, class, and gender. Early on, the reporter realizes that Ecotopia represents a counter-imagination that strikes at the heart of manifest destiny and the frontier thesis because it "poses a challenge to the underlying national philosophy of America: ever-continuing progress, the fruits of industrialization for all, a rising Gross National Product".[369] In posing this challenge, *Ecotopia's* literary respatialization equates bioregional independence with practices of sustainable development and steady-state economics, making the book a vital influence for the West Coast's counterculture and green movement.

Displacing the dominant spatial framework from political towards ecological ordering, ecotopian bioregionalism puts emphasis on the agency, diversity, and interactivity among environmental and individual vectors, implying "that we not only live in cities, towns, villages or 'the countryside'; we also live in watersheds, ecosystems, and eco-regions".[370] Cascadia's flag signals the meaningful cohesion between natural features that define it as an exceptional space in the imagination of its advocates. The banner's conscious use of colours and symbols integrates human activity with spaces of longing and belonging. As one of the movement's founders, the Portland native Alexander Baretich explains: "Prior to the design and its popularity, the idea of Cascadia, specifically the bioregion, was pretty much an abstract concept reserved for radical geographers, hip sociologists, devoted ecologists and 'radical' environmentalists". Unlike "[t]he bioregional congress 'movement' [that] was an echo of the alternative culture of a bygone generation", the translation of abstract concepts into evocative and implicitly performative representations takes centre stage in the formatting of Cascadia through its flag:

> What the flag has done is convey something far more tangible than an abstract concept of demarcation of space. The flag gave access to the idea of Cascadia that was not limited to scholarly research or having the privilege of money and time for a camping trip on the other side of the continent. [...] [T]he blue of the flag represents the moisture-rich sky above, and the Pacific Ocean, along with the Salish Sea, lakes, and inland waters. Our home is a place of continuous cascading waters flowing from the Pacific to the western slopes of the Rockies and Cascades where water cycles back to the Pacific. The white represents snow and clouds, and the green represents the evergreen forests and fields of the

369 E. Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*, Berkeley: Banyan Tree Books, 2004, p. 4.

370 D. C. Wahl, "Bioregionalism", *Age of Awareness*, 30 September 2017, https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/bioregionalism-4e15f314327.

> Pacific Northwest. The lone-standing Douglas Fir symbolizes endurance, defiance, and resilience. All these symbols come together to symbolize what being Cascadian is all about.[371]

As a non-profit organization, CascadiaNow is chiefly driven by community-organized projects and local arts and music events in the Seattle and Portland areas that expressly work towards minority inclusion. In its mission statement, the organization seeks to "provides space for indigenous, POC, and traditionally marginalized communities, and of course the millions of amazing Cascadians who live here, to [...] break down boundaries which are harmful and negative".[372] Apart from rallies and social events, Cascadia's bioregional identity is also performed in the virtual space of the internet, sometimes in the form of memes and viral images that ironically use regional stereotypes and position Cascadia as a multilayered semiotic assemblage. The semi-official seal of Cascadia's Diplomatic Corps, for instance, shows the mythical Sasquatch holding a salmon in one hand and gripping a tree with the other. The cryptozoological pastiche is complemented by the Chinook slogan *Hyiu Tillicum Snookum*, which can be translated as "many good friends" or more broadly as "the importance of a big family".[373]

In the Pacific Northwest, Cascadia has become a pop-cultural phenomenon with local sports teams brandishing its flag and microbreweries offering a beer brand called Secession IPA. The organization sponsors its own "national" soccer league in the Cascadia Association Football Federation (CAFF) with the goal to form a mixed-gender team.[374] CascadiaNow sells flags, maps, artworks, and authentically-looking passports in the "hope to inspire people to begin to think locally, bioregionally and globally, as both a citizen of their watershed – and the world".[375] Heterogenous placemaking performances such as these, however, make it difficult to ascertain if Cascadia's spatial entrepreneurship aims to

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371 A. Baretich, "The Cascadian Flag: A Transformative Icon", *Free Cascadia*, 10 November 2014, http://freecascadia.org/the-cascadian-flag-a-transformative-icon/.

372 Cascadia Illahee Department of Bioregional Affairs, "No Hate Policy", https://deptofbioregion.org/no-hate-policy (accessed 24 April 2020).

373 D. D. Robertson, "The Thunder Bird Tootooch Legends", *Chinook Jargon*, 25 August 2016, https://chinookjargon.com/2016/08/25/the-thunder-bird-tootooch-legends/.

374 Cascadia's team competes in the Swedish-based Confederation of Independent Football Associations (CONIFA) as a league "of People, Nations, Minorities and geographically or sportingly isolated territories, which not yet are affiliated to the FIFA" (Confederation of Independent Football Associations, "CONIFA Constitution", 6 July 2013, http://www.conifa.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/conifa-constitution.pdf [accessed 24 April 2020]). The non-profit organization houses teams from various unrecognized regions such as Kurdistan, Somaliland, or the Donetsk People's Republic.

375 Cascadia Illahee Department of Bioregional Affairs, "Cascadia Passport", https://deptofbioregion.org/department-of-bioregion-2/cascadia-passport (accessed 24 April 2020).

ironically deconstruct the symbols of a national order perceived as unjust and exclusionary, or if it merely attempts to substitute national with regional exceptionalism. Despite its symbolic and performative reconfiguration of borders and human geographies, Cascadia's discursive spatialization takes cues from the narrative hallmarks of American placemaking discussed throughout this book. Some of these cues reverberate in the tunes of Skookum Tamanawis' song "Cascadia Forever: Anthem for a New Nation":

> Underneath the Skies of Cascadia
> Where the Mountain Woodlands Meet the Sea
> E'vry Living Being in Cascadia
> *United in Diversity*
> From the Rocky Mountain Highlands
> To the Wide Pacific Shore
> We Will Take Our Stand to Preserve the Land
> And Its Biome Evermore
> Voices Rise in Song for Cascadia
> *A Light for All the World to See*
> As We Lift Our Pray'r for Cascadia
> "Kwan-E-Sum Chinuk Ill-A-Hee!"[376]

First, the line "A Light for All the World to See" takes conscious recourse to John Winthrop's vision of a City Upon a Hill as formulated in his lecture "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630). It stresses the panoptical exposure of exceptional spaces and the subsequent need of displaying proper morality because "[t]he eyes of all people are upon us".[377] The second line that stands out in the anthem's lyrics frames Cascadia as a space that is oxymoronically "United in Diversity". This statement subverts the notion that effective placemaking hinges on the homogeneity of communities formatted alongside parameters such as race, religion, or binary gender identities. Cascadians in this manner appropriate Unionism as a byword and linchpin of the United States' spatial order, only to deconstruct and reframe it in the service of their own bioregional respatialization project. In another example of narrative ambiguity, the movement embraces the slogan "Illahee, illahie, illi'i –

376 S. Tamanawis, "Cascadia Forever: Anthem for a New Nation", 9 November 2009, https://youtu.be/OGJpXcShGSM (emphasis added). *Kwan-E-Sum Chinuk Ill-A-Hee*, more commonly spelled as *Kwanesum Chinook Illahee*, is the motto of Cascadia meaning "land of the Chinook forever". Apart from this orchestral hymn, the folk song "O' Cascadia" makes for another "official" anthem of Cascadia (see L. Vivola, "O' Cascadia", 30 May 2018, https://youtu.be/TW6_Do815_Q).

377 J. Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity", J. Beardsley (ed.), 1997 [1630], p. 9, https://www.casa-arts.org/cms/lib/PA01925203/Centricity/Domain/50/A%20Model%20of%20Christian%20Charity.pdf.

Land, country, earth, soil – in both physical and political senses; [...] a network of peoples arranged through the interweaving of family, blood marriages, allies. [...] Home. Family".[378] This message, however, seems reminiscent of "blood and soil" ideologies that use similar environmentally deterministic arguments in their demands for a diametrically opposed spatial order centred around ethnically homogenous spaces shaped by chauvinistic nationalism. Juxtaposing heritage, soil, and identity, Cascadians apply a similar lens, albeit to position bioregionalism as a counter-draft to the formats of nation and empire, arguing that its rooting in natural diversity represent authentic and lived realities instead of ideologically crafted and exclusionary communities. In other words, the Cascadian ecotopia embraces a spatial "philosophy that connects people and ideas into place [...] in ways that are sustainable, democratic and just". This scaled-down perspective "which work[s] watershed by watershed" then becomes a strategy of tackling the complexities and contradictions of increasingly global conditions "by using bioregions to break large issues down to a local level, creating or magnifying solutions already being practiced in a community, and create accessible pathways for every person living in a region to be able to get active about issues they care about".[379]

Despite its claims of merely reflecting an overarching "natural order", bioregional spatial formatting therefore remains a constructivist exercise whose inbuilt environmental determinism makes it prone to criticism. Additionally, its attempt to ontologically stabilize a confusing global order by introducing scaled-down, empirically measurable spatial units (i.e. bioregions) appears particularly doubtful in a time of accelerating climate change. Cascadia's drive to dissolve the nature-culture binary by conjuring the female goddess Gaia as a superordinate, planetary ordering force aligns itself with second-wave ecocritical scholarship that "has tended to reject the validity of the nature-culture distinction".[380] This approach, to be sure, becomes a powerful spatialization strategy with the potential of dismantling metanarratives through direct social action as well as symbolic performances. At the same time, breaking down social and ethnic boundaries can appear contradictory in light of the movement's ingrained determinisms that derive personal values from topographical features through "the blending of the natural integrity and the sociocultural unity".[381] These opposing vectors culminate in a regional biopolitics that is supported by its contrasting

378 Cascadia Illahee Department of Bioregional Affairs, "Cascadia, A Name", https://deptofbioregion.org/cascadia-the-name (accessed 24 April 2020).

379 Cascadia Illahee Department of Bioregional Affairs, "What is Bioregionalism?", https://deptofbioregion.org/what-is-bioregionalism (accessed 24 April 2020).

380 Buell, Heise, and Thornber, "Literature and Environment", p. 419.

381 CascadiaNow! "About Cascadia".

exclusion of national or regional Others who refrain from ordering the world via bioregional parameters and thus are implicitly perceived as less inclusive and progressive than the "spatially exceptional" Cascadians.

But Cascadian ecotopians are not the only contemporary actors that pursue the reformatting of far western regions. In *The Elusive State of Jefferson*, Peter Laufer relates that "[t]oday, travelers racing up Interstate 5 toward Yreka from Sacramento [...] cannot miss the huge letters screaming STATE OF JEFFERSON painted on the roof of a hay barn that faces oncoming freeway traffic".[382] Frustrated by the underrepresentation of their rural counties in state governments, a group of young men staged a coup in October 1941. Armed with hunting rifles, they set up roadblocks, stopped cars, and handed out typescripts declaring that "Jefferson is now in patriotic rebellion aganst [sic] the States of California and Oregon. Patriotic Jeffersonians intend to secede each Thursday until further notice".[383] The motives of these radical spatial actors, however, were not entirely – as the name may suggest – driven by Jeffersonian idealism, but instead rooted in economic issues. Most of the activists were unemployed youths who complained that policymakers in Sacramento and Salem impeded regional development by preventing the extracting of its natural wealth in copper ore. After weeks of protesting and media attention, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor effectively put an end to the movement as the following surge of patriotism made secessionism a less than popular subject.

Recently, the movement experienced a resurgence by positioning its imagined state against organizations like CascadiaNow or CalExit, the latter of which renewed their calls for California's secession from the Union following Donald Trump's election and controversial immigration policies. If California were to become an independent nation, the 23 rural Republican counties in southern Oregon and northern California that would form the State of Jefferson have pledged to appeal to Congress for their incorporation as the 51st state, similar to

382 P. Laufer, *The Elusive State of Jefferson: A Journey Through the 51st State*, Lanham: TwoDot Books, 2013, p. 2. In US history, several local and regional independence campaigns have assumed the names of Jefferson, Lincoln, or Washington. Selecting the right namesake and making use of "proper" spatial semantics played an often under-appreciated role in the success and popularity of movements that sought statehood or independence. Perhaps the most notable example is today's state of West Virginia, whose previous nomenclature included Franklin, West Sylvania, Kanawha, and Columbia.

383 Qtd. in T. D'Souza, "State of Jefferson Dreams were Dashed by Pearl Harbor", *Mount Shasta Herald*, 2 July 2012, https://www.mtshastanews.com/article/20081211/NEWS/312119971.

how West Virginia separated itself from the Confederacy during the Civil War.[384] On 15 March 2018, the State of Jefferson once again declared its independence. However, this time not from the United States but from California and Oregon, whose policies regarding undocumented immigrants and sanctuary cities its proponents view as an "open rebellion and insurrection against the government of the United States".[385]

This symbolical (and legally not binding) act seems noteworthy because it directly counters the goals of West Coast separatists that seek autonomy from the nation-state. The State of Jefferson in turn declares its loyalty to the Union and thus understands itself as a beacon of righteousness, surrounded by lawlessness and threats of ethnic diversity emanating from Democratic majority areas on the seaboard. According to its website, the State of Jefferson has received hundreds of thousands of donations towards its cause, making it an example of spatial entrepreneurship that far exceeds the realms of fantasy. This money is needed as the movement's attempts of reformatting a confederacy of counties into an independent state are met with legal hurdles and costly court proceedings, while its progenitors in 1941 were "libertarians [who] didn't bother with the legal formalities of getting either the federal government's or the state Legislature's approval".[386] Against this background, it seems particularly fitting that the State of Jefferson's official seal depicts a mining pan that, instead of golden nuggets, contains a double X "designed to represent Sacramento and Salem double-crossing" their spatial vision of a loyalist Pacific republic.[387]

This last example demonstrates that various regional spatialization projects imagine the formatting of Oregon and California through utterly different epistemic

384 State of Jefferson Formation, "Declaration of Unity", https://soj51.org/unity-declaration/ (accessed 24 April 2020).

385 State of Jefferson Formation, "Declaration of Independence!", 15 March 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20181002103037/http:/soj51.org/ (accessed 24 April 2020). Jefferson's argument for statehood is based on the subordination of state rights under federal law and California "harboring and shielding illegal aliens, a felony under federal law. Governor Brown and the above named criminals are in violation of Article 1, Section 8, Clause 4 U.S. that clearly gives Congress lawful jurisdiction over immigration. Governor Brown and the above named politicians are in violation of California Constitution, Article 3, Section 1, which states that California is an inseparable part of the United States, and the United States Constitution is the supreme law of the land" (ibid.).

386 T. Holt, "A Modest Proposal – Downsize California!" *SFGate*, 17 August 2003, https://www.sfgate.com/opinion/article/A-modest-proposal-downsize-California-2574603.php.

387 Laufer, *Elusive State of Jefferson*, p. 3; see A. Koseff, "State of Jefferson Supporters plan Bill seeking Independence from California", *The Sacramento Bee*, 6 January 2016, https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article53355675.html.

lenses, motivated by vastly different agendas, and operating on different scales. They regularly try to set themselves apart from the discursive vectors of a superordinate spatial order by framing regional identity through spatial formats, ranging from ecotopian bioregions to law-abiding Republican islands in defence of the constitution. Regionalist placemaking practices draw from a host of themes that compound, extend, or delimit certain spaces and challenge the status quo of spatial orders based on social, cultural, political, economic, environmental, and ethnic variables. One of the commonalities among spatial entrepreneurs such as CascadiaNow and the State of Jefferson, nonetheless, appears to be their ultimate failure and their tendency to remain in the realms of the imagination. None have garnered nearly enough popular support that would make their visions of transforming the overall spatial order come true.

Engaging with ongoing and alternative spatialization practices and their discursive origins nonetheless proves vitally important. It makes visible how movements provide actors with tools that enable them to point out and criticize perceived injustices and opaque power dynamics of overarching spatialization processes. It furthermore underlines the resilience and significance of regional placemaking practices and identities vis-à-vis increasingly globalized cultural spaces. In their combination, these insights cast doubts on three seemingly unequivocal historical and contemporary spatial axioms: First, the metanarrative of the ever-more unified American nation-state and its manifest destiny to incorporate the continent from coast to coast, which in light of the alternative conceptions discussed above appears more artificial and quixotic than ever. Second, the contemporary mantras of globalization, internationalization, and neoliberal corporatism as the pillars of global discourses that continue to shore up the nation-state as a dominant spatial format. And finally, the inference that regionalism and local differences become obsolete as they are subjugated to the homogenizing and synthetic compounds of universal, incessantly repeated, yet ultimately artificial and ephemeral sites of global cultures and identities.