Heartless Immensity

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Literature, Culture, and Geography
in Antebellum America

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For my grandmother, Janet Hargrove

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An Empire in Denial

> The intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can tell it? Mark, how when sailors in a dead calm bathe in the open sea—mark how closely they hug their ship and only coast along her sides.
>
> —Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

> To be in any form, what is that?
>
> —Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States more than doubled in size. As dreams of a nation spanning all of the North American continent reached their peak at midcentury, some Americans wanted to annex territory even beyond continental limits, including islands like Cuba and Hawaii. This massive incorporation of new land meant that the boundaries of the still new nation fluctuated dramatically in both fact and thought, so that for much of the nineteenth century no American would have been able to call to mind a clear picture of his or her nation. As a result of annexing not just vast tracts of uncharted territory but also different ethnic groups, people indigenous and otherwise with alien customs, religious practices, and beliefs about land and property, Americans began to fear that they were inhabiting the national arena with strangers. Literal common ground, they feared, would not necessarily lead to figurative common ground.

The central premise of this book is that the growth of the United States during this period—and the geographical uncertainty that it engendered—had a far more complicated, multifaceted impact on American culture than has been previously recognized. In the 1840s, as expansion reached fever pitch and the nation's centrifugal energies began to seem uncontrollable, a sense of unease simmered beneath the well-known optimism about expansion (epitomized by the jingoistic doctrine "Manifest Destiny"). It found

expression in a variety of social and cultural productions—political speeches, pamphlets, popular prints, even funerary enclosure—and ultimately served also as an indispensable catalyst for the explosion of literary creativity sometimes called "the American Renaissance."

In June 1847, Ralph Waldo Emerson recorded a curious lament in his journal:

> Alas for America as I must so often say, the ungirt, the diffuse, the profuse, procumbent, one wide ground of juniper, out of which no cedar, no oak will rear up a mast to the clouds! it all runs to leaves, to suckers, to tendrils, to miscellany. . . . America is formless.[1]

It would be easy to interpret this passage as simply a figurative expression of his belief that American culture, in its bustling materialism, had not yet crystallized—simply one more plaintive expression of concern that the United States had as yet produced few distinctive artistic creations. But consider the passage in the light of its historical moment. Although westward expansion was the primary cause of the spatial uncertainty that characterized the period, the nation's northern and southern boundaries were nebulous as well. The boundary between Maine and Canada had been in dispute since the treaty that ended the American Revolution. It was only settled after the area had been surveyed in 1839 and the Webster-Ashburton treaty established a definitive border in 1842.[2] The southernmost boundary of the United States (between the state of Georgia and the territory of Florida) was likewise in dispute. Although Florida had been bought from Spain in 1819, Americans remained so ignorant of the annexed territory that in 1841 (four years before Florida became a state) a writer for *The New World* poked fun at his readers and felt it necessary to inform them that "Florida, geographically considered, is not much more at this time than, in northern parlance, that 'jib of land' which extends itself on the Mexican Bay" and does not "touch the confines of New Spain."[3]

Emerson's complaint about America's formlessness was probably more directly inspired, however, by uncertainty over western territory. Since 1818, the area that is now Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia had been jointly occupied by the United States and Britain. As the two countries attempted to divide the territory in the 1840s, a fierce dispute arose over the proper boundary, with the British claiming the Columbia River (now the boundary between Oregon and Washington) as the appropriate dividing line and the Americans insisting on the 54°40′ parallel. In 1846, less than a year before Emerson's journal entry, a compromise was reached; the

boundary was drawn at 49° (its present place) and war between Britain and the United States was narrowly averted. Even as this compromise was reached, however, another boundary controversy was developing into the Mexican War. After the annexation of Texas in 1846, controversy over the southern boundary of the new state sparked a war with Mexico that the United States used as a pretext for appropriating the territory that now makes up New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, and most of Colorado. In 1847, then, huge blocks of ostensibly American national space had not yet been divided into identifiable political units (states, counties, etc.) or translated into the familiar "visual language of cartography."[4] America was indeed "ungirt," "diffuse," and "profuse." Not merely a figurative complaint about "America" as idea, Emerson's lament reflects a powerful concern about the nation's literal form.

There are several interconnected reasons for the unease about national form that I will explore in the following pages. The most immediately apparent is the often-discussed sectional conflict over slavery, which threatened national cohesion and helped bring about the Civil War. This, certainly, is the aspect of antiexpansionist sentiment on which historians have tended to focus.[5] But it is important not to let the legacy of slavery, including our own era's preoccupation with race and identity politics, blind us to other aspects of the debate over the nation's size and shape. When, in 1819, Lyman Beecher (father of antislavery novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe) warned his fellow citizens, "The rapidity of our emigrations, and the extension of our agricultural territory, is itself a national evil," his fears were not about slavery. He feared, rather, that a too rapid incorporation and settlement of western territory would lead to an alien society arising beyond the Alleghenies, made up—in Beecher's nightmare—of land hungry speculators, Catholics with more allegiance to the pope and his European allies than to the United States, and half-savage westerners who had never been exposed to the civilizing influences of schools and churches that had shaped the eastern citizen. Bound together by the federal system established by the Founders, yet torn asunder by differing values that went far beyond questions about the morality or legality of slavery, the expanding nation, Beecher feared, could become "a protracted frontier of desolation and blood." "The prosperity of a nation," he warned, "depends on . . . the compactness of its organization, by means of which, one heart may beat the pulse of life to every extremity, and one arm extend protection and control to every member."[6] Similar preferences for a "compact" nation, expressed through metaphors of the body politic, would reappear over and over again for the next four decades.

Like Beecher, the authors of the Constitution of the American Bible Society (1816) worried about the "dreadful consequences" of "a people's outgrowing the knowledge of eternal life." They meant "outgrowing" quite literally. In their view, "the prodigious territory of the United States" and "the increase of their population" presented problems that would be of urgent concern to the Bible Society and its local chapters for years to come. Theodore Sedgwick articulated the same basic problem from a more secular point of view in an 1844 editorial on the proposed annexation of Texas: "In theory, such a confederacy as our own is scarcely susceptible of limits, but in practice the difficulties are manifestly serious."[7]

As important a component of the mid-nineteenth-century anxiety about national form as slavery, then, was a less tangible set of concerns about boundaries, boundlessness, and the incorporation of space not yet mapped according to Euro-American conventions or organized according to Euro-American principles of order (such as property ownership). Behind these concerns, as well as behind the sectional conflict over the legal status of slavery in the territories, lay a larger set of questions about spatial organization to which Beecher's anxious warning about the West calls our attention. What kinds of political, legal, economic, and social grids could or should be imposed on this space? How could it be given a shape and structure that would reflect the beliefs, values, and aspirations of most Americans?

As Americans confronted these questions, curious discursive moments that call into question time-honored modes of thinking about or organizing space began to appear in American writings of all kinds. In Melville's third novel, *Mardi* (1848), a becalmed sailor confronts the terrifyingly blank and seemingly endless space of the open sea. The experience "revolutionizes his abdomen" and "unsettles his mind," and he begins to lose faith in mapping conventions like the intersecting lines marking longitude and latitude: "To his alarmed fancy, parallels and meridians become emphatically what they are merely designated as being: imaginary lines drawn round the earth's surface."[8] What does it mean, the passage asks, to acknowledge that parallels and meridians, which impose an orderly grid on space, are human constructs—fictions designed to facilitate navigation rather than real, fixed points of reference.

Like mapping conventions, nationalism is one way of organizing or classifying space. It enables people to account for blocks of land by designating them the proper domain of certain imagined communities.[9] During the mid–nineteenth century, nationalism-fueled expansion served as a means of imposing a recognizable form on large portions of the North American

continent perceived as formless. Paradoxically, however, the extraordinarily rapid expansion of the United States also undermined the comfortable sense of a distinction between "us" and "them," inscribed on space, that is one of the most powerfully appealing aspects of nationalism. In an 1837 open letter condemning the proposed annexation of Texas, clergyman William Ellery Channing declared, "The moment we plant our authority on Texas, the boundaries of those two countries [Texas and Mexico] will become nominal, will be . . . little more than lines on the sand of the seashore."[10] Channing builds his argument on moral grounds, his primary point being that annexation of Texas would be theft from Mexico. But beneath his ethical qualms lies a fear that national boundaries may be meaningless.

Cultural artifacts and practices of the early national period, defined, usually, as the period from 1783 to 1830, reveal Americans attempting to solve the social and political problems posed by acquisition of new territory. Legislation, at first, seemed effective. The Land Ordinance of 1785 provided a system for organizing western land (over 150 million acres) that individual states had turned over to the federal government in the early 1780s (thus forming "the national domain"). It required that land be surveyed before it was settled, and it divided the land into square townships. (The division of the land into townships, which were to be settled by communities moving to the West en masse, was intended to prevent speculators from acquiring large parcels of land.) These townships were in turn divided into thirty-six one-square-mile lots, and one of these in each township was set aside to be used for the maintenance of public schools.[11] By such means, legislators were able to allay at least *some* of the fears—expressed by people like Lyman Beecher—about distinct regional values and the capacity of western settlers to practice democracy. The Land Ordinance took into account the way that spatial organization shapes individual character and communal ways of life, and took practical—albeit small—steps to ensure that some of the civic values that New England tradition had in common with Jefferson's vision of the new nation—public education and relatively moderate disparities in wealth—could be reproduced in the Northwest Territory.

The question of how to organize western territory *politically* was more difficult to solve. Some residents of the original thirteen states sought to keep political power consolidated on the eastern seaboard and viewed western territory as the site of potential colonies rather than potential states. Ultimately, however, a more democratic (and risky) plan won the day, ensuring that the stakes and the consequences of American imperialism

would be very different from those of its European counterparts. The British Empire, for example, continued to incorporate new subject territories to be ruled and administered by the British and with no say whatsoever in policies of the empire into which they were incorporated. The line between "home" and "the provinces" remained sharply demarcated.

The United States also incorporated massive quantities of new territory over the course of the following century. But a remarkable piece of legislation—the Northwest Ordinance of 1787—established a process by which "territories" (for all practical purposes just another word for "colonies") could eventually become states, equal in all respects to the original states.[12] It was this piece of legislation, one might point out, that enabled the United States to become an empire in denial, continually conquering new territory while at the same time vociferously claiming its dissimilarity to more traditional empires like Britain and Spain. For the purposes of this book, however, it is more important that the Northwest Ordinance was extremely effective at allaying many of the concerns raised by the new nation's growth. Certainly grumbling about the potential effects of the Northwest Ordinance continued after its ratification. Rufus King feared that no "paper engagements" would be able to "insure a desirable connection between the Atlantic states, and those which will be erected to the Northwest," while Virginia Representative John Randolph complained in 1813, "We are the first people that ever acquired provinces . . . not for us to govern, but that they might *govern us*—that we might be ruled to our ruin by people bound to us by no common tie of interest or sentiment."[13] And certainly the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 raised issues that made some Americans uncomfortable. Sidney Morse (the son of Jedidiah Morse, the "father of American geography" and the author of the nation's first geography schoolbook), for example, saw the creation of new states from the Louisiana Purchase as dangerous to the balance of power within the new and fragile federal union. As a result of the system for creating new states established by the Northwest Ordinance, he pointed out, by the "mere drawing of a line, . . . without the addition of a single inhabitant to the Southern States, that section of the Union has acquired a power which cannot be balanced by the addition of Four Hundred Thousand people to the Northern States."[14] Nevertheless, the Land Ordinance and the Northwest Ordinance proved to be highly effective means of organizing national space in the short run, and they established a positive precedent for legislative solutions to spatial dilemmas.

By the mid–nineteenth century, however, legislative solutions to the various problems posed by the acquisition of new territory no longer seemed

adequate. The Missouri Compromise (1820) and the Compromise of 1850, for example, which both attempted to create boundaries circumscribing slavery in the territories, were stopgap measures, unable to resolve the fundamental differences of opinion over the political organization of western space that were convulsing the nation. In 1850, in the aftermath of the Mexican War, by means of which the United States acquired 529,000 square miles of additional territory, Senator William Dayton of New Jersey expressed the problem succinctly: "The war with Mexico has brought with it much territory and much trouble. . . . We now have a national estate beyond our national wants or means of enjoyment, and yet not less the subject of contention among the heirs."[15]

Slavery was, of course, one of the primary causes of that contention; many northerners feared that the new territory would develop into states in which slavery was legal, and that the "peculiar institution" would thus be perpetuated and strengthened. But there were other problems to be dealt with as well. Theodore Sedgwick acknowledged that new communication technologies had made a larger republic increasingly practicable by allowing politicians to get to Washington from their home districts more easily and thus alleviating some of the strain placed on the expanding democracy. Even so, he warned that despite such advances, "the extension of territory necessarily involves increased diversity of interests" and that the "local interests and sectional prejudices" that expansion would exacerbate could prove dangerous to the nation. The nature of the new inhabitants of the territories was another source of worry for Sedgwick. To "introduc[e] foreign States into the Union," he argued, could "chang[e] at one blow the whole nature of the confederacy, and place the freemen of the north at the mercy of the Spaniards of Mexico, or the mongrels of South America." "To *annex* may prove to be *annexed*," he warned (echoing John Randolph). "Change the relative proportions of population and the right of annexation amounts to a right to re-transfer us to colonial vassalage."[16]

For others, the problem was not as concrete as the racial difference of the people being annexed, but was, rather, rooted in a vaguer sense that intangible and seemingly unstoppable forces were at work. A writer for the *New World* newspaper, responding in 1844 to the proposed annexation of Texas, identified the cause of annexation as "the expansive power of the democratic principle." The "impulses" of that "expansive power," he declared, "are uncontrollable as the great moving elements of nature." While some Americans found their nation's expansiveness exhilarating, the anonymous newspaper writer of the *New World* expressed moral qualms about it. "To ride upon the whirlwind and direct the storm, were an easy task," he

observed, "compared with subjecting the energies of this spirit to the laws of reason and right." He deplored his country's disregard for "the obligations of treaties, national honor, and international law."[17]

The problem of how best to facilitate the imposition of European notions of ownership and private property onto western space seems, perhaps, as though it should have been more easily soluble by legislative means than problems like an increasing diversity of interests or the alarming "otherness" of the people being annexed. That was not the case, however. The lively debate over public land policy in the 1840s and 1850s centered on the distribution of wealth—why and how to keep land in the possession of small farmers and out of the hands of speculators and land barons, thus maintaining the Jeffersonian ideal of an agrarian republic. While many westerners and would-be settlers argued that the federal government should give, rather than sell, sections of newly acquired public lands to settlers, which they would be required to "improve" in order to keep, others argued that free land would encourage speculation.[18] No compromise or official resolution of this question could be reached. Southerners vehemently opposed free land under any circumstances, believing it would speed the emergence of nonslave states in the West.

As if the problems created by the collision of national expansion with federalism (i.e., sectional tensions) were not enough, changes in the perception of geographical space—brought on by advances in transportation and communication technologies—created new challenges along with their benefits. Theodore Sedgwick, among others, had observed that national growth would also lead to a problematic "diversity of interests." What he omitted from his brief discussion of the changes wrought by technological advances was the sense of vertigo that would accompany them and the way they would bring about a need for organizing space in previously unimaginable ways. Before the advent of the railroad and the telegraph, when people and letters still traveled by foot, by boat, or on horseback, the fact that "noon" in New York occurred about twelve minutes later than "noon" in Boston didn't really matter very much. The new ability to move people and goods rapidly from one location to another radically changed that situation—along with people's perception of both time and space. Before 1872, each railroad kept its own time. Thus, someone travelling from Maine to western New York might find himself dealing with four different versions of time once he arrived at his destination: "the New York Central railroad clock might indicate 12:00 (New York time), the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern clocks in the same room 11:25 (Columbus time), the Buffalo city clocks 11:40, and his own watch 12:15 (Portland time)."[19]

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the sense of spatial formlessness created by dramatic changes in the history of technology began to dissipate. A solution to the problem was initially achieved by the railroad companies themselves when they met in 1872 and created a working system of time zones, dividing the country into manageable, relatively equal-sized portions in order to establish a uniform time system. Then, at the International Meridian Conference, in 1884, a system of world time zones was proposed, and approved by many countries, including the United States. (Only in 1918, though, were actual boundaries between time zones in the United States established by the newly created Interstate Commerce Commission.)

The postbellum era also saw the alleviation of other threats to a sense of coherent, homogeneous, bounded national space. Perhaps most importantly, the Civil War forced the "energies of the spirit" of expansion to take a hiatus, after which they were never able to pick up quite the same force. In the aftermath of a war that established the Union on a new, firmer footing, national boundaries came to seem more solid and more real. At the same time, the Civil War alleviated some sectional tensions by making it possible to ignore southern intransigence. As a result, legislative solutions to the problem of how to transform recently annexed space into private property again became feasible. In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act, which worked out the provisions under which individuals could acquire, and keep, 160-acre parcels of federal land.[20] In 1887 the Dawes Act required that Indian tribes adopt the same principle of private land ownership that underwrote the Homestead Act. Tribes were forced to divide tribe or clan-owned territory into individual homesteads. The act was a devastating blow to Native ways of life, and made matters easier for speculators who wished to cheat Indians out of their land. It was meant, however, to ensure that all the territory within national boundaries would be organized by the same fundamental principle. Alleviation of antebellum anxiety about national form meant not just the achievement of fixed borders but also the imposition of a single culture's methods for thinking about and organizing land.

Not surprisingly, the sense that order and form had been established appears in American writings of all kinds. In 1885 Theodore Roosevelt sounds a resigned note as he predicts the imminent demise of the ranchman's free lifestyle, declaring, "The broad and boundless prairies have already been bounded and will soon be made narrow."[21] Historian Frederick Jackson Turner, in the seminal 1893 lecture in which he announced the closing of the frontier, revived the nation-as-body metaphor, which was a staple of antebellum political rhetoric. But he uses it not to sound the alarm about the nation's astonishing growth (as Lyman Beecher had) but to

describe "the social and economic consolidation of the country." Adopting a pose of scientific detachment, Turner sees the national body as fully developed rather than threateningly large. Focusing on new technologies like the railroad and telegraph, he observes that the "slender paths of aboriginal intercourse" have turned into "the complex mazes of modern commercial lines; the wilderness has been interpenetrated by lines of civilization growing ever more numerous." The proliferation of these lines crisscrossing what was once, according to Turner, an inchoate mass is "like the steady growth of a complex nervous system for the originally simple, inert continent."[22]

In Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* (1913), the Nebraska prairie is first seen as a dark chaos upon which human dwellings "huddle," "struggle," and are "set about haphazard" without "any appearance of permanence."[23] Sixteen years later, as the narrative actually begins, the land is the very picture of order: "From the Norwegian graveyard one looks out over a vast checkerboard, marked off in squares of wheat and corn; light and dark, dark and light. Telephone wires hum along the white roads, which always run at right angles."[24] The checkerboard of crops and the neatly angled roads form a reassuringly solid and tangible grid, which establishes order and proper functioning in much the same way that Turner's nervous system for the national body does.

Discursive moments like these and the developmental model of expansion and American national form to which they have given rise have obscured the extent to which antebellum Americans perceived the geographical space they were incorporating into their nation as formless and thus threatening. Literary and cultural studies that address nineteenth-century expansion have tended, in consequence, to overlook the processes by which a widespread sense of formlessness was assuaged, and they miss American writers' productively ambivalent reactions to this cultural phenomenon.

A teleological understanding of American expansion is not, however, the only reason for that oversight. Previous scholars, when interpreting antebellum expansion, fall into one of two camps. Inaugurated by Frederick Jackson Turner—who famously regarded the frontier as the source of what was "really American" about U.S. history—the first camp adopted a largely celebratory tone. In an age before "American exceptionalism" went out of fashion, the scholars—both historians and literary critics—who followed Turner saw the frontier experience as the catalyst for a "distinctively American" character, which they characterized as self-reliant and democratic.[25] Reacting against the celebratory tone of the first camp, as well as

against its focus on white, male frontier figures, a new group of historians and literary scholars arose in the 1970s and sought for the next two decades to expose the injustices perpetrated by previously celebrated historical figures and to take into account the experiences of minority groups—women, Native Americans, African-Americans, and Asian-Americans—whose role in U.S. expansion had been suppressed or distorted.[26]

Both groups of scholars have provided important insights into the history of national expansion. What is missing from their accounts of that process is a more nuanced awareness of national sentiment during the period. For in their Cold War eagerness to shore up a sense of national identity that they perceived as under attack from anti-American forces, scholars like Smith were unable or unwilling to recognize an ambivalence about expansion that extended well beyond the parlors of New England's intellectual elite (where they presumed that it originated and largely remained). Similarly, the scholars who arose in the seventies and eighties, in their zeal to correct the omissions and eliminate the blind spots of their predecessors, tended to overlook the sense of unease that lay beneath the nation's growth in their condemnations of the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny.

While my own omissions and blind spots are no doubt many, the passage of time, the current state of literary and historical scholarship, and the current state of the world all make this moment an opportune time to rethink the role that changes in national geography played in the formation of American literature and culture. Changes in the field of American Studies provide perhaps the most compelling reason to reexamine the dramatic fluctuations in national form that took place during the antebellum period. The field has taken a global turn in the last decade, and Americanists have urged each other to "disturb the continental egoism" that led earlier scholars to confine their subjects of study to "U.S. mainland cartographies."[27] American literature and history, their argument goes, developed in constant dialogue with other parts of the world: national boundaries, they point out, have always been permeable, a fact that manifests itself everywhere in American culture. Yet to carry out fully the task such scholars propose—to remove the figurative boundaries imposed on American Studies by earlier scholars eager to define "America" solely in terms of its uniqueness rather than its contacts with other world regions—it is first necessary to pay closer attention to the process by which the literal boundaries we tend to take for granted were established. How did the physical entity known as the United States come into being? How did Americans who lived through the period *before* that physical entity took its apparently final form

experience the process of formalization? What was it like to live in a nation whose shape and size were constantly shifting? "Too often," Lawrence Grossberg writes, "discussions of American cultural studies represent places as if they were coherent, bounded, and settled, as if identities were always constituted through identifications with or against such fixed places."[28] One goal of this book is to correct that oversight.

Additional changes in the scholarly terrain make it possible to approach these questions with more sophisticated intellectual tools than were available twenty years ago. Scholars like Benedict Anderson and Thongchai Winichakul have taken important steps toward answering the thorny question "What is a Nation?" and in doing so have contributed to—and problematized—work in a variety of disciplines.[29] Anderson's insights into what creates popular allegiance to the idea of the nation and Winichakul's argument about the role that western mapping technologies played in creating that idea both contribute to a foundational set of ideas about the modern nation-state.

The field of cultural studies has also provided helpful tools for the revision of American literary history that I undertake here. With its emphasis on an anthropological sense of culture—culture as a system of signs and a context within which historical events, institutions, and practices can be understood—cultural studies has encouraged literary scholars to move beyond literary texts to examine other kinds of cultural productions as well. Examining works by Melville, Thoreau, Fuller, and others in the context of panorama pamphlets, political speeches, sermons, and even funerary enclosure offers new insights into those works as well as into the culture in which they were produced.

Above all, new developments in the field of geography have provided a vocabulary and a set of ideas that have been helpful in excavating a previously ignored anxiety about American geographical space. Innovators in that field such as Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, influenced, respectively, by Marxist theory and postmodernism, have drawn attention to the ways in which geographical space—often taken to be simply a given, something merely "out there" to be described—is really culturally constructed. As Lefebvre points out, "Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure."[30] Partially in response to such observations, geographers have examined the cultural construction of particular places. Matthew Edney, for example, has explored the way that the British surveying practices brought about the geographical entity we know as India. Such processes incorporated space into familiar symbolic systems and created

geopolitical entities. They constitute an important element of my argument in this book.

With these tools in hand, we can see that the various cultural artifacts and practices inspired by anxiety about national form were vital catalysts for "the American Renaissance." The first chapter suggests that Americans developed a variety of linguistic strategies for imagining the form of the United States and its position in relation to other geopolitical entities. Comparisons to European empires, biblical allusions, body politic metaphors, and metaphors derived from science all reflected—and often attempted to assuage—fears that the nation was becoming either monstrously large or else misshapen, threatening cherished beliefs and national self-images. Figurative language offered ways of addressing perceived threats to the nation's democratic principles, moral fiber, and racial homogeneity, as well as a means of coming to grips with the shift from republic to empire that took place during the antebellum period.

Subsequent chapters develop these ideas in two ways. Building on the notion of linguistic responses to the problem of territorial expansion and national shape-shifting, I argue in several chapters that particular kinds of texts addressed anxiety about national form in particularly powerful ways. Narratives of surveying and mapping expeditions (discussed in chapters 2 and 3) tell stories about the incorporation of geographical space into a familiar system. They often portray that process, moreover, in appealingly heroic terms. The printed pamphlets that accompanied panoramas (discussed in chapter 4) likewise translate alien geographical space into something more familiar and recognizable. They do so, however, not by incorporating it into an abstract system but by incorporating it into a narrative of progress and by turning the artist's visual representation of that space into a proxy for its successful integration into the nation. Geography schoolbooks, too, provide a window into the problem of national form. Unlike mapping narratives and panorama pamphlets, however, the schoolbooks don't directly address the anxiety that Americans were feeling. Instead, they inadvertently provide a rationale for policies designed to create a racially homogeneous nation.

In addition to identifying and analyzing particular kinds of texts that address the problem of national form, *Heartless Immensity* explores literary responses to cultural practices and artifacts designed to assuage anxiety about national form. For example, chapters 2 and 3 argue that Melville and Thoreau—engaging, respectively, the popular exploration narratives of John C. Fremont and Charles Wilkes—adapt the process of measurement to very different literary ends. Melville parodies the impulse to measure and

demonstrates its untenability as a means of truly knowing the world. Thoreau on the other hand, attempts to transform the meaning of measurement by making it not simply the first step in the commodification of land, but rather part of the transcendentalist project of finding meaning in nature. Like measurement, the landscape view from the heights (what Mary Louise Pratt has called "the monarch-of-all-I survey scene") was a means of symbolically possessing space in nineteenth-century culture. In chapter 5, I analyze Melville's *Typee* and Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes in 1843* as critiques of the appropriative landscape view. For both Melville and Fuller, the experience of unfamiliar geography and the conscious rejection of popular modes of perception facilitate the development of a unique, mature voice. The culminating exploration of literary responses to popular strategies for dealing with the nation's expanding size comes in chapter 6. In that chapter, I analyze images of monstrously large western bodies, which are clearly designed to assuage fears that the acquisition of alien territory—territory not organized according to Anglo-American conventions—will diminish or engulf the acquirer. After tracing this proliferation of size imagery to its origins in the eighteenth-century debate between the French naturalist Buffon and Thomas Jefferson, the chapter shows that Melville's satirical treatment of such self-enlarging practices literally shapes *Moby-Dick.*

The literary figures to whom I devote sustained attention, Melville, Thoreau, and Fuller, were both fascinated and appalled by the cultural mechanisms Americans employed to make expansion less threatening—geographical predestination, avid consumption of mapping and surveying narratives, and so on. Their ambivalence, moreover, functioned for each of them as a springboard for literary innovation. That ambivalent fascination has functioned as my primary criterion for sustained attention. Whitman might seem at first glance a natural figure to discuss in a book like this. But he was by and large untroubled by national expansion in the way that Melville, Thoreau, and Fuller were, although expansion did indeed function as a catalyst for Whitman's formal innovation. In the portions of "Song of Myself" and of the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass* in which the speaker becomes a kind of colossus ("I skirt sierras," "My palms cover continents") he participates, without irony or critical distance, in the self-enlarging practices that Melville parodies to such intriguing effect in *Moby-Dick.* As a result, Whitman has a relatively minor part to play here.

Essentially, *Heartless Immensity* tells the story of how Americans made sense of—and contained their anxiety about—their country's constantly fluctuating borders and annexation of massive quantities of new territory.

In doing so, it offers a new understanding of the formal innovation that characterized antebellum literary production by contextualizing it within various cultural practices and artifacts, which proved inspiring to some writers precisely because they stirred misgivings along with intense interest. At the same time, the book contributes to contemporary efforts to understand nationhood as a historical phenomenon by focusing attention on the emergence of a relatively fixed, visualizable form as a critical component of nation formation.

Chapter One

Imagining National Form

Early in Edward Everett Hale's 1863 short story "The Man Without a Country," set in the early republic, the main character, Phillip Nolan, is condemned never again "to hear of his country or to see any information regarding it."[1] And for fifty-six years, he doesn't. At the end of the story, Nolan—now "a dear, sainted old man" on his deathbed—experiences a geographical epiphany when a young naval officer takes pity on him and tells him about the events of the past half-century. While the hour-long narrative that ensues does include information that is not strictly speaking geographical in nature—such as that Abraham Lincoln is president—even it is conveyed in a geographical framework ("I said that Old Abe was a Kentuckian like himself"). Indeed, the conversation consists primarily of the filling in of the pathetically outdated map that Nolan has drawn from memory and hung at the foot of his bed:

> Quaint, queer old names were on it, in large letters: "Indian Territory," "Mississippi Territory," and "Louisiana Territory," as I suppose our fathers learned such things; . . . he had carried his western boundary all the way to the Pacific, but on that shore he had defined nothing. (60)

The young officer describes the new states added to the Union and draws them on Nolan's map. He tells of phenomena that have made the rapid formalization of space possible, including distance-reducing technology ("steamboats, and railroads, and telegraphs") and the nation's first naval exploring expedition (that of Wilkes in 1838–42). This knowledge—essentially the ability to have a mental picture of the nation—in effect releases "the man without a country" from his tormented life, and, within an hour

after the young officer's departure, Nolan is found to have "breathed his life away with a smile" (66).

I begin my book with a discussion of Hale's story—little read now but immensely popular in its day—because it seems to me that in Philip Nolan, Hale created a character who embodies the problem of national form and whose death dramatizes its resolution. The young Nolan's unnamed treasonous act, his susceptibility to the "gay deceiver" Aaron Burr (who dupes Nolan into assisting him in his rebellion against the United States), is a direct result of his upbringing—simultaneously cosmopolitan and provincial—on the frontier:

> He had grown up in the West . . . on a plantation where the finest company was a Spanish officer or a French merchant from Orleans. His education, such as it was, had been perfected in commercial expeditions to Vera Cruz, and I think he told me his father once hired an Englishman to be a private tutor for a winter on the plantation. He had spent half his youth with an older brother, hunting horses in Texas; and, in a word, to him "United States" was scarcely a reality. (9–10)

Nolan's youthful folly, in other words, stems from the kind of geographical conditions—a nation made up of culturally distinct regions separated by vast distances—that led Daniel Webster to ask despairingly, "What sympathy can there be between these New Mexicans, these Californians, and the inhabitants of the valley of the Mississippi . . . or of the Eastern States. . . ? . . . Have they any consentaneous sentiment?"[2] As the passage suggests, the West posed a particular threat to the eastern ideas about the nation, not simply because it was perceived as distant, unsettled, and uncivilized, but also because it was a region under global influences. Although England was the United States' chief rival for territory in western North America, France and Spain continued to influence the hearts and minds of western Americans by virtue of the proximity of their colonies and former colonies.

After his trial for treason, at which the judge grants his impulsive wish to "never hear of the United States again," Nolan becomes a living illustration of the link between identity and place or nation. The sympathetic narrator (another naval officer) refers to him as "poor creature" and observes, "I dare say there is many a man who has taken wine with him once a fortnight, in a three years' cruise, who never knew that his name was 'Nolan,' or whether the poor wretch had any name at all" (2). No longer allowed access to his country or to any information about it, he becomes a "creature" or a "poor wretch" rather than a human being. When the narrator makes vari-

ous futile efforts to have Nolan pardoned, he finds that "it was like getting a ghost out of prison." Nolan has gotten lost in the bureaucratic shuffle, and "[t]hey pretended there was no such man, and never was such a man" (51). The character to whom the "'United States' was scarcely a reality" actually takes on the insubstantiality of his nation. When he is first transferred from ship to ship, and the fact "that there was no going home" truly dawns on him for the first time, he looks "very blank" (26), much like the map of the nation as he imagines it in his epistemological prison.

If Nolan himself comes to embody the hazy, unformed qualities of the physical nation during the antebellum years, his death, at the height of the war that would ensure the continuation of the Union, signifies the resolution of geopolitical questions that had plagued the United States for decades. Nineteenth-century readers found Nolan's attempt to map the nation without any access to empirical data deeply moving—it sold half a million copies within a year of its publication—and the reason may have been that it was a fictional analog to their own attempts to make sense of the nation's size and shape.[3] Like Nolan with his makeshift map, Americans had desperately attempted to visualize the nation, to make it something tangible.

Like most citizens of Europe and its former colonies during the nineteenth century, Americans were eager to feel that their nation was real. (Nations, as Benedict Anderson and others have pointed out, were novel entities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, despite the fact that part of their powerful appeal was the way they made people feel connected to something ancient and immutable.) It was to this project of making the nation real and tangible that Jedidiah Morse—"the father of American geography"—consciously contributed in the first geography book about the United States, *The American Geography* (1789). Knowledge about the physical nation, he declared in his preface, was necessary to "attach [American youth] to its interests."[4]

Maps played an important role in the process of giving the nation form. But more blatantly figurative means of imaging national space were also ubiquitous in American culture. In order to map a nation in flux, Americans, debating the appropriate size and shape for the nation, turned to metaphors drawn from a wide variety of traditions and psychological experiences, from a range of discourses including religion, aesthetics, and science. In 1820, Emerson wrote in his journal, "It is a singular fact that we cannot present to the imagination a longer space than just so much of the world as is bounded by the visible horizon." Confident in the powers of language, however, he added, "But what matters it: We can talk & write &

think it out."[5] As if to provide proof of Emerson's claim, Americans devoted vast quantities of paper to writing and thinking out the problems presented by geographical space that extended far beyond the visible horizon yet would change the nature of their nation in ways they could hardly begin to imagine.

One symptom of this wish to justify the nation's ever-changing form was a tendency to compare themselves to other growing empires. Thus John A. Dix, arguing for the justice of the American claim to Oregon in 1846, suggested that Great Britain's far-flung empire would ultimately be its downfall: "I know," he declared confidently, "that her inordinate distention contains within itself an element of vital weakness. It is not in the order of human society that so extended a dominion should remain long unbroken." He goes on to acknowledge, however, that he has "not yet been able to detect, in the condition of her body politic, the unerring symptoms of that decay which precedes and works out the dissolution of empires." Most importantly, Dix reassures his American readers that their own nation is in no such danger:

> Our contest for territorial rights, which we consider indisputable, has no object but to enable our citizens to extend themselves to our natural boundary,—the Pacific. Her [Great Britain's] interest is remote and contingent; ours is direct and certain. Hers is the interest of a State in a distant country which she wishes to colonize; ours is the interest of a country in its own proper territory and settlements.[6]

The imagery he uses to describe Britain's imperial form—"overgrown and unwieldy possessions held by a thread"—represents not so much an accurate picture of that empire (which Dix himself acknowledges to be strong rather than weak) as what Dix and other Americans hoped was the antithesis of their own national form.

Charles Boynton—a minister from Cincinnati—took a different tack in *The Russian Empire: Its Resources, Government, and Policy. By a Looker On from America* (1856). The book is a Romantic nationalist ode to the increasingly powerful Russia. Boynton argues that the "American and Sclavonian races," which are "just now stepping upon the arena of national life," have "vitality" and "vigor" that will make them the great powers of the future. But he also pushes his expansionist agenda for the United States by comparing it favorably to Russia. Boynton points out that "the Russians are subduing a continent, expanding themselves on every side, and redeeming the wilderness, after the manner of the Americans here" (31). And, basing

his observations on both Russia and the United States, he suggests that technological advances make it possible for nations to become far larger than the great empires of the past. At times his own nation even seems to supplant Russia as the subject of the book, as when he argues that "the magnitude of our country will never destroy the efficiency or unity of the government." A single "central power," he declares, might now control "the two Americas." In addition to their expansiveness, Russia and the United States also share, according to Boynton, the enmity of the great European powers: "The Gulf of Mexico and the adjacent waters, are the 'Black Sea' of the West, and France and England are determined that we shall neither control it, nor obtain its Sebastopol, even by honorable purchase." Cuba is the subtext of this comparison. (In 1853 President Franklin Pierce had offered to buy Cuba from Spain and was refused. The following year, three American diplomats issued the Ostend Manifesto, which declared the United States' right to buy or conquer Cuba despite Spanish opposition.) In his eagerness to see the United States annex that Caribbean island, Boynton turns Russia into his own nation's spatial doppelgänger: "The central homogeneous mass of Russia, its compact and vigorous nationality, as compared with the various tribes that skirt its wide frontier, may be regarded as a mighty continent with a fringe of islands scattered along its shores."[7]

Another widespread manifestation of the yearning for national form is the phenomenon that historians have named "geographical predestination." As various scholars of American culture have pointed out, the belief that the United States had a special role in God's plan pervaded American culture from its earliest beginnings.[8] The idea that the nation's *boundaries* have been providentially drawn is a natural corollary to this belief, and was invoked numerous times during the expansive years between the nation's founding and the Civil War, as Americans designated successive geographical barriers (the Alleghenies, the Mississippi, the Rockies, and finally the Pacific) the natural, God-given boundaries of the nation. Albert K. Weinberg, the historian who named this procedure "geographical predestination," called American expansionism a "motley body of justificatory doctrine," and there is no doubt that geographical predestination served as one means by which expansionists justified further territorial acquisition.[9] This has certainly been the way that most twentieth-century scholars of the antebellum period interpreted such rhetoric. But the need to feel enclosed by divinely established barriers also suggests that a kind of agoraphobia as well as an anxiety about incorporating other races into the nation were additional motives for the doctrine of natural boundaries. Fear of the possible

results of expansion, it seems, may well have been as powerful an impetus behind "geographical predestination" as the desire to justify territorial acquisition. As Weinberg himself points out, "The principle of the natural barrier is . . . concerned not with the unifying territorial features but with those which clearly and securely separate peoples."

Mississippi senator Robert J. Walker's "Letter . . . relative to the Reannexation of Texas" is a popular example of "geographical predestination":

> If the Creator had separated Texas from the Union by mountain barriers, the Alps or the Andes, these might be plausible objections; but He has planed down the whole valley, including Texas, and united every atom of the soil and every drop of the waters of the mighty whole. He has linked their rivers with the great Mississippi, and marked and united the whole for the dominion of one government and the residence of one people; and it is impious in man to attempt to dissolve this great and glorious Union. Texas is a part of Kentucky, a portion of the same great valley. It is a part of New York and Pennsylvania, a part of Maryland and Virginia, and Ohio, and of all the western states, whilst Tennessee unites with it the waters of Georgia, Alabama, and Carolina.[10]

Thomas Jefferson's argument that "Nature" (rather than God) had decided that the United States should have a port of deposit at the mouth of the Mississippi (because its territory alongside the river entitled its citizens to navigate the river) is the more secular, pantheistic, Enlightenment version. But another example of the rhetorical gesture—one that supports Weinberg's claim that geographical predestination is primarily concerned with "territorial features . . . which clearly and securely separate peoples"—was Representative C. J. Ingersoll's claim that the deserts south of the Rio Grande would function as "the natural boundaries between the anglo-Saxon [*sic*] and the Mauritanian races."[11] According to Ingersoll, it was natural that the races should be divided by obstacles such as deserts and rivers, and the preordained boundaries established by God would surely, he supposed, be contiguous with such obstacles.[12]

The invocation of religion to oppose what was often seen as the nation's out-of-control expansiveness was not limited to geographical predestination. Scripture also seemed to offer important lessons about the nation's proper form. When the Reverend Burdett Hart gave a Thanksgiving sermon in New Haven in 1847, he chose as his text Proverbs 22:28: "Remove not the ancient land-mark which thy fathers have set." The fact that no boundary in the United States could be considered "ancient" apparently

wasn't important. What *was* important for Hart, who was very much a believer in the United States' special millennial role in the world, was that the shift in the nation's earlier geographical form—brought about by the lawless aggression of the Mexican War—signified a deviation from the scripturally dictated path of righteousness: "But now we too are like the nations! When will other days again return—the days of our former glory and happiness? May god speed them and that right early! May the ancient land-mark be no farther removed, and may we still cling to the principles of our fathers!"[13]

Reverend Samuel Harris's 1846 Thanksgiving sermon also invoked scripture to deplore the Mexican War. But where Hart saw the United States as a tragically fallen ideal, Harris saw the nation as courting disaster. Citing Habakkuk 2:12 ("Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity"), he declared, "In the very act of grasping new territory by violence and blood, we are grasping the curse of the Almighty and hugging destruction to our bosoms." Harris was particularly concerned that "[t]he enlargement of our territories, by increasing the dissimilarity of our population and the diversity of our local interests, by leading to a larger standing army, and by the direct and indirect military influence of the conquest, must make our government more difficult to be administered and our liberties more precarious." As an example of the consequences of enlarged territories and increased diversity of local interests he cited the fact that "[a]fter taking Santa Fe, Gen. Kearny and his staff, in full dress, bearing lighted tapers, accompanied through the streets a Popish procession in honor of some saint or relic." For Harris, such an exhibition of "jesuitry" and "idolatry" by the nation's military officers was proof that disaster predicted by Habakkuk 2:12 was already coming to pass.[14]

While Christian mythology was the most common basis for arguments about national form, many nineteenth-century Americans also turned to the classical tradition to make sense of the nation's growth and the way citizens were distributing themselves within it.[15] Lyman Beecher, anxious about the immigration of European Catholics to the West and the "consolidated mass of alien votes" that they represented, claimed that the immigrants were "another nation within the nation—the Greek in the midst of Troy."[16] In 1825, Thomas Hart Benton, despite being pro-expansion, suggested that the Rocky Mountains should constitute "the Western limits of the republic," with a statue of the Roman god of boundaries "Terminus . . . raised upon its highest peak, never to be thrown down."[17] At the conclusion of his famous Seventh of March speech (arguing for the Compromise of 1850), Daniel Webster declared:

> Large before, the country has now, by recent events, become vastly larger. This republic now extends, with a vast breadth, across the whole continent. The two seas of the world wash the one and the other shore. We realize on a mighty scale, the beautiful description of the ornamental edging of the buckler of Achilles—
>
> "Now the broad shield complete the artist crowned,
> With his last hand, and poured the ocean round;
> In living silver seemed the waves to roll
> And beat the buckler's verge, and bound the whole."[18]

To see the nation as realizing or embodying Achilles' shield is to imply that it is divinely created, since Achilles' shield was made by the god Hephaistos. But even more important than his appeal to the divine or to the classical tradition is his appeal to aesthetics as he attempts to detect a hidden design beneath the apparent arbitrariness of the nation's shifting form. For Webster, the nation has, through the very growth that threatens its existence, become an aesthetic ideal.

Pro-expansionist senator Robert Walker similarly invoked aesthetics when he claimed—arguing *for* the annexation of Texas in 1844—that "[t]he present boundary is the worst that could be devised. It is a succession of steps and curves, carving out the great valley of the West into a shape that is absolutely hideous." "A better argument for an artist than a statesman," scoffed Theodore Sedgwick in response.[19] Despite Sedgwick's response, however, aesthetic arguments held enormous appeal in the debate about national form. Arguments based on geographical predestination had their detractors, who in rational fashion questioned the "naturalness" of various physical boundaries. John A. Dix, for example, pointed out that "physical obstacles are not always the most appropriate or convenient for statistical divisions. . . . Identity or diversity of race, association, or condition often does more than rivers, and mountains, and plains to bind men together or force them asunder."[20] But no such line of reasoning was available to counter the assumption—held by a generation steeped in aesthetic theories of the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque—that the nation should display the same kind of symmetry and proportion as a work of art (though individuals differed widely, of course, in their opinions of what shape and size would represent such an ideal). Joseph T. Adams, arguing that the annexation of Texas would provide new markets for New England's manufactured good, claims that annexation is "essential . . . to preserve the symmetry of the whole."[21] Caleb Cushing, on the other hand, saw northern,

rather than western expansion as aesthetically desirable. If Canada were to break free from Great Britain, he declared, then "North America would . . . present one harmonious American whole, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Sea."[22]

Schoolbook author William Woodbridge unconsciously supplied a rationale for such aesthetic arguments in his 1824 *A System of Universal Geography,* when he made a case for his method of presenting geographical information to students. Learning geography, he suggested, was like learning to draw: "The novice in drawing first delineates individual objects or the several parts of the body. It is the business of a more advanced stage of his progress to draw even a single human figure; and it is not until he is master of the elements of the art, that he is permitted to combine a variety of objects into a group or a landscape and to imitate the colouring of nature."[23] So too the novice geography student should become familiar with the constituent parts of nations—rivers, mountains, national customs, and so forth—and only then be introduced to the way that "locality" brings these parts together. Woodbridge's metaphor is a self-interested one, to be sure: he uses it to justify and promote his new method of teaching geography. But his notion that geographical knowledge should be acquired in the same way that a student of art acquired representational skills reveals a conception of geography that had significant consequences when held by policymakers.

Science, too, provided Americans with metaphors for imagining the elusive gestalt of the nation. In 1820, Representative Wood of New York declared that the admission of Missouri as a new state would "destroy the proportions of influence and obligation as adjusted by the parties to the original compact." But while addressing the language of the treaty—which stipulated that "the inhabitants of the said Territory shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States"—he also resorted to science to argue that the new state was incompatible with the Union as he knew it: "The word *incorporate* . . . implies an intimate union, . . . similar to that which takes place between the acids and alkalies, in chemistry, by the affinity of combination, the most intimate union in nature." While Wood turned to science to imagine the political process by which geographical space and its inhabitants were incorporated into the nation, Lyman Beecher and Reverend Charles Boynton found in scientific language ways of thinking about the space itself. Beecher, with his fears of a nation overrun and ultimately ruined by Catholics, claimed that "[o]ur rich unoccupied territory . . . will as certainly bring over adventurers as a vaccuum [*sic*] will call in the circumjacent atmosphere." Boynton, eager to encourage antislavery settlers to

move to Kansas, imagined "Emigrant churches" becoming "the nuclei around which society there would form itself."[24]

Like religion, aesthetics, and science, the traditional trope of the body politic provided Americans with a way of thinking about the size and shape of their nation, as well as the way that citizens were distributing themselves within it. In 1846 Emerson used an implicit body politic metaphor to convey his fear that a conquest of Mexico would be disastrous for the United States. "It will be as the man swallows the arsenic, which brings him down in turn. Mexico will poison us."[25] Other metaphors of the body politic used in this period are more complex, conveying more than the sense of dread and despair that Emerson's does. The traditional function of such metaphors is to suggest that the political entity being described is an organic whole rather than an arbitrarily linked collection of people or locales, and many of the body politic metaphors found in antebellum rhetoric about national form are of just this kind. Robert J. Walker, for example, joining a body metaphor to the premise that topography should dictate national form, argues that failure to annex Texas constitutes the "dismemberment of the great valley" of the Mississippi. Lyman Beecher, on the other hand, uses a body politic metaphor to make claims about the relative importance of the constituent parts of the growing nation and to articulate his anxieties about overly rapid expansion. Churches and schools, he argues, "are necessary to form the mind, and the conscience, and the heart of that vast world." For Beecher, a region without such "great institutions" would be as monstrous as a body without a mind or heart.

Charles Boynton made use of a body politic metaphor not to hierarchize various components of the nation but to make a sharp distinction between an animate nation and a dead one. For Boynton, the difference was based on racial homogeneity: "a nation will be great and powerful . . . in proportion as its growth is the progress of a single race, instead of a mere aggregation of dissimilar communities, brought by conquest under the domination of a single head. The one is a dead mass, tending ever to dissolution; the other is an animate body, unfolding a life, and tending toward maturity."[26] The distinction Boynton makes between animate and dead bodies politic is a Romantic nationalist one: he believes, following Johann Gottfried von Herder and other founding figures of that movement, that what defines the true nation is the intangible *geist* or spirit of the folk, which was itself sometimes thought to be tied to race.

John Calhoun of South Carolina, too, found it useful to distinguish between living and dead bodies politic. Arguing in 1848 against both keeping Mexico as a province or incorporating it into the Union, he declared

that the recent conquest of Mexico had resulted in the United States being "tied to a corpse."[27] (Presumably Calhoun is referring to the disadvantages of annexing a predominantly Catholic and mestizo nation.) John A. Dix, in responding to Calhoun's use of the trope, elaborates on it in ways that almost make Mexico sound like character in an Edgar Allan Poe story:

> Mexico is, indeed, prostrate—almost politically inanimate, if you please—under the oppressions which have been heaped upon her, year after year, by unscrupulous rulers. But I should be sorry to believe her beyond the power of resuscitation, even by human means. I do not expect, as our contact with her becomes more intimate, to see her, like the dead body touched by the bones of the prophet, spring at a single bound, to life and strength. But I hope to see her—possibly through our instrumentality freed from the despotic sway of her military rulers, and rising, by sure degrees, to the national importance I wish her to possess.[28]

Dix seems reluctant to give his metaphor religious undertones. (He refuses to believe that Mexico can be revived immediately like a dead body touched by religious relics.) But it is important to recognize that he is rejecting not just any religious reading of the situation but one associated specifically with the superstitious Catholicism that is so frequently disdained and mocked in the popular press and in pulp fiction about the Mexican War. Gender, however, is helpful to Dix in his attempt to establish the appropriate relationship between the United States and Mexico.

After "intimate" contact with America, Dix suggests, the feminine Mexico may rise (a bit like Madeleine Usher emerging from her crypt). This morbidly optimistic picture of Mexico as a female figure come back from the dead is suggestive of the way gender figured in many nineteenth-century inflections of the body politic trope. Granted, the use of "she" to personify nations (like ships) was common in the period. But frequently nations were gendered in order to convey real or desired power relations. In Dix's metaphor, for example, Mexico is feminine in part because weakness is feminine and Mexico has been oppressed by "unscrupulous rulers." "She" is also feminine, however, because she is a damsel in distress to be rescued by the implicitly masculine (and more powerful) United States.[29]

Lyman Beecher takes a different approach and assigns a gender to the body politic specifically in order to address his concern about the dangers of rapid territorial expansion. According to him, "sparse . . . settlements" militated against the "homogeneous public sentiments" necessary to legis-

late "the requisite institutions" (schools and "literary institutions") into existence. Without such institutions, he claimed, the young nation would fail to grow into "a glorious and unperverted manhood."[30] For Dix, the United States had merely been *implicitly* masculine in its relation to the feminine Mexico. For Beecher, on the other hand, masculinity is an overtly necessary condition of his nation, and perversion is the risk it runs by growing too rapidly.

Marriage metaphors, in Victorian society, represent the logical extension of such gendering of geopolitical entities. In addition to the rhetorical possibilities inherent in the body politic metaphor (the ability to convey the relative importance of various parts of the nation, to express value judgments about whole nations by labeling them dead or alive, feminine or masculine), marriage metaphors have the additional advantage of enabling the speaker to make implicit claims about the legality or illegality of annexation. A writer for the *New World,* for example, argues for the legality and appropriateness of annexing Texas in 1844 by making marriage a vehicle for the political act of annexation. Texas, in this metaphor, has come "before us and offer[ed] to join herself to our Union in solemn political wedlock." Unfortunately, in the writer's view, antiannexationists like Henry Clay have allowed their fears to get the best of them, and in Clay's "affrighted fancy," "all the sacred forms of National Faith and Honor start up at once and . . . forbid the banns!"[31]

All of the tropes discussed so far reveal people attempting to conceptualize the form of their nation or to articulate contested possibilities for national form to others. It is important to recognize, however, that printed words are not the only artifacts that speak to us about yearning for spatial form. Like geographical predestination or metaphors drawn from science or religion, trends in material culture suggest a fear of boundlessness and a need to impose form on space. Beginning in the 1830s, urban congestion and lack of space in urban churchyards led to the creation of rural or garden cemeteries outside major cities in both the United States and Europe. The creation of these cemeteries in turn enabled middle-class families to buy family burial plots that would be legally theirs in perpetuity. In the United States in the 1840s and 1850s, the practice of erecting iron fences around these cemetery plots became so popular that the influential landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing, in his campaign to discourage such fences, referred to the trend as "fencing mania."[32] In the 1860s stone curbs (less subject to corrosion) replaced fences as the enclosure of choice. Not until the 1880s did the idea of naturalistic, parklike cemeteries take hold and the widespread removal of fences and curbs begin.

Historians have offered various explanations for this trend. Stanley French believes it was "symbolic of the national trait of possessive individualism."[33] Blanche Linden-Ward argues that the craze for elaborate iron fences arose out of a desire to imitate the fences found at the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris and out of improvements in metalworking technology. But why should the "fencing mania" have occurred in the 1840s and 1850s when illustrated books on Père Lachaise appeared in the 1820s? Linden-Ward also fails to account for the appeal of stone curbs. She suggests that "lot owners associated their funerary property with domestic space, . . . a place to be personalized and defined as private, albeit in a quasi-public landscape."[34] No doubt this is true. But why should such a need have arisen at this particular historical moment? In the context of the anxious sense of boundlessness and spatial formlessness expressed in the period's literature and political rhetoric, it may be more profitable to see the enthusiasm for fences, as well as the subsequent replacement of fences with stone curbs, as symptomatic of a midcentury need for solid boundaries—a way of producing a reassuringly enclosed space.

American anxiety about boundlessness was further exacerbated by the fact that during the 1850s—precisely the time when American literature reveals a pervasive uneasiness about boundlessness and geographical disorder—fencing material grew markedly more difficult to obtain. In the already settled East, timber for fencing became increasingly scarce, and in the newly forming prairie states, lack of readily available timber for fencing made demarcation of boundaries difficult and costly. As Clarence Danhof has noted, the agricultural press of the 1850s is filled with references to the "fencing problem," including suggestions for altering legal requirements for fencing as well as various ideas for fencing substitutes such as hedges. One writer for the *Rural New Yorker* wrote about the problem in terms that clearly indicate that fences had a psychological, as well as a practical, dimension: "Good and secure fences are better than a hot toddy, or all the soporific drugs of Turkey or Arabia, to sleep upon; you not only know where your cattle are but where they are not."[35]

Funerary enclosure in the antebellum period suggests Americans attempting to *impose* form on the space around them, while other practices—such as geographical predestination—suggest attempts to *find* the nation's hidden form. This distinction between the two overarching means of assuaging anxiety about national form was not always so clear-cut, however. The key to the enormous popularity of mid–nineteenth-century surveying and mapping expeditions, in fact, lay in their blurring of this distinction. Surveying and mapping provided Americans with the satisfying

sense that they were discovering a hidden order, when they were actually incorporating space into a man-made system. It is the sudden awareness of this fact that so distresses the becalmed sailor of *Mardi,* discussed in the introduction. In the following chapters, I turn to Melville and Thoreau's engagement with two of the most prominent surveying and mapping narratives of the period. Both Melville and Thoreau, I suggest, found the cultural work done by measurement and mapping problematic. But where Melville ultimately parodies it, Thoreau attempts to transform it in order to make it serve his own literary Transcendental ends.

Chapter Two

Mapping and Measuring with Ahab and Wilkes

The marked differences between Ishmael and Ahab create a contrapuntal effect in the narrative of *Moby-Dick.* Whereas Ahab's intense desire to take revenge on the white whale drives the plot of the novel toward its violent conclusion, Ishmael's reveries and reflections on the nature of the whale slow it down, forcing the reader to pause, rather than recklessly follow Ahab to his quest's denouement.[1] A careful look at the novel, however, reveals that the two characters overlap in at least one crucial respect: both map and measure in ways that enable Melville to explore the increasingly important role that scientific exploration played in the nineteenth-century United States. Ishmael's measurement of a whale skeleton temple in "A Bower in the Arsacides" (chap. 102) and Ahab's mapping of the migration routes of sperm whales in "The Chart" (chap. 44) both echo episodes from Charles Wilkes's *Narrative of the First United States Exploring Expedition* (1845), which Melville owned.[2] But simply to see that text as a source for *Moby-Dick* is to see only part of the picture. For the real significance of Ishmael's act of measurement lies not simply in its connection to Wilkes's narrative, but in Melville's curious juxtaposition of sources in that episode. By linking the Wilkes expedition to biblical apocalypses, Melville points to a major shift in thinking about American geography and rationalizing the incorporation of new territory into the national sphere. Similarly, the full significance of Ahab's mapping arises not solely from the parallels between "The Chart" and Wilkes's own pet project of mapping sperm whale migration routes, but from Ahab's later abandonment of the very scientific methods of knowing the world and locating oneself in it that the Wilkes expedition practiced and even represented in the popular imagination.

The most famous exploring expedition in U.S. history is undoubtedly the Lewis and Clark expedition, which has achieved a prominence in popular culture unrivaled by its many successors because it successfully dramatized the mapping of space as a precursor to later migratory expansion. No other government-sponsored exploring expedition has been the subject of a Ken Burns documentary or the inspiration for a new coin (the Sacajawea dollar). In terms of historical significance, however, the Wilkes expedition was every bit as important as its famous predecessor.[3]

The idea for a naval expedition that would circumnavigate the globe making maps and collecting scientific specimens arose as early as the 1820s. Its staunchest advocate was Jeremiah Reynolds, a writer and exploration enthusiast, who is best known today for his impact on his literary contemporaries. Reynolds wrote "Mocha Dick or the White Whale of the Pacific"—one source for *Moby-Dick*—and was a passionate proponent of John Symmes's theory that the earth was hollow and that there were entrances at the poles. It was his articulation of this theory that inspired Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym.* Ardent campaigning by Reynolds for a naval expedition finally bore fruit in 1836, when Congress appropriated three hundred thousand dollars for the voyage. Under the command of Wilkes, the expedition left Washington, DC, in 1838 amid great fanfare and public acclaim. On board were a philologist, two naturalists, a conchologist, a mineralogist, a botanist, and a horticulturist.[4] Researches in "hydrography and geography" were to occupy the "special attention" of the naval officers, along with inquiries related to astronomy, terrestrial magnetism, and meteorology.[5] Over the course of the next four years and eighty-seven thousand miles, this unprecedented group of scientists would collect enough scientific data and specimens to warrant the founding of the Smithsonian Museum, while the naval officers mapped regions—most notably the South Pacific and the Pacific Northwest coast—that would prove invaluable to the nation's military and commercial interests.

Critics have discovered a number of parallels between characters in Wilkes's narrative and in *Moby-Dick.* Wilkes himself, for example, "apparently behaved as autocratically as Ahab in many respects."[6] Queequeg and Fedallah also very likely owe something to characters that Wilkes encountered in New Zealand and the Philippines.[7] While the recognition of these characterological parallels has provided important insight into Melville's composition of *Moby-Dick,* they are not my primary focus here. Instead, my interest in the expedition lies in what might be called its national and imperial flavor. In order to understand what I mean by this phrase, it is helpful, first, to understand the nationalist sentiment that fueled the expe-

dition and, second, to know something about recent scholarship on the role of European mapping and surveying in Asia and Latin America.

From the very beginning of his campaign to launch the U.S. Exploring Expedition, Jeremiah Reynolds saw the project in nationalistic terms. While he was certainly aware of the commercial and scientific benefits to be gained from it, he saw it above all as a means of increasing "national dignity and honor."[8] His most persuasive argument for the launching of such an expedition was that the time had come for the United States to take its place alongside the European world powers who had already sponsored scientific exploring expeditions. Similarly nationalistic arguments were invoked by the Secretary of the Navy, who immediately prior to the expedition's launch reminded its officers that "the undertaking which they are assisting to accomplish, is one that necessarily attracts the attention of the civilized world," adding that "the honour and interests of their country" were at stake. The publishers of Wilkes's narrative attempted to increase their sales by declaring the work "a great and truly national one," assuring readers that all aspects of the book were "STRICTLY AMERICAN," and proclaiming it "a book worthy of the country." And Wilkes himself begins the introduction to his narrative by reminding readers that the expedition was "the first, and is still the only one fitted out by national munificence for scientific objects that has ever left our shores."[9]

The most *overt* aim of the expedition, then, was to enable the United States to make a name for itself as a nation to be reckoned with. This was not, however, the expedition's sole function. For just as the *Pequod* has been read as a ship of state in pursuit of additional territory to annex, so too the Wilkes expedition was clearly intended to incorporate—through a series of largely symbolic gestures—certain previously uncharted regions into the United States' sphere of influence.[10] Among the most important of these gestures were measurement and mapping.

Mary Louise Pratt points to the mid–eighteenth century as the date of a fundamental shift in the way European elites thought about the world, and she cites as the chief manifestation of this shift the emergence of the "totalizing, classificatory project" of natural history, nothing less than the "systematizing of nature" and the production of order out of chaos. Whereas older European representations of the world had "construed the planet above all in navigational terms," the newer "representations or categories [of natural history] constituted a 'mapping' not just of coastlines or rivers, but of every visible surface."[11] A variety of apparatuses, in Pratt's account, made this classificatory project possible—Linnaeus's classification system for *all* plants, even those yet unknown, for example. But the standardiza-

tion of European units of measurement is the most important for my purposes here.[12]

This new emphasis on measurement and quantification, along with the invention of the chronometer—a device for accurately figuring longitude—made possible modern cartography, and with it the rise of modern geography. The planetary latitude-longitude grid that developed at this point functioned as a general matrix for measurement, and the measurements taken and the mathematical calculations done by the explorers and navigators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries filled in the blank areas on that matrix.[13]

The emergence of modern cartographic conventions, in turn, had far-reaching political consequences. Thongchai Winichakul has argued that the displacement of indigenous conceptions of space by new conceptions associated with modern geography contributed significantly to the emergence of the nation-state. With its emphasis on precise boundaries, the modern map, in his view, was a "prime technology" of nationhood. While Winichakul is primarily interested in the way Western conceptions of space interacted with premodern Siamese notions of space, many of his ideas can usefully be applied to the early national United States. For there is no question that the Wilkes expedition's directive to map the Pacific Northwest coast was designed to help crystallize the new nation's sense of itself by establishing a more coherent picture of what was imagined by many (correctly, it turned out) to be its future western boundary.

Considerable scholarly attention has been paid recently to the relationship between cartography and empire. Matthew Edney and Graham Burnett, for example, have both shown that surveys played a decisive role in the history of British imperialism by turning "terra incognita into a mapped and bounded colony" and by consolidating the colonizers' sense of themselves as possessors of scientific knowledge and, so, as justifiable rulers of less "civilized" peoples.[14] Even leaving aside the agency of particular European practitioners of cartographic surveying, however, there is also the basic fact that by its very nature "a map appropriates a spatial object by its own method of abstraction into a new sign system."[15]

The Wilkes expedition can be seen as the naval equivalent of the various surveying expeditions that Edney and Burnett examine. The South Pacific was not, strictly speaking, a *colony* of the United States in quite the same way that India, for example, was a colony of Britain. Yet the Wilkes expedition was nonetheless intended to secure the United States' continued success not only in the whaling industry but in the competition to dominate various non-European parts of the globe.[16] The founding of the "National

Institute" (now the Smithsonian Museum) in 1840 in order to house the specimens collected by Wilkes's "scientifics" is further evidence that the expedition was intended to put the United States on the imperial map. My contention here is that Melville was aware of the national and imperial functions served by measurement and mapping, and that he dramatized those functions by weaving references to the Wilkes expedition into the fabric of *Moby-Dick.*

"A Bower in the Arsacides," the chapter in which Ishmael surreptitiously measures a whale-skeleton temple on a South Seas island, is an intriguing combination of slapstick humor, lyrical intensity, and metaphysical inquiry, as well as a tour de force of Melville's exuberant literary style. At first glance, however, it seems to bear little structural relation to the novel as a whole. And unlike other digressive chapters such as "The Town-Ho's Story"—which has been shown to have thematic ties to the novel's central plot—it has received relatively little scholarly attention. In fact, the basic question—what it means for Ishmael, at this point in the novel, to measure the whale skeleton temple and tattoo the measurements on his body—has remained uninvestigated.[17]

"A Bower in the Arsacides" begins as yet another of Ishmael's meditations on the nature of the whale, a phenomenon quite familiar to readers from the earlier cetology chapters. Having "chiefly dwelt upon the marvels of his outer aspect," he observes, "it behoves [*sic*] me now to unbutton him still further" and to "set him before you in his unconditional skeleton."[18] He then briefly recounts his dissection of a "small cub Sperm Whale"—an act that foreshadows the invasive nature of his measurement of the temple—before moving on to the primary action of the chapter. Ishmael recalls that "years ago," while on the island of Tranque, ruled by Tranquo, he encountered a vast whale skeleton that had been turned into a temple. He describes the temple in a passage that is characteristically Melvillean in both its language and metaphysical preoccupations. After first establishing the exotic appearance of this South Seas island temple ("The ribs were hung with trophies; the vertebrae were carved with Arsacidean annals in strange hieroglyphics"), he turns his description of the temple in its verdant, natural setting into an elaborate simile: "the industrious earth beneath [the temple] was as a weaver's loom, with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures." The simile, in turn, prompts an impassioned plea for clues to some underlying meaning or purpose in the world. This plea suggests that if Ishmael's mad captain sees the physical world as a mask to be broken through, Ishmael himself sees it as a machine whose operator refuses to

explain it: "Oh busy weaver!—pause!—one word! whither flows the fabric? . . . wherefore all these ceaseless tailings?"

Since the "weaver-god" refuses to speak, Ishmael is left to his own empirical devices as he attempts to navigate between the marvel of a king who regards the chapel—a sacred space—as merely "an object of vertu" and that of priests who swear that the whale's "smoky jet" (created by a continuous flame burning in its skull) is genuine. First Ishmael breaks through the ribs of the skeleton and wanders with a ball of twine, like Theseus in the labyrinth, through the temple's "many winding, shaded colonnades and arbors." His line soon runs out, however, and he emerges from the skeleton-temple having seen "no living thing within." He then cuts "a green measuring rod" and once more enters the temple.

It is not particularly surprising to find Ishmael measuring a whale skeleton. After all, he has from the very beginning of his narrative displayed an intense desire to know the true nature of the whale. And as we have already seen, measurement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was increasingly regarded as an effective and important part of the acquisition of knowledge about the world. That Ishmael measures a whale skeleton *temple,* however, is both more unexpected and more significant. For his measurement recalls episodes in three apocalyptic texts of the Old and New Testaments, all three of which suggest that the measurement of the temple of Jerusalem is a crucial prerequisite for the reestablishment of the kingdom of the Israelites, which fell due to the sins of its people.[19]

In the book of Ezekiel, the eponymous prophet addresses the Israelites, who are in captivity in Babylon, and describes a vision, sent to him by God, which details the steps to be taken if they wish to be restored to their freedom and their homeland. In the vision, Ezekiel is carried to the land of Israel, where he encounters a temple and a man "whose appearance shone like bronze" and who carries a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. He is then told to look and listen attentively, for he has been brought there that he might "declare" all he sees "to the house of Israel." The next two chapters consist of a detailed account of the man's measurement of every part of the temple, after which the prophet is instructed to "describe the temple to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern, . . . and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances." The book of Zechariah, which consists of the prophet Zechariah's visions of what will be necessary to restore Israel to its previous strength and purity also portrays "a man with a measuring line in his hand," whose declared purpose is "[t]o measure Jerusalem."

In the book of Revelation, it is the visionary himself who does the mea-

suring. John of Patmos, the author of this particular apocalyptic text, writes, "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, 'Come and measure the temple of God and the altar of those who worship there.'" Here, as in the earlier books of the Hebrew scriptures, measurements are taken with an eventual restoration of the sacred temple in mind. Revelation differs from Ezekiel and Zechariah, however, in that the reestablishment of the temple is intended to occur after the end of the world and the second coming of Christ.

If, as seems likely given the extent of his biblical allusions elsewhere in *Moby-Dick,* Melville was indeed echoing the motif of temple measurement in biblical prophecy, then the significance of the parallel is easy enough to interpret.[20] *Moby-Dick* has often been read as a political allegory in which the white whale represents western territory. Just as annexation of western territory will cause the debate over slavery to erupt into Civil War, so too Ahab's sacrilegious determination to destroy the white whale leads to the destruction of the *Pequod,* an event that, as many critics have pointed out, has eschatological overtones. By alluding to biblical prophets as the *Pequod* nears its doom, Melville turns Ishmael into a prophet for America, whose measurement of the temple can provide the blueprints for his nation's restoration.

Identifying Melville's references to biblical prophecy, however, reveals only part of the meaning of "A Bower in the Arsacides," an episode that, like Ahab's doubloon, can have various meanings depending upon which source or allusion one chooses to focus on. Melville dangles before his readers the possibility of a simple allegorical reading in which Ishmael's actions have a single biblical referent. Such a simple, clear-cut reading becomes untenable, however, when we consider that Ishmael's measurement of a temple on an idyllic South Seas island also bears a significant resemblance to an episode from the Wilkes narrative.

In chapter 1, volume 5, of his narrative, Wilkes describes the discovery of a South Pacific island previously unknown to Americans or Europeans, which he gives the unromantic name Bowditch Island. In doing so, he pays tribute to Nathaniel Bowditch, an American mathematician and astronomer and author of *The New American Practical Navigator* (1802), which became the official navigation manual of the U.S. Navy, as well as the most popular manual in civilian circles. Wilkes's naming of the island, in other words, signals a faith in measurement and the navigational systems that it makes possible, which will dominate the rest of the episode. Eager to survey the island, Wilkes dispatches a group of officers and sailors to shore, where they encounter natives who manifest a strong "desire that our peo-

ple should depart" (14). Determined, despite this opposition, to remain on the island in order to collect specimens and to catalog its people and their customs, the crew makes every effort to calm the natives, though Wilkes notes that "nearly an hour elapsed before they were tranquillized."

His use of the word "tranquillized" deserves further attention in light of Melville's language in "A Bower in the Arsacides." It is relatively easy for a close reader of Wilkes to hear verbal echoes in *Moby-Dick.* When Melville describes the "devious zig-zag world circle of the Pequod's circumnavigating wake" (218), for example, it recalls Wilkes's description of the "devious and extensive cruise" (457) of his own world circumnavigation. In thinking about connections between "Bower" and Wilkes's narration of the Bowditch Island episode, it is worthwhile to consider that Melville's naming of "Tranquo," ruler of "Tranque," may well be a similar echo of the exploring expedition's "tranquillized" natives. For a verbal link here would not only reinforce a connection between the two places, but would also highlight Melville's interest in the relationship between Americans and natives in "Bower."

After calming the natives and looking around, the Wilkes crewmen find that "[t]he most remarkable building was that which they [the natives] said was their 'tui-tokelau' (house of their god)." It is a large building with a thatched roof, a not terribly unusual example of Polynesian architecture (unlike the fantastic skeleton-temple of "A Bower in the Arsacides"). But its simplicity and setting make it "one of the most beautiful and pleasant spots," and a drawing of it included in the published narrative makes it seem lovely and idyllic indeed. Like Ishmael on "Tranque," the officers among the party are determined to see the inside of the temple, and they do so in spite of religious injunctions against their presence. "[The natives] were at first unwilling that the officers should enter; but upon the explanation that what was taboo for them, would not be so for the Papalangis [white men], they were admitted by an old priest, but not without reluctance" (14). And like Ishmael, they make measurement a top priority. They measure the gods themselves, which are actually located outside the temple, ("The largest of these was fourteen feet high and eighteen inches in diameter. . . . The smaller idol was of stone and four feet high") as well as the tables or benches where the gods are supposed to sit ("four feet long by three broad and the same in height").

Wilkes's straightforward, unremarkable narration of the episode is a far cry from the lyricism and humor of "A Bower in the Arsacides"; Melville has made the episode uniquely his own. But to see a connection between that chapter and the island temple episode in the Wilkes narrative is to see

Melville's awareness, born out of his interest in cross-cultural encounters in the South Pacific, that measurement can be a means of defining or laying claim to what one sees. Melville reinforces this connection between measurement and ownership as he concludes the episode. After Ishmael takes the whale's measurement, the priests shout, "How now! . . . Dar'st thou measure our god!" Ishmael's story then moves into slapstick comedy mode, with a scene that would not be out of place in a Three Stooges episode. Ishmael wryly asks, "Ay, priests—well, how long do ye make him then?" A "fierce contest" then arises "concerning feet and inches" and they crack "each other's sconces with their yard-sticks" (491). To measure, in this story, is to define or lay claim, and the priests' disagreement over the whale's measurements—and their use of yardsticks as weapons—clearly represents the disagreements of various sects over religious doctrine. At stake is the question, "Who shall define God?"

The issue then shifts abruptly, becoming not religious doctrine (what one might call figurative "ownership" of God), but literal property ownership. Again, however, possession and measurement are complementary processes. After noting that other whale skeletons are owned and on display in England and the United States, Ishmael observes that the two known "proprietors" of *sperm* whale skeletons both claimed their specimens "upon similar grounds": "King Tranquo seizing his because he wanted it; and Sir Clifford, because he was lord of the seignories of those parts" (491). But the main purpose of this comic exposure of the arbitrariness of conventions of property ownership is to point out that "there are skeleton authorities" we (the readers) "can refer to, to test [Ishmael's] accuracy." Other whales are owned, and other whales have therefore been measured.

If "A Bower in the Arsacides" does indeed echo apocalyptic books of the Bible as well as the Bowditch Island episode of the Wilkes narrative, what, then, are we to make of Melville's juxtaposition of sources in this chapter? His awareness of the relationship between biblical rhetoric and national expansion is certainly not unique to "A Bower in the Arsacides." (Think, for example of "Brother Jonathan, that apostolic lancer," who regards Texas as a "loose fish.") So to identify Melville's biblical allusions in that chapter is perhaps simply to add another chapter to an old story. But his creation of an episode of measurement that is both a pastiche (a nonparodic imitation) of the biblical prophets *as well as* a parody of an episode of Wilkes's narrative shows us Melville's creative imagination responding to a major cultural shift.[21] Religion provided the primary framework for thinking about national expansion from the nation's beginnings through the Mexican War. "Manifest Destiny"—the notion that the United States was divinely ordained to spread across the North American continent—is the

best-known manifestation of religion's influence on conceptions of American geography. But in fact, Manifest Destiny should be thought of as only one part of "geographical predestination." Immediately after the Revolution Americans both for and against expansion began to designate successive geographical barriers (the Alleghanies, the Mississippi, the Rockies, and finally the Pacific) the natural, God-given boundaries of the nation.

While there is no doubt that religion continued to be an important element in American nationalism, by the 1840s science, as practiced by exploring expeditions like that of Wilkes, had begun to play an increasingly important role in shaping public opinion about the territory that the United States was in the process of incorporating.[22] By inviting readers of "A Bower in the Arsacides" to hear echoes of both biblical prophecy *and* Wilkes's scientific expedition, Melville expresses his misgivings about U.S. imperialism in two ways: one rooted in the Bible and focused on the *consequences* of expansion; the other based in a keen awareness of the new processes by which modern nations assimilated new territory and made space national.

But the dual echoes in the chapter are also a way of analogizing the religious and the scientific methods of figuratively assimilating geographical space and in doing so revealing that neither can justify its claims to absolute authority. A reference to biblical prophecy alone, for example, might suggest that Melville is simply following in the footsteps of Puritan authors who identified America with Israel. But while Melville by no means rejects the possibility of an analogy between the two peoples and their histories, his juxtaposition of religious and scientific contexts for measurement calls into question the absoluteness of each context. The Bible, this chapter suggests, is only one tool, among many, for interpreting historical events.

Likewise a parodic allusion to the Wilkes expedition's visit to Bowditch Island, taken by itself, could reveal simply the comic undertones in a transgressive cross-cultural encounter. Alongside the prophetic associations of measurement in the chapter, however, the reference to the expedition's predilection for measuring—and its underlying assumption that numbers capture some essential reality of a place—becomes an exploration of what Matthew Edney has called "the empiricist delusion." According to Edney, late Enlightenment empiricism "posited a direct, visual link between an entity in the world, the individual's mental perception of that entity, and the individual's inscription of that perception on paper." That inscription on paper might include numbers, drawings, or written descriptions, but in all cases "it was assumed to be an 'essential' and literal copy of the original entity."[23]

Edney's exploration of this delusion, exemplified by British surveys of

India, involves explaining how the "conditions of observation" and "the subjective condition of the observer" influence perceptions. Melville's, on the other hand, involves dramatizing how, like the biblical interpretation of history, measurement requires that some external template (in this case instruments of measurement) be brought to bear on an object in ways that may ignore, or even diminish, the object's local, contextual meaning (in this case its religious significance within the local culture).

We see Melville build on this insight at the end of "A Bower in the Arsacides" when Ishmael describes having the measurements he has taken tattooed on his arm and observes that "at that period, there was no other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics" (491–92). How are we to read the phrase "such valuable statistics" given the multiple allusions of the chapter in which it occurs? With considerable irony, surely. For if Ishmael's measurement invoked biblical apocalypses alone, the statistics in question might indeed be valuable, if only as symbols for a destroyed ideal. But in the context of the Wilkes expedition's visit to Bowditch Island and the comical measuring proclivities of the priests, we are clearly intended to question their value. While statistics that lead to better maps are valuable because they enable successful commercial ventures, statistics like Ishmael's measurement of the whale skeleton or the Wilkes crew's measurement of the gods of Bowditch Island are *not*—except insofar as they provide the measurer with a sense of mastery.

Where Melville's invocation of biblical prophecy and the Wilkes expedition in "Bower" analogizes religion and science in order to question their representations of themselves as uniquely effective interpretive tools, his portrayal of Ahab's mapping and measuring focuses more exclusively on the claims of science. As in "A Bower in the Arsacides," the Wilkes expedition is a key ingredient in Melville's exploration of the role science, quantification, and the collection of numerical data played in Western assimilation of global territory during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ahab's mapping of sperm whale migration routes, as I mentioned, recalls Wilkes's own pet project, carried out during the expedition he commanded.[24] But Ahab's gradual movement away from navigational practices based on numerical data as he draws closer to the white whale suggests something else: the shortcomings of science as a means of achieving Ahab's more daring goal. Whether one reads that goal in philosophical or political terms—as retribution for the world's injustice or as hubristic territorial annexation—is immaterial. For in either case, the quantifying gestures of the U.S. Exploring Expedition prove inadequate in Ahab's eyes.

Charles Wilkes ends his five-volume account of that expedition with a

chapter called "Currents and Whaling." Noting that "[i]t may at first sight appear singular that subjects apparently so dissimilar . . . should be united to form the subject of one chapter," he goes on to make a persuasive argument that his charting of ocean currents (which carry with them "the proper food" of whales) will enable whaling captains to determine "not only the places to which they [whales] are in the habit of resorting, but the seasons at which they are to be found frequenting them."[25] Wilkes has discovered, in other words, the very scientific method of whale finding (observing currents, observing whales, finding correlations between the two sets of observations) that Ahab practices in "The Chart" as he "thread[s] a maze of currents and eddies":

> Ahab, who knew the sets of all tides and currents; and thereby calculating the driftings of the sperm whale's food; and, also, calling to mind the regular, ascertained seasons for hunting him in particular latitudes; could arrive at reasonable surmises, almost approaching to certainties, concerning the timeliest day to be upon this or that ground in search of his prey. (216)[26]

The resemblance stops, however, at that methodological similarity. For while Wilkes merely carries out his straightforwardly commercial goals with characteristic zeal, Ahab's devotion to "that monomaniac thought of his soul" clearly betrays his madness (215).

A related difference between this final chapter of Wilkes's *Narrative* and "The Chart" is that whereas Wilkes is utterly uninterested in the phenomenon of his own mind making the observations and drawing the conclusions that he reports, Melville is fascinated by Ahab's mental processes. As Ahab works at his "large, wrinkled roll of yellowish sea charts," a lamp throws "shifting gleams and shadows of lines upon his wrinkled brow, till it almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses of the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead" (215). The most obvious reading of this passage is that Ahab's obsession with finding Moby Dick is "marking" his mind, or driving him insane. But it is important to note also that both Ahab and his tools for finding the whale (the charts) take on the whale's distinguishing characteristics. Just as Moby Dick is known for his vast wrinkled brow, the charts are "large" and "wrinkled"; and just as Ahab himself marks the charts, "some invisible pencil" also inscribes similar marks upon his own brow.

In addition to depicting Ahab's madness, then, the passage can also be

seen as an examination of the relationship between observer and observed. In representing Ahab's mental processes, Melville is influenced by two models of vision that overlapped in the first part of the nineteenth century. The first, dominant during the Enlightenment but common in scientific circles for much longer, took the camera obscura—essentially a walk-in pinhole camera—as the model for human vision. The presupposition was that just as the camera obscura separated the viewer from the world (the viewer would be inside a darkened box looking at an image of the outside world thrown on a rear wall), so too in the everyday world vision was a mechanistic activity in which the viewer was entirely separate from an objective, exterior world, which his reason (like an element of the camera obscura) then shaped into a coherent picture. Ahab, far from remaining a detached and impartial observer—as Wilkes's "scientifics" and the imperial surveyors that Edney and Burnett have studied imagined themselves to be—merges with his object of scrutiny. In doing so, he already takes his first step away from the scientific gaze.

The "heavy pewter lamp suspended in chains over his head" under which Ahab works as he "ponder[s] over his charts," also highlights the workings of his mind, but suggests an alternative, newly emergent model of vision. As M. H. Abrams has demonstrated, during the Romantic period the lamp replaced the mirror as the vehicle of choice for metaphors of the mind, the change reflecting a fundamental shift in popular views of the mind's role in perception. While the mirror analogy conveyed a view of the mind as "passive receiver," the lamp analogy suggests an active mind that in perceiving "discovers what it has itself partly made."[27] In "The Chart," then, the lamp above Ahab's head represents his powerful intellect and creative imagination.

That the lamp is "suspended in chains," however, hints at both a kind of captivity to his diabolical purpose, and the consequences of his Promethean overreaching. But as Ahab draws closer to Moby Dick, he not only defies divine authority (as Prometheus did) but also rejects the technology for locating oneself according to the modern cartographic grid. In "The Quadrant" (chap. 118), Ahab uses the quadrant to measure the distance of the sun from the horizon and then, "with his pencil upon his ivory leg," uses that information to "calculate what his latitude must be at that precise instant" (544). Angered, however, by the tool's inability to locate the white whale, he smashes it, after delivering the following diatribe:

> Foolish toy! babies' plaything of haughty Admirals, and Commodores, and Captains; the world brags of thee, of thy cunning and might; but

> what after all canst thou do, but tell the poor, pitiful point, where thou thyself happenest to be on this wide planet, and the hand that holds thee: no! not one jot more! Thou canst not tell where one drop of water or one grain of sand will be to-morrow noon; and yet with thy impotence thou insultest the sun! Science! Curse thee. (544)

Ahab's condemnation of science's inability to provide answers to the questions that drive him reveals the shortcomings of the worldview that was the foundation of the Wilkes expedition and signals his final rejection of Enlightenment epistemology. That Ahab then turns to the occult knowledge of pagan, fire-worshipping Fedallah as an alternative to the quadrant also suggests that his smashing of the quadrant is a form of blasphemy. Enlightenment epistemology, in other words, has acquired the status of religious doctrine.

The question of whether Ahab's frustration with science—like his hunt for the white whale—is insane, peculiarly admirable, or some combination of both, remains for individual readers to decide. But rethinking some of Ahab's and Ishmael's actions in the context of the Wilkes expedition does allow us to see Melville as an astute observer of his own culture. Where most Americans saw in the Wilkes expedition merely a way to enhance the prestige of their own country in the eyes of the world or to facilitate whaling, Melville accurately saw the embodiment of a relatively new geographical worldview that would enable Europeans and Americans to dominate the globe. That his two main characters both, in the beginning at least, act on the basis of that worldview suggests, perhaps, its pervasiveness. That Ahab rejects this worldview so shortly before his final encounter with Moby Dick may well suggest that to see beyond its orthodoxy required a deeply transgressive mind.

Chapter Three

From Salt Lake to Walden Pond

In his essay "Walking," Thoreau describes an apocalyptic vision of measurement gone mad, of the urge to establish boundaries taken to a blackcomical extreme.[1] In this vision, a "worldly miser with a surveyor looking after his bounds" does not see that "heaven had taken place around him" and continues to look for "an old post-hole in the midst of paradise." "I looked again," the passage continues, and "saw him standing in the middle of a boggy Stygian fen, surrounded by devils, and he had found his bounds without a doubt." "Looking nearer," Thoreau observes, "I saw that the Prince of Darkness was his surveyor."

It is a curious passage for Thoreau to have written. During his short stint as a schoolteacher in 1840, he introduced his students to surveying in order to show them the practical uses of mathematics. Later, from 1849 to 1860, he earned his living as a surveyor, measuring land and determining property boundaries. (The handbill he had printed for his surveying business offers the following services: "Woods lotted off distinctly and according to a regular plan; Roads laid out, &c.") Because it enabled him to spend time in his beloved nature, surveying seems to have been the only profession the sometimes misanthropic Thoreau could tolerate for any length of time.

His writings, too, suggest an enthusiasm for surveying. In his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), he praises the knowledge-expanding powers of measurement: "How many new relations a footrule alone will reveal. . . . What wonderful discoveries have been, and may still be, made, with a plumb-line, a level, a surveyor's compass . . . !"[2] Here surveying—the process of taking linear and angular measurements in order to delineate the form of a tract of land, as well as its location in relation to

other land parcels—is presented as a marvelous instrument of discovery rather than the work of the devil.

The more successful a surveyor Thoreau became, however, the more troubled he became by the profession's implications. "With our prying instruments," he wrote in 1859, "we disturb the balance and harmony of nature." A year earlier he was concerned with the effects of his profession on his own perceptions of, and emotional responses to, nature. He had "lately been surveying the Walden woods so extensively and minutely" he wrote, that he had begun to see it "mapped in [his] mind's eye—as indeed, on paper—as so many men's wood-lots" and was now aware whenever he walked through the woods that he was "at a given moment passing from such a one's woodlot to another's." "I fear," he concluded, "this particular dry knowledge may affect my imagination and fancy, that it will not be easy to see so much wilderness and native vigor there as formerly."[3]

What Thoreau sees mapped in his mind's eye is information about property ownership, rather than about the land's spiritual relationship to human beings (emphasized by Thoreau's mentor, Emerson) or the ecological balance between the different organisms within a habitat, which would increasingly interest Thoreau in his later years. As we will see, however, *Walden* suggests that other purposes may be served by measurement and mapping. Thoreau's surveying in "The Pond in Winter" does indeed affect his "imagination and fancy," but not in the way he feared in his journal. Instead, it enlarges these faculties, enabling him to see and understand more of the world around him.

Thoreau's ambivalent fascination with the process of measuring and mapping shapes *Walden* in crucial ways. This can be most clearly seen in the long, detailed, and contradictory account of the mapping of the pond itself, where a desire to determine its exact depth fights with the powerful appeal of the belief that it is bottomless and immeasurable. Located just before the exuberant thawing of "Spring" and the homiletic exhortation of the "Conclusion," the episode represents Thoreau's last sustained encounter with the pond in his narrative. It is in the context of the prominent role that surveying played in American culture during the national expansion of the 1840s and 1850s, I believe, that this enigmatic episode and its place in the larger design of *Walden,* can best be understood.

As a variety of cultural geographers have pointed out, surveying and mapping played a pivotal role in the reconfiguration of world geography that took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to

Matthew Edney, for example, the British trigonometric survey of the Indian subcontinent was responsible for the construction of the entity we know today as India. The survey method known as triangulation—in which surveyors imagined a series of straight lines stretching from point to point to form a network of triangles, and then measured the angles of the triangles in order to determine in precise terms the relationship of geographical entities to one another—enabled the British to create a "single and coherent view" within which "particular variations and contingencies were subsumed." The "Great Trigonometic Survey" was an indispensable part, Edney claims, of British control over the subcontinent. Western mapping technologies played a critical role in reformatting geographical space even where direct imperial control was not an issue. The nation of Thailand, for example, emerged only when Western assumptions about geography—including the notion that one can determine an object's true or objective location by measuring its distance from points of reference such as lines of latitude and longitude—supplanted indigenous ones.[4]

Measurement was also the primary tool for what might be called the formalization of geographical space on the American continent. The surveying expeditions by means of which the western portions of the continent were mapped have been the subject of historians' scrutiny before. William Goetzmann, most notably, has portrayed the surveyors and mapmakers of the nineteenth century in heroic terms.[5] Those expeditions, I suggest, need to be removed from the neat, and now outdated, category of "the winning of the West" and placed in two new contexts. The first is the notion (implicitly espoused by all recent scholars of mapping) that geography is "not a given object 'out there'" but is, rather, "a conceptual abstraction of a supposedly objective reality, a systematic set of signs, a discourse."[6] (This new context will become important in my discussion of Thoreau's reading and revision of Fremont's survey of Salt Lake.) The second is the fact that western mapping expeditions were neither uniquely American nor uniquely "western" (in the sense of the American West) phenomena. They were, rather, part and parcel of a larger process that was taking place in European colonies (like Edney's India), in parts of the world coming into contact with the overwhelming strength of the European powers (like Winichakul's Thailand), and even in the eastern United States, where the process of cataloging and measuring in order to define states was still under way. The eastern United States, in other words, was not the static, fully known space that Goetzmann's celebration of western adventures assumes.

In 1830, the state legislature of Massachusetts passed a resolution authorizing the governor to appoint a surveyor "well skilled in astronomy and

the art of surveying upon trigonometric principles" to survey the entire state. Much taken with the idea, the governor in turn requested that the legislature authorize an increase in the appropriation in order to add a geological survey to the geographical one. Thus began a massive nine-year project, the goal of which was to create accurate maps of each county in the state and to catalog its soils, minerals, and rocks. In his final report to the governor, the head geologist noted that since Massachusetts began its state survey, eighteen other states had followed suit.[7]

There is no doubt that the motives for these state surveys (and the many others that would follow them) were in large part economic and scientific. But it is important not to overlook the rhetoric of such reports, which suggests another function: to give a sense of solidity or reality to newly established states, many of which were created on the basis not of royal charters or land grants (as in the case of the original thirteen) but of rather arbitrarily assigned boundaries, whose straight, perpendicular lines—not even, in most cases, corresponding to major landmarks such as rivers or mountain ranges—accentuated their arbitrariness. State survey reports invariably begin by describing the size and shape of the state and situating its borders in relation to lines of latitude and longitude, major rivers, and other states. The "Report on the Geological Survey of Iowa" (1858), for example, begins with a chapter called "Physical Geography," in which we learn that the state has "nearly the figure of a rectangular parallelogram" and, among other localizing facts, that it borders Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois.[8]

The Natural History of New York, published in 1842 to mark the completion of New York's state survey, goes even further in taking the survey as an opportunity to define the state. The governor, William H. Seward, wrote the introduction. He discusses the state's census, voting rights laws, the structure of state government, the history of education and the press, the political history of the state, "the studies and productions of our citizens" in a wide variety of arts and sciences, and concludes with "an account of the inception, progress and consummation of the survey." For Seward, this lengthy dissertation on the state of the state—which seems to consist almost entirely of a massive digression—is justified because "although circumscribed and imperfect," the survey "furnishes gratifying proof that a republican government is not unfavorable to intellectual improvement." For him, in other words, the survey itself represents the culmination of the state's development over generations.

Less ambitious state survey reports were, to be sure, more common. But even the briefest and most straightforwardly factual usually imply some sort of vision that goes beyond seeing the state as a parcel of land contain-

ing particular minerals. For example, Kentucky's survey report, published in 1858, though it provides considerably less detailed information than New York's, does ponder Kentucky's future, as well as its role in the national economy. Claiming that Great Britain's iron resources are the source of "her national greatness" and that the United States pays Great Britain thirty million dollars annually for imported iron (in order to suggest an empire-colony relationship between the two countries, this money is referred to as "tribute"), the author predicts that "[t]he time . . . is at hand, when the mineral resources of the State shall become known" and Kentucky will supplant Britain as the nation's supplier.

Even as the surveys gave more tangible form to often newly created states and situated them in relation to the nation and the rest of the world, the process of formalizing western space, soon to be incorporated into the nation, was well under way. During this period, surveying and mapping projects and expeditions produced maps that were sufficiently accurate to enable the extension of Euro-American principles of landownership to the new territories. In a variety of other ways, too, they shaped public opinion and public policy more forcefully than in any other period in American history. From the early days of the new republic through much of the nineteenth century, geographical knowledge and nation formation were inextricably connected in the United States. As the nation expanded, enormously popular narratives of surveying and mapping played a critical role in stirring up popular support for annexation. No mapping narrative was more widely read than John C. Fremont's popular *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843–'44* (1845), in which Fremont combines technical descriptions of the mapping process with literary (if clichéd) and allusive verbal landscapes.

Thoreau's notebooks show that he followed trends in surveying carefully and read a wide variety of exploration narratives and surveyor's reports. Fremont's *Report of the Exploring Expedition,* which Thoreau read during his second summer at Walden, is particularly relevant to an understanding of his literary project. In fact, his mapping of Walden Pond can be seen as a pastiche of Fremont's account of the mapping of Salt Lake. In responding to this account, Thoreau adapts the process of measurement to his own ends, transforming it into a means of resisting the nationalist and commercial agendas that surveying served.

As a public figure, the flamboyant Fremont could hardly have been more different from Thoreau. Born in humble circumstances in Savannah, he entered public life by eloping with Jessie Benton, daughter of Thomas Hart

Benton, powerful senator from Missouri. (Jessie was Fremont's amanuensis, and as some historians have argued, she may have been responsible for the colorful, literary qualities of the *Report.*) Although Fremont had served as assistant on a military surveying expedition to the West, it was his influential father-in-law who arranged for him to lead the highly publicized surveying expeditions that made him famous. On the third of these, in 1845, he took the side of Americans living in northern California who rose up against the Mexican government to form the Bear Flag Republic. After leading a battalion in the Mexican War, he became embroiled in the politics of the war's aftermath. Though he had been named the military governor of California by General Stockton, General Stephen Watts Kearny had also been asked by the president to form a government. When Fremont refused to step down (he doubted the validity of Kearny's orders), Kearny had him court-martialed. This ended Fremont's military career, but did not keep him out of the spotlight for long. During the remaining decades of his life (he died in 1890) he became a millionaire in the Gold Rush of 1848 and then lost his huge fortune, served as senator from California and as governor of the Arizona Territory, fought controversially in the Union army during the Civil War, and ran as the Republican candidate for president in 1856.

Despite their authors' differences, the stylistic and thematic parallels between *Walden* and the second half of Fremont's *Report* (the account of his journey to Oregon and north California) are illuminating. In both texts one finds an emphasis on precision and exactness, a deliberately scientific sensibility, juxtaposed with moments of lyrical appreciation of nature. Though Thoreau had a talent for fusing poetic language and scientific observation in interesting ways that one does not find in Fremont, the same alternation between lyrical or revelatory moments and acutely observed scientific fact that Fremont employs also makes up the rhythm of *Walden.*[9]

The most striking similarity between *Walden* and Fremont's *Report,* however, is the way that the mapping of a body of water functions as a focal point of each narrative. In the *Report,* Fremont uses the mapping of Salt Lake to create some semblance of plot in what would otherwise be a rather flat day-to-day account of travel across an unfamiliar landscape. Though he and his men go on to California before marching back east, the vividly described encounter with Salt Lake—a highlight of the narrative—is the episode that most powerfully dramatizes the incorporation of land into the national economy. Though the structure of *Walden* does not hinge on Thoreau's survey of the pond in quite the same way that the structure of Fremont's narrative hinges on the exploration of Salt Lake, still the survey

of the pond does seem to cap Thoreau's stay at Walden. Just as the state surveys so popular and widespread during the 1840s and 1850s signified the incorporation of a particular area into the political and economic system of the United States, so too Thoreau's survey of the pond is his final attempt to fathom its symbolic meaning and incorporate it into the transcendentalist system of correspondence between the natural world and the human one.

Fremont begins spurring the reader's anticipation of Salt Lake a full twenty-three pages—or two and a half weeks—before the climactic encounter with it. His primary means of creating suspense is to emphasize not only its mysterious nature, but also the body of folklore that had accumulated around it:

> We were now entering a region which for us possessed a strange and extraordinary interest. We were upon the waters of the famous lake . . . around which the vague and superstitious accounts of the trappers had thrown a delightful obscurity, which we anticipated pleasure in dispelling, but which, in the mean time, left a crowded field for the exercise of our imagination.
>
> In our occasional conversations with the few old hunters who had visited the region, it had been a subject of frequent speculation; and the wonders which they related were not the less agreeable because they were highly exaggerated and impossible.
>
> Hitherto this lake had been seen only by trappers who were wandering through the country in search of new beaver streams, caring very little for geography; its islands had never been visited; and none were to be found who had entirely made the circuit of its shores; and no instrumental observations or geographical survey, or any description, had ever been made any where in the neighboring region. It was generally supposed that it had no visible outlet; but among the trappers, including those in my own camp, were many who believed that somewhere on its surface was a terrible whirlpool, through which its waters found their way to the ocean by some subterranean communication. All these things had made a frequent subject of discussion in our desultory conversations around the fires at night.[10]

The most important point to note about Fremont's Romanticization (one might almost say gothicization) of the lake is his attitude to the trappers' tales, and his view of his own relationship to them. On the one hand he "anticipate[s] dispelling" the tales of his only white predecessors in the

region, whose approach to the country ("wandering through . . . in search of beaver streams, caring very little for geography") he also plans to supplant, replacing it with his own scientific, measurement-oriented approach to the place. On the other hand, he refers to the "delightful obscurity" created by the trappers' stories, noting that "the wonders which they related were not the less agreeable because they were highly exaggerated and impossible." By the end of the passage he seems to surrender himself completely to the trappers' fantastic stories, declaring: "my own mind had become tolerable well filled with their indefinite pictures and insensibly colored with their romantic descriptions, which, in the pleasure of my excitement, I was well disposed to believe, and half expected to realize."

Historians of science have observed that measurement is the activity by which we make information about the environment transmissible and comparable. It should be added that measurement of land is also designed to make that land exchangeable, to incorporate it into an economy. Fremont's primary task at Salt Lake, about which he was clearly ambivalent, was to replace the lore of the place, accrued in the human imagination, with an abstract system designed to facilitate exchangeability. His job was to incorporate the lake into a classificatory system designed to eliminate difference.

Thoreau expresses very similar mixed feelings about his own measuring of Walden Pond. At first, typically setting himself in opposition to the village and to conventional wisdom in general, he is patronizingly eager to disprove rumors of Walden's bottomlessness: "There have been many stories told about the bottom, or rather no bottom, of this pond, which certainly had no foundation for themselves. It is remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it." After sounding the pond, however, and discovering Walden's "remarkable" depth, Thoreau switches gears. He declares himself "thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol," and then, completely contradicting the hard-nosed admiration for facts he expressed earlier, adds, "While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless."[11]

Literary scholars of *Walden* seem notably unwilling to address this contradiction. Stanley Cavell, for example, focuses on Thoreau's reading of the "solid bottom" of the pond and simply ignores his approval of the belief in bottomlessness. For Cavell, "The human imagination is released by fact." Only Walter Benn Michaels directly addresses the contradictoriness of the passage, and for him it is crucial precisely because "the central problem of reading *Walden* is the persistence of our own attempts to identify and

understand its unity, to dispel our nervousness by resolving or at least containing the contradictions which create it."[12]

For Michaels, however, the measuring of the pond is only emblematic of Thoreau's struggle with the notion of a foundation or a "location for authority." As helpful as this is, it is not the only way to interpret this central episode. Thoreau's ambivalence about finding the bottom of Walden Pond and the mapping that follows add up to a pastiche of Fremont's encounter with Salt Lake. And as a pastiche of Fremont, the episode is historically specific, the product of Thoreau's awareness of the commercial and nationalistic ends that surveying served in increasingly powerful and visible ways.

Of his sounding of the pond, Thoreau proclaims, "I fathomed it easily with a cod-line and a stone weighing about a pound and a half." While the villagers, in their bumbling group attempt to measure the pond, seem incapable of sensing the location of their larger, man-made weight, Thoreau observes that he "could tell accurately when the stone left the bottom, by having to pull so much harder before the water got underneath to help me." This reliance on physical sensation and a fishing line links the act of measurement to Thoreau's midnight fishing in "The Ponds," the first chapter of *Walden* concerned primarily with the pond. In that episode Thoreau describes how, as he drifts dragging the line, he now and then feels "a slight vibration along it, indicative of some life prowling about its extremity." "At length," he writes, "you slowly raise, pulling hand over hand, some horned pout squeaking and squirming to the upper air." Summing up the experience, he observes, "It was very queer, especially in dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast cosmogonal themes in other spheres, to feel this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to Nature again" (118). Here, as in the measurement of the pond, Thoreau finds that a fishing line enables him to communicate with the seemingly inaccessible world below the surface. And in both cases, attention to physical sensation yields far more than simply "some horned pout" or the distance to the bottom. In the description of fishing, "this faint jerk" recaptures Thoreau's imagination (and by extension the reader's). It "link[s] you to Nature again." In the measurement episode the connection with nature is even more pronounced: the water of the pond actually becomes Thoreau's partner, actively getting "underneath to help" him pull up his line as he measures.

In an 1837 journal entry, Thoreau expresses a young transcendentalist's confidence in a connection with the natural world, as well as a sense that the human body is the key to overcoming any sense of alienation or

diminution at its vastness. "Not the carpenter alone carries his rule in his pocket," he declares. "Space is quite subdued to us." Measurement, according to Thoreau, is the way we acquire this sense of mastery or power. Even "the meanest peasant," he claims, "finds in a hair of his head, or the white crescent upon his nail, the unit of measure for the distance of the fixed stars." The passage then begins to display an Emersonian fascination with the concrete origins of language: "His [the peasant's] middle finger measures how many *digits* into space; he extends a few times his thumb and finger, and the continent is *spanned;* he stretches out his arms, and the sea is *fathomed.*"[13] The passage remains classically Thoreauvian, however, in its exuberance about the symbolic power of measurement. Thoreau's measuring of Walden, though written in the more subdued tones of a professional surveyor, expresses a similar sense that measurement, when performed in the appropriate spirit, can be far more than a means of imposing an arbitrary system upon space. Instead, that episode suggests, it can be a means of locating oneself in the world.

That the surveying of the pond is an attempt to establish that measurement need not serve only commercial ends becomes clearer when we consider its position as precursor to the episode of the ice-cutters, who arrive at the pond just after Thoreau has surveyed it (just as commodification follows measurement in the world outside *Walden*—as in the state surveys, for example). Earlier in the book, Thoreau wrote of White Pond and Walden, "If they were permanently congealed, and small enough to be clutched, they would, perchance, be carried off by slaves to adorn the heads of emperors; but being liquid, and ample, and secured to us and our successors forever, we disregard them, and run after the diamond of Kohinoor." He declares thankfully, however, "They are too pure to have a market value" (134). In "The Pond in Winter," however, the pond *is* congealed, though only temporarily, and Thoreau's claim that if it were solidified it "would . . . be carried off by slaves" begins to seem prophetic when he tells the story of the "hundred Irishmen, with Yankee overseers [who] came from Cambridge every day to get out the ice" (197). After breaking up the ice, the cutters "divided it into cakes," which were hauled off to an ice platform, and raised by grappling irons and block and tackle . . . on to a stack, "as surely as so many barrels of flour." Thus the waters of Walden, "too pure to have a market value," seem to have become commodified.

Ultimately, however, the recounting of the ice melting and returning to the pond reveals his parable of the ice-cutters to be not about any real threat to the environment, but about the inadequacy of a worldview that regards nature as a commodity. When Thoreau observes that the cakes of

ice are "placed evenly side by side, and row upon row, as if they formed the solid base of an obelisk designed to pierce the clouds," the parallels with Babel are obvious: to design "to pierce the clouds" is an act of hubris that will inevitably fail. Additional commentary on the ice structure suggests a hyperaccelerated decline or decay reminiscent of Thomas Cole's series of paintings "The Course of Empire": "At first it looked like a vast blue fort of Valhalla." But after the cracks have been filled with hay and the structure is "covered with rime and icicles, it looked like a venerable, moss-grown and hoary ruin." The ice "never got to market" and so the "ruin" finally dissolves altogether, and the pond "recover[s] the greater part" of its water.

While the ice-cutters' attempt to cut up and sell Walden Pond comes to naught, Thoreau's financially disinterested measurement of the pond yields, to his mind at least, something like the key to the universe. Having mapped the pond, he discovers "that the lines of greatest length intersected the line of greatest breadth *exactly* at the point of greatest depth" and he speculates that these statistics are "almost elements enough to make out a formula for all cases." "If we knew all the laws of Nature," he declares, "we should need only one fact, or the description of one actual phenomenon, to infer all the particular results at that point." "What I have observed of the pond," he writes, "is not less true in ethics" (193).

Thoreau, like the ice-cutters, cuts holes in the pond in order to carry out his surveying work. But for him, these holes become both works of art and mirrors. The holes in the pond repair themselves and in the process create beautiful new forms. "When such holes freeze," he writes, "and a rain succeeds, and finally a new freezing forms a fresh smooth ice over all, it is beautifully mottled internally by dark figures, shaped somewhat like a spider's web, what you may call ice rosettes." At that point, he is even able to see himself in the ice: "Sometimes . . . I saw a double shadow of myself, one standing on the head of the other, one on the ice, the other on the trees or hill-side" (196). It would be easy to read this moment as evidence of a kind of solipsism, but that would be to miss the point. For in fact, the ability to see or find oneself in the natural world is what Thoreau believes his contemporaries have lost and what he has striven for throughout his sojourn at the pond. He achieves it, finally, through measurement, a process carefully and deliberately adapted to suit his own purposes.[14] Always the astute observer, Thoreau looks carefully and critically at the cultural work performed by measurement in the mid–nineteenth-century United States. Then, in *Walden,* he attempts to harness it for a very different purpose.

In other respects too, *Walden* engages with the cultural processes that brought about the formalization of space and its incorporation into the

nation, as well as with the national debate over the nation's size and shape. No nineteenth-century writer was more consistently and vehemently disdainful of national expansion than Thoreau. Perhaps the clearest expression of his attitude appears in an 1853 letter to his friend Harrison Gray Otis Blake: "The whole enterprise of this nation, which is not an upward one but a westward one . . . is totally devoid of interest to me. . . . [It] is not illustrated by a thought it is not warmed by a sentiment, there is nothing in it which one should lay down his life for, nor even his gloves." "No," he concludes, "they may go their way to their manifest destiny, which I trust is not mine."[15]

In *Walden,* Thoreau declares that "California and Texas" are "transient and fleeting phenomena" (220). But this rejection of contemporary politics is to a large extent wishful thinking on Thoreau's part. For in fact, his passionate feelings about annexation and the way that space is incorporated into and shaped by human institutions are crucial elements in *Walden*'s vision of renewal. The insistent presence of contemporary politics in *Walden* requires that we read many of Thoreau's pronouncements, and indeed his entire experiment at Walden Pond, against the background of debates over geographical space that raged throughout the 1840s and 1850s. For example, Thoreau's declaration that once a "magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas" has been constructed, those states may still have "nothing important to communicate" (35) is part of a larger discourse of sectional incompatibility. That "Louisiana" instead of "Texas" appeared in the original draft of *Walden* Thoreau wrote at the pond also suggests that sectional compatibility was on his mind. By the time he began to revise his draft Texas was an enormous national problem, and his substitution would inevitably have had political resonance.[16] Anxiety about the cohesiveness of the Union can be seen also in the frequent protestations that problems could be overcome. Emerson, for example (who unlike Thoreau regarded technological advances as a solution), argued in 1844 that the railroad would alleviate the strain placed on the nation by sectional conflict: "an hourly assimilation goes forward, and there is no danger that local peculiarities and hostilities should be preserved."[17]

Thoreau's comment on the telegraph has often been read as a criticism of technology. As Leo Marx has pointed out, Thoreau deplores industrialization's effect on human consciousness. "[M]en have become tools of their tools," Thoreau claims, and new technological inventions such as the steam train and telegraph are "but an improved means to an unimproved end" (35). But why designate "Texas" as the distant entity with which Maine may have "nothing important to communicate"? In an era when Theodore Sedgwick Jr. could define the annexation of Texas as "another

name for 'the perpetuity of slavery,' "[18] Thoreau's comment about the telegraph's pointlessness takes on special significance. It is not technology per se at which Thoreau scoffs, but rather technology that, like "internal improvements," shortens the distance between two incompatible entities. Like Melville's images of the *Pequod* as a group of "Isolatoes . . . federated along one keel" and the huge whale "frightfully instinct in all parts" in *Moby-Dick,* Thoreau's remark that Maine and Texas may have "nothing important to communicate" is a commentary on the problems inherent in a federalist nation growing by leaps and bounds through the incorporation of territory geographically distant and culturally distinct from the inhabitants of the northeastern states. If Maine and Texas have nothing to say to one another, then what are they doing in the same nation?

Thoreau's passionate antiexpansionist sentiments find their way into his narrative about life at the pond in two recurrent motifs. The sense that the centrifugal energies of the nation were unstoppable was widespread in the 1840s and 1850s, and the expansionist movement achieved much of its momentum by generating a sense of inevitability. John L. O'Sullivan's claim that expansion was the nation's "manifest destiny" is of course the most famous example of this strategy. "[W]ho will, what can, set limits to our onward march?" he asked rhetorically in the *Democratic Review.*[19] But other instances abound, and were particularly common in discussions of the native inhabitants of soon-to-be annexed lands. A typical example is John A. Dix's declaration that the "aboriginal races, which occupy and overrun an portion of California and New Mexico, must there, as everywhere else, give way before the advancing wave of civilization. . . . they must ultimately become extinct by force of an invincible law. . . . We have no power to control it, if we would."[20]

Critiques that treated annexation as a moral choice to be made were largely ineffective against the sense of destiny and fate that such rhetoric inspired. A brilliant reader of this rhetoric of inevitability, Thoreau recognized the near impossibility of countering it with argument. (How, after all, does one *argue* against destiny?) Instead, he takes a different tack. He expresses disapproval of his "overgrown and unwieldy" nation—and attempts to make containment a real possibility—by embodying or giving figurative shape to the antiexpansionist rhetoric of figures like Boston clergyman William Ellery Channing (uncle of Thoreau's good friend Ellery Channing, the "poet" of *Walden*). In 1837 Channing declared, "We are a restless people, . . . less anxious to consolidate and perfect than to extend our institutions, more ambitious of spreading ourselves over a wide space than of diffusing beauty and fruitfulness over a narrow field,"[21] later

adding, "To spread, to supplant others, to cover a boundless space . . . seems our ambition, no matter what influence we spread with us." "Why," he pleads, "do we not remember, that to diffuse these blessings we must first cherish them in our own borders."[22] Channing's appreciation for a "narrow field" and for diffusion of blessing through the maintenance of fixed boundaries stands in stark opposition to rhetoric that celebrated America's expansion. Charles Boynton's metaphor of "the river of our greatness" is a good example. Though Boynton believes that the "head springs" of American greatness can be found in New England, he rejoices that "many noble tributaries rising in other regions of our common land, have helped to swell the current to its present breadth and volume, and give still nobler promise for the future."

In his story about learning to do without yeast, Thoreau enters into the national debate about expansion and comes down firmly on Channing's side. What first seems to be a simple anecdote about life at the pond—part of the accumulation of facts that makes up the "Economy" chapter—is in fact a metaphor subtly advocating containment:

> Leaven, which some deem the soul of bread, the *spiritus* which fills its cellular tissue, which is religiously preserved like the vestal fire,—some precious bottle-full, I suppose, first brought over in the Mayflower, did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading, in cerelian billows over the land,—this seed I regularly and faithfully procured from the village, till at length one morning I forgot the rules and scalded my yeast; by accident I discovered that even this was not indispensable. (42)

On one level, of course, the yeast in this story can be seen to stand for any product that one deems indispensable but then learns to see as an unnecessary and distracting luxury. Perhaps, one might think, this is merely another of Thoreau's examples of ascetic living and voluntary simplicity. But yeast's sole function is to rise or expand. To expand, one might say, is its destiny. Furthermore, Thoreau's concern with "America" and one of its most sacred national symbols ("the Mayflower") should not be overlooked. Yeast, "first brought over in the Mayflower," becomes in this passage a metonym for the first English settlements—still "rising, swelling, spreading" over the American continent. Like Melville, who in *Moby-Dick* asks, "What to that apostolic lancer, Brother Jonathan, is Texas but a Fast-Fish?" (398), Thoreau is keenly aware of the religious dimension with which national expansion has been imbued, as his description of the yeast, "reli-

giously preserved like the vestal fire," and his own earlier faithful procurement of it demonstrates. In forgetting "the rules" and scalding his yeast, and then learning that he can live quite happily without it, Thoreau rejects his culture's aggressive and sanctimonious spread.

Like his discovery of unleavened bread, Thoreau's representation of the pond is designed to present an alternative to expansiveness, a tangible example of Channing's "narrow field." He emphasizes that the setting for his experiment in spatial reconfiguration is contained: "I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon" (58). Though a nearby hilltop provides him with a view across the pond, he carefully points out that "in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods which surrounded me" (59). He finds this enclosure completely satisfactory: "Though the view from my door was still more contracted, I did not feel crowded or confined in the least. There was pasture enough for my imagination" (59). In recent years scholars have linked "the view from above" in nineteenth-century literature and painting to imperialist ideology.[23] In his deliberate embrace of the constricted view from his low-lying cabin, Thoreau implicitly rejects the expansionist impulses that fueled—and were fueled by—ubiquitous representations of sublime landscapes viewed from on high.

The pond itself, *Walden*'s central symbol, is the most crucial vehicle for engagement with the problem of national form. Thoreau's descriptions of it occasionally express his desire for unmarked space, as when he describes it as a "great expanse" over which "there is no disturbance but it is thus at once gently smoothed away and assuaged" (126). But more often the pond functions as the symbol of perfect, if vulnerable, self-containment. Thoreau emphasizes the pond's distinct, fixed boundaries by introducing one of his famous false etymologies: "If the name was not derived from that of some English locality—Saffron Walden, for instance,—one might suppose that it was called, originally, *Walled-in* Pond" (230). For Thoreau, boundedness signifies purity, as his comparison of Walden Pond with Flint's Pond readily demonstrates. By "living thus reserved and austere, like a hermit in the woods," Walden has "acquired such wonderful purity." "[W]ho would not regret that the comparatively impure water of Flint's Pond should be mingled with it, or itself should ever go to waste its sweetness in the ocean wave?" (241). Thoreau's "regret" that Walden's pure water should ever be mingled with impure water from larger Flint's Pond, or even with the ocean, recalls a passage from Lyman Beecher's "A Plea for the West," in which he argues that the West's salvation, and thus that of the nation which has annexed it, depends on upright emigrants—particularly

clergymen and educators—from the eastern states *mingling* with "the people of the West," rather than establishing separate settlements. The salvation of the West shall be achieved, he claims, "Not by prayers, and supplications . . . nor by charities." Not even "colonial emigrations" to the West are the answer. For these, he imagines, would be "fenced in, and exert but a feeble general influence beyond their own inclosures." People who want "to do good at the West," he argues, "should go out to mingle with the people of the West, and be absorbed in their multitude, as raindrops fall on the bosom of the ocean and mingle with that world of waters."[24] For Thoreau, however, such mingling would represent a threat to the purity of the nation and its citizens as they existed originally. He lacks Beecher's confidence that a unified, pure entity can move beyond its "inclosures" and still maintain its purity.

In addition to embodying or giving tangible form to antiexpansionist sentiment, Thoreau also attempts in *Walden* to create a space unmarked by culture or tradition. His quarrel with the way human institutions and habits leave their marks on the landscape is in part rooted in a transcendentalist sensibility, a desire to extricate himself from what he sees as the web of culture. For Thoreau, the desire for what Emerson called "an original relation to the universe" plays itself out in the arena of geography. But his interest in unmarked space also derives from a disdain for Manifest Destiny and a concern about the consequences of surveying and mapping.

In "The Village," Thoreau visits and describes the nearby town of Concord, from whose customs he has tried to distance himself by moving to Walden Pond. In the process, he reveals himself to be a kind of protocultural geographer, anticipating later thinkers like David Harvey and Edward Soja in his awareness of the ways in which social customs and cultural values configure space, which in turn shapes the lives of its inhabitants. The houses, he notes, "were so arranged as to make the most of mankind, in lanes and fronting one another so that every traveller had to run the gantlet, and every man, woman, and child might get a lick at him." Ever aware of the relationship between economics and spatial organization, Thoreau then extends the metaphor in order to explain property prices: "Of course, those who were stationed nearest to the head of the line, where they could most see and be seen, and have the first blow at him, paid the highest prices for their places." The inhabitants "in the outskirts," on the other hand, "where long gaps in the line began to occur, and the traveller could get over walls or turn aside into cowpaths, and so escape, paid a very slight ground or window tax" (113).

Today the kind of public thoroughfare that Thoreau describes has

become almost obsolete: city planners now bemoan the lack of public space in American towns and cities, and cite this lack as the source of a lamentable decline in communal sensibilities. But Thoreau, in comparing the city's main street to a gantlet—points to a darker side of the public thoroughfare. The layout of the village, to Thoreau's mind, enables a kind of surveillance that he finds oppressive. Only in the outskirts, where space is not so rigidly configured, can one escape.

The effect of the village's layout on the people who live there is far worse. The principal object of the town's arrangement of space is, according to Thoreau, to facilitate the gathering of "news," a substance that acts on the villagers like a drug: they "sit . . . in public avenues without stirring," and "let it simmer and whisper through them . . . as if inhaling ether, it only producing numbness and insensibility to pain" (113). The practice is habitual, for Thoreau notes that when in the village he "hardly ever failed . . . to see a row of such worthies . . . with their bodies inclined forward and their eyes glancing along the line this way and that . . . with a voluptuous expression, or else leaning against a barn with their hands in their pockets, like caryatides, as if to prop it up" (113). Ultimately, then, this practice of sitting in a row and "glancing along the line" has the capacity not only to drug the villagers, but also to turn them to stone. As caryatids, male citizens of the town are feminized. And since the caryatids of a particular building all look the same, all of the town's inhabitants lose their humanity and individuality.

Thoreau wants to jolt his readers out of their received notions about space, and away from the familiar ways of living they mirror; he does so in part by making a series of provocative pronouncements intended to call into question spatial concepts like "near" and "far." "The whole earth which we inhabit is but a point in space," declares Thoreau, encouraging his readers to enlarge their perspectives and thereby rethink ingrained notions about the size of the planet and consequently the relative proximity of its inhabitants" (90). "Is not our planet in the Milky Way?"

Thoreau then asks his readers to reject altogether quantitative ways of thinking about space. To an inquiry about whether he gets lonely living so far from other people, he replies, "That . . . seems to me not to be the most important question. What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another" (90). Thoreau provides a concrete example of this principle when he notes, "Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervis in the desert" (91). While the observation that

"the earth . . . is but a point in space" suggests that its inhabitants are much closer to one another than they might realize, the parable of the diligent student reminds us of an unrecognized distance between human beings. The result is a salutary confusion on the part of the reader, who must now reorient him or herself in new terms, "not measured in miles of space." The point of altering his readers' perceptions of space becomes clearer when Thoreau asks, "What do we want most to dwell near to?" and then answers: "Not to many men surely, the depot, the post-office, the barroom, the meeting-house, the school-house, the grocery, Beacon Hill, or the Five-Points, where men most congregate, but to the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found that to issue, as the willow stands near the water and sends out roots in that direction." What is this place? one might ask. Thoreau answers obliquely: "This will vary with different natures, but this is the place where a wise man will dig his cellar" (90). Shaking off traditional notions about space, including concepts like near and far, is preparation for locating "the perennial source of our life." The litany of places that are *not* this source—the depot, the post office, the barroom, the meeting house, and so on—closely resembles the list of "the vitals of the village" ("the grocery, the bar-room, the post-office, and the bank") that forms the prelude to the description of the town as a gantlet. In both cases Thoreau lists these places disparagingly because they are the loci of social custom, "where men most congregate." Thoreau's singsong lists capture the dull routine: human beings make the rounds from one place to another, moving along well-worn paths. Only by removing oneself from the orbit of such institutions can one dig one's cellar in the appropriate place.

In keeping with his distaste for the preinscribed, ready-configured space of towns, Thoreau repeatedly expresses a desire for space unmarked by human beings or by cultural institutions. After visiting the village, Thoreau finds the antidote to his discomfort with its rigidly defined space in the pleasantly disorienting space of the woods at night. "It was very pleasant," he notes, "to launch myself into the night . . . and set sail" (114). The extended sailing metaphor emphasizes the pleasure he takes in undefined space, and, more importantly, indicates a desire for pristine space that will *remain* forever unshaped by human beings, for water by its nature can never be marked in the way that land can. If the forest were truly an ocean or lake, as the metaphor suggests, it would be immune from the walls and cowpaths—traces of human custom inscribed on space—that exist even on the outskirts of the village. The metaphor develops next into a meditation on the defamiliarizing effects of snowstorms and on the pleasures and

advantages of the "valuable experience" of being lost in the woods: "Often in a snow storm, even by day, one will come out upon a well-known road and yet find it impossible to tell which way leads to the village" (115). Since Thoreau's project is to shake his readers loose from the ingrained modes of thought that the village represents, the fact that the village is the destination that becomes less attainable because of the snow is surely significant.

As Thoreau meditates on the "surprising and memorable" experience of being lost in the woods, he notes with great satisfaction that "[b]y night, of course, the perplexity is infinitely greater." Then he makes a case for embracing a certain kind of productive disorientation:

> In our most trivial walks, we are constantly, though unconsciously, steering like pilots by certain well-known beacons and headlands, and if we go beyond our usual course we still carry in our minds the bearing of some neighboring cape; and not till we are completely lost, or turned round,—for a man needs only to be turned round once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost,—do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of Nature. Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any abstraction. Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. (115)

Here navigation of space becomes a metaphor for life. The "well-known beacons and headlands" are familiar assumptions that Thoreau throughout *Walden* urges his readers to examine and then discard. To "learn the points of compass again" is to regain an internal sense of direction that we lose by "constantly though unconsciously" steering by familiar landmarks or beliefs.

In "Sounds," Thoreau again exults at undomesticated space, this time the wilderness surrounding his cabin: "No yard! but unfenced Nature reaching up to your very sills. . . . wild sumachs and blackberry vines breaking through into your cellar. . . . Instead of no path to the front-yard gate in the Great Snow,—no gate—no front-yard,—and no path to the civilized world!" (87). What appeals to Thoreau here is primarily the lack of demarcation he experiences at the pond—no fences, no path, no gate, no yard; in other words no organization imposed on space and no traces of human institutions inscribed on the landscape.[25] The lack of boundaries in the woods creates a nearly unbroken wholeness to which even Thoreau's cellar succumbs. That his own cellar should fall prey to nature's encroachment,

and that Thoreau should celebrate it, bespeaks an awareness that his own project at the pond inevitably represents, despite his own best efforts to the contrary, the very kind of spatial marking or inscription that he set out to resist in the first place.

In *Walden*'s "Conclusion," Thoreau more fully acknowledges that his own experiment has itself imposed the kind of pattern on space that he would like to resist:[26]

> I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. . . . It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten path for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the high-ways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! (216)

Leaving his experiment at the pond reflects an honest acceptance of the fact that neither inhabited space nor the human mind can remain a tabula rasa. The purpose of *Walden,* then, is not to locate a permanently pristine space—for Thoreau recognizes that as impossible—but rather to shake his readers out of familiar, well-worn ways of thinking about space and out of the familiar ways of living that are both symptom and cause of traditional spatial organization.

Chapter Four

Word, Image, and National Geography

Invented at the end of the eighteenth century, panoramas—large illusionistic paintings designed to make the viewer feel transported to the place portrayed—were extraordinarily popular for much of the nineteenth century. Circular panoramas, in which viewers would look at 360-degree paintings from a viewing platform, were more popular in Europe. In the United States, on the other hand, long, moving panoramas that were unrolled before seated viewers proved more successful. This has partly to do with material conditions. The large metropolitan cities of Europe were better able to accommodate the construction of permanent panorama buildings, while the more diffuse population of the United States made the portable moving panoramas far more profitable in that country. But Stephan Oettermann has suggested that other factors came into play as well. "For Europeans," he argues, "the 360-degree vista of the panorama reflected . . . curiosity [about the world around them] and represented an enormous expansion of perspective. Americans on the other hand, were dealing with dimensions in their own country that could not be grasped or conquered simply by climbing to an elevated point and surveying the horizon. The circular painting was visually inadequate to the situation in which they found themselves."[1] This visual inadequacy of the circular panorama, he suggests, partly accounts for the popularity of moving panoramas in a nation that, like the panoramas themselves, during the antebellum period seemed to be continually unrolling to include more territory.

The question of nationality and panoramic form is one we will return to. The key point for now is that the new form of public entertainment was a hit on both sides of the Atlantic, in part because it helped European and American audiences negotiate their expanding geographical horizons.[2]

This new visual technology—in many ways a precursor of cinema—provided European and American viewers with two kinds of vicarious visual experience. Panoramas of distant European cities like Florence, Athens, and Berlin enabled middle-class viewers to take a tamer, cheaper version of the grand tour once reserved for the wealthy. Panoramas of places like Bombay, Calcutta, California, Cuba, and the Sandwich Islands, on the other hand, went hand in hand with the growing power of the British Empire and with American expansion. Panoramas, in other words, were among what Edward Said has called the "cultural formations" within which "the processes of imperialism" were consolidated.[3] The massive paintings of these locales at the edges of empires allowed viewers, just for one evening—and without ever leaving home—to see what the explorers and adventurers who made Western empire-building possible had seen. In effect, panoramas enabled those viewers to become vicariously what Mary Louise Pratt has identified as "seeing man, . . . he whose imperial eyes look out and possess"—a central figure in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing.[4]

The heyday of the panorama form in the United States was the 1840s and 1850s, when John Banvard and his rivals Professor Risley and J. R. Smith made grand transatlantic successes of their panoramas of the Mississippi, each claiming to be more accurate and, above all, bigger than the other. The panorama viewing experiences of Philadelphia art collector Joseph Sill provide some evidence for how sophisticated Americans saw the popular entertainments. In his diary, Sill records a second visit to Burford's *Panorama of Rome . . . and the Bay of Islands,* painted in 1837, which he "enjoyed even still more highly" than the first. Sill marvels at the correctness of the paintings, notes that "[a]s works of Art they are admirable," and sums up by declaring "the illusion is perfect and you gain such information in a few minutes, as it would be impossible to receive by a whole life of reading." His reviews of Banvard's and Smith's Mississippi panoramas are equally enthusiastic, and of Smith's he notes approvingly that "it has drawn a horde of visitors." In an 1850 commentary on *Smith's Panorama of California, Mexico, Panama &c.,* Sill observes of the country that his own nation had recently defeated, "Some of the Scenes, by the Overland Route thro' Mexico were beautiful and it would be a pleasure, were it safe and comfortable, to make a Journey through it." "The children," he adds, "received from the Panorama a lesson on Geography which they shall probably never forget."[5]

By the 1860s Artemus Ward, arguably America's first stand-up comic, was burlesquing the form. *Artemus Ward's Panorama*—which depicted a

comic journey through the West, with a particular focus on the Mormons and their practice of polygamy—like the panoramas of his more serious predecessors, was a great success on both sides of the Atlantic. But his parody also marks the beginning of the form's decline. After the Civil War, the vast paintings were no longer able to fill large venues on their own. Although panoramas continued to be shown, they were usually one element in a sort of variety show—shown alongside Belgian giants and allegedly famous violinists—rather than a stand-alone attraction. Advertising for post-1860 panoramas also tended to focus more exclusively on entertainment, rather than stressing the form's ability to both entertain *and* instruct. In 1848, Edward Everett, former U.S. ambassador to the Court of St. James, had assured the Royal Geographical Society that Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi "will have a scientific interest for the geographer."[6] After Artemus Ward, panoramas typically were no longer regarded as worthy of such serious testimonials.

Panoramas have garnered considerable scholarly attention in the last decade or so, thanks largely to the new field of visual studies, along with a continued emphasis in American Studies on popular art forms. Scholars like Stephan Oettermann, Bernard Comment, and Angela Miller have done a great deal to flesh out our understanding of the nineteenth-century panorama fad. Miller has been particularly good at analyzing the nationalist dimensions of the phenomenon, arguing that landscape art in the antebellum period—including panoramas—helped to unite the disparate sections of the country in what nineteenth-century politicians called "new bonds of interest and sympathy."[7] In that way, she has suggested, landscape representations functioned much like transportation technologies such as the railroad and steamboat, in that they worked to create a diminishing sense of distance between regions, even as the nation expanded very rapidly.[8] It should be added, however, that the panorama form can also be seen as highlighting the tensions between national and regional allegiances. The Mississippi panoramas of Banvard, Lane, and Risley and Smith were frequently described as great national paintings, traveled all over the United States (and Europe), and functioned metonymically as emblems of the nation's progress. National pride was a crucial element in the marketing of the Mississippi panoramas. *Perham's Pictorial Voyage, Known As The Seven Mile Mirror to Canada, American Frontier, and the Saguenay . . . Situated in the Hudson's Bay Territory,* on the other hand, was marketed specifically to New England customers. Like his competitors in the panorama business, Josiah Perham advertised his painting in hyperbolic terms, claiming that it was "the largest and most elaborately finished mov-

ing painting ever executed." Perham was unique, however, in combining the marketing of the panorama with his interests in another new kind of business enterprise. Perham owned a controlling interest in a New England railroad, and was thus able to offer tens, perhaps even hundreds, of thousands of small-town New Englanders a package deal that included a train ticket to and from Boston and a ticket to the panorama. (The sightseers would make the journey to and from Boston in one day.) So successful was he at this innovative scheme, in fact, that he became known as "the father of the cheap excursion system in this country."[9] As part of his marketing program, Perham sought to appeal to regional pride by touting the superlative beauty and interest of the region's geographical features. According to the souvenir pamphlet that accompanied the panorama, "The Mississippi is but a low, sluggish creek, compared to the majestic St. Lawrence. The Missouri and Ohio are but tiny streams compared with some of the tributaries of the St. Lawrence. The Hudson is but a drop in the bucket, a rill winding through a small farm or meadow, compared with that immense flood of fresh water poured into the Atlantic through the Gulf of St. Lawrence."[10]

In this chapter I want to build on the work of previous scholars who have analyzed the social and political functions of the panorama. But I also want to focus on a particular aspect of the panoramas that has thus far been largely ignored: the cheap pamphlets that were sold to panorama viewers to be read before and during the viewing and to be taken home as souvenirs of the experience. Printing became significantly cheaper during the antebellum period, and panorama pamphlets were part of the barrage of printed material that entered the marketplace at that time. As Oettermann has pointed out, "No visual art form had ever been accompanied by such reams of printed material as the panorama."[11] In recent years, scholars interested in what different kinds of people read and how, where, when, and why they read it, have shown how reading functioned in the lives of nineteenth-century Americans. For the most part, however, they have focused on a single genre: the novel. The question I want to pose here is this: how might other forms of popular print culture—such as the panorama pamphlet—have shaped readers' perceptions of the world around them?

The typical panorama pamphlet was about five and three-quarters inches wide and eight and a half inches long—easy to hold and thumb through or to fold and slip into a jacket pocket. The early British pamphlets that accompanied Robert Burford's panoramas in the 1830s and 1840s tended to be brief—only twelve to sixteen pages long. These pamphlets—accompanying paintings of places such as New Zealand, Canton, or

Macao—consisted of approximately three or four introductory pages of description resembling what one might find in a geography book, then seven or eight pages describing the scenes in the panorama (often scenes relating to the place's discovery by the British, various native activities, particularly sublime or beautiful natural features, etc.) and a foldout representation of the panorama. American pamphlets from the late 1840s and 1850s were different, not only because they usually accompanied representations of American (or soon-to-be American) geography but because they tended to be longer and more elaborate. In addition to the standard introduction to the place, they consisted of approximately ten pages detailing the particular sites that the viewer would be seeing, as well as anywhere from five to twenty of pages of short sketches. These might include biographical sketches of the artist or of other figures considered relevant to the place(s) portrayed, or general descriptions of the region. At least one even included a poem memorializing the panorama.[12] Despite the self-consciously literary quality of most of these sketches, authors are rarely named. Presumably the owners of the panoramas either wrote the pamphlets themselves, or else hired ghostwriters whom they felt no obligation to cite. Another omnipresent component of the pamphlets was a section of testimonials from people who had seen the places portrayed and testified to the painting's veracity, as well as from important public figures who testified to its national significance. The claim that the panorama was a "great national painting" was very common.

How did these pamphlets shape the viewer's experience of the panorama? How might a fuller understanding of the panorama experience—one that includes the written materials that accompanied the viewing—help enrich our understanding of the panorama's role in the nationalization of geographical space and in the nation's transition to empire? Certainly one function of the printed pamphlets was to train viewers to appreciate the paintings presented to them. So readers were tutored in the aesthetic conventions of the sublime and picturesque by narration that informed them, for example, that Niagara Falls "strikes upon the soul a sense of majestic grandeur, which loss of life or intellect can alone obliterate."[13] The viewer-readers were also informed as to how they should respond to representations of the "large and beautiful steamboats scudding up the eddies." In case they were not able to gauge their own emotional responses, the author of a pamphlet on Banvard's Mississippi panorama writes: "It is now refreshing, and . . . imparts a feeling of energy and power to the beholder."[14]

But even more importantly, the printed word complemented the visual

experience by encouraging readers to see the static images before them as parts of larger expansionist narratives. There are two significant components of this narrativization of the panorama. First, the pamphlets that accompanied panoramas of the Mississippi River or of the overland trail to California situated newly annexed territory both spatially and temporally, suggesting to viewers that U.S. annexation of western territory was the culminating moment in a narrative of progress. Second, the pamphlets presented the panorama artist as a national hero and the representation of western territory as a form of mastery. By becoming artistic versions of a Franklinesque or Horatio Alger–like character, succeeding through perseverance and cleverness, the panorama artist and his intrepid sketching or daguerreotyping of territory unfamiliar to most eastern viewers became emblematic of the successful (i.e., unproblematic) incorporation of that territory into the nation.

The use of the printed word to give geographical space a temporal dimension was not unique to panorama pamphlets. Art critic Henri Stuart's 1855 pamphlet to accompany *Powell's Historical Picture of the Discovery of the Mississippi by DeSoto, A.D. 1541 Painted by Order of the United States Government for the Rotunda of the National Capitol* is a useful example. The painting itself, like most visual works of art, is basically a snapshot of a single moment in time. It portrays the Spanish explorer de Soto on a white horse, gazing at the broad river, surrounded by his own followers—who are engaged in various activities, including raising a crucifix and hauling a cannon—as well as by Indians—who stand gazing at de Soto, rather than at the river—and tepees. What, one might ask, is a painting of a Spanish explorer doing in the Capitol Rotunda? Stuart attempts to answer this question in his pamphlet, and his primary method of doing so is to incorporate the Spanish conquests in the Americas into U.S. history, making them not the long-ago actions of a foreign colonial power, but instead the first links in the chain of events leading to "our national existence."[15] In making such a claim, Stuart is in part staking out a position in the controversy that surrounded the last four paintings commissioned to decorate the Rotunda—a controversy that, like the panorama pamphlets I will be discussing later, suggests a hunger for a coherent national narrative. The first four had been painted by John Trumbull between 1819 and 1824, and all represent events from the American Revolution *(The Declaration of Independence, The Capitulation at Saratoga, The Capitulation at Yorktown,* and *Washington Resigning his Commission at Annapolis, MD).* The last four were all painted by different artists between 1840 and 1853. The subjects of the final four

Figure 1. William H. Powell, *Discovery of the Mississippi by Desoto, A.D. 1541*, 1853. Architect of the Capitol.

paintings were the baptism of Pocahontas, the embarkation of the Pilgrims at Delft, the landing of Columbus in the New World, and—finally—de Soto's discovery of the Mississippi. These paintings expanded—both temporally and spatially—the scope of the original four, in ways that puzzled and even alarmed some Americans, who wondered how exactly Powell's painting, in particular, was relevant to the American republic. In response to such questions, a writer for the *New York Daily Times* in 1853 (cited by Stuart in his pamphlet) declared Powell's subject—and indeed any occurrence in the Spanish conquest of the Americas—to be "capable of entire adoption into our reflections on the origin and growth of republican fortunes in this hemisphere."[16] Stuart goes even further in his attempt to make Powell's painting the basis of a coherent narrative. In Stuart's conception, the painting joins the past to the future by alluding to Spanish territory "which is, or soon will become, a part of our national territory."[17] He then elaborates on this attempt to unify temporally disparate moments—de Soto's discovery of the Mississippi and the United States' annexation of Mexican territory—by informing viewers that Powell used a cannon brought back from the Mexican War as a model and that the Spanish veteran in the left foreground should remind them of "the stalwart hero of San Jacinto" (in other words, Sam Houston, whose defeat of the Mexican general Santa Anna in 1836 led to Texas' independence from Mexico, which in turn was a catalyst for the Mexican War ten years later).[18] Stuart links the Spanish expedition of discovery to Texas' war for independence and to the

Mexican War in an attempt to make them part of one long narrative of Manifest Destiny. If we move from Powell's painting to its larger context—the addition of the last four paintings to the Rotunda—it is clear that their subject matter, which had to be approved by Congress, reflects a fundamental shift from republic to empire. No longer was the nation merely a republic formed from a colony (as Trumbull's paintings suggest). Instead, it was the star player on a global stage in a drama whose culmination was to be its rise to power, its supplanting of a great European empire.

Just as the Mexican War and the ideology of Manifest Destiny colored Stuart's interpretation of Powell's painting, so too contemporary politics also played a role in the panorama pamphlets. In the pamphlet that accompanied *Professor Risley and Mr. J.R. Smith's Original Gigantic Moving Panorama of the Mississippi River* (1849), for example, the writer, at the very end of the description of the various places to be seen, describes the way that the powerful current of the Mississippi deposits large quantities of earth from the riverbanks into the Gulf of Mexico. "By this natural process," the author adds confidently, "new territory is continually added to the Gulf of Mexico, and—*gradually annexing the West India Islands, in spite of all treaties.*"[19]

As I suggested earlier, however, a more widespread, and ultimately more significant, parallel between the panorama pamphlets and Stuart's pamphlet is the attempt to make their respective paintings suggestive of a narrative, incorporating a temporal as well as a spatial dimension. The writers of pamphlets for moving panoramas had an even easier time of it than Stuart: they only needed to accentuate the way that the panoramas' representations of linear objects—of trails or, in particular, rivers—were suggestive of the passage of time. Viewers of panoramas were encouraged to sit back, listen to the narrator and the music that often accompanied the show, while taking an imaginary steamboat journey not only in space—from St. Louis to California or from St. Louis to New Orleans on the Mississippi—but in time as well. Moving panoramas have been described as precursors of cinema, but the river panoramas should surely also be thought of as precursors of theme park rides.[20]

Viewers were to imagine looking at the banks of the river and passing "wild and uninhabited forest . . . the abode of bears, owls, and noxious animals."[21] As they passed such places, however, the rapidity with which civilization was supplanting wilderness was vehemently impressed upon them. A typical example is the Risley and Smith panorama pamphlet's observation that "all this grand portion of the Union, instead of being in a state of nature, is now more or less covered with farms, villages, and towns." After particularly stressing the role that technology and commerce (two elements

of river life that are emphasized in all the Mississippi panoramas) have played in this transformation, the pamphlet adds: "when it is remembered that these extraordinary changes have all taken place within the short period of half a century, it is matter to pause and wonder at."[22]

In this pamphlet, as in others, the culmination of the journey through time that panorama viewers are invited to take is the settlement of the land by "a busy and industrious people." The way in which the narrative of progress is established, however, varies from pamphlet to pamphlet. In the case of *Perham's Pictorial Voyage* to Canada, for example, the northward journey toward the unsettled, unfarmable frontier lent itself to portrayal as a journey back in time. The primitive world at the end of the journey represents the end of the line both literally and figuratively:

> Beyond this point civilization ends, and the savage wilderness stretches out to Hudson's Bay, bearing no signs or traces of life save the trail of the Indian hunter. Into this wild region, where constant impediments to our progress present themselves, and grievous privations have to be endured, we will not invite the reader. The curtain therefore falls. Our romantic trip is ended.[23]

Pamphleteers conveying trips down the Mississippi—which usually ended in New Orleans (or occasionally St. Louis)—couldn't rely on the structure of the journey in the same way and therefore had to use the textual equivalent of narrative voice-overs to create a sense of movement through time. So, for example, Risley and Smith's pamphlet makes the following set of observations in the introductory section of the pamphlet, before the viewer is figuratively led past specific sites that will represent the various levels of civilization to be found on the journey:

> We see man's first dwelling place, the cave, hollowed by the hand of Nature herself—the rude log hut next attracts our admiration. . . . Floating past this the Indian wigwam, scarce built with the skill displayed by the beaver in formation of its home. . . . Further on the comfortable farmhouse, the pleasant cottage and the stately mansion with warehouses, churches, theatres, and every other description of building, display their architectural peculiarities, and furnish one more proof of man's superiority over the lower animals, the dwellings of which are now constructed in precisely the same form first given them by the original artificers.

Building on quasi-evolutionary theories of stages of civilization, the passage leads viewers down an imaginary river at the same time that it constructs a history of humanity based on architectural style. Because the Indians build dwellings that resemble beaver dams, the passage suggests, they have failed to establish their superiority over "lower animals." Remnants of the past, the author implies, they will soon be utterly passed by in the march of progress. Perham's pamphlet notes somewhat regretfully that the Indians of Canada "are all a degraded and down-trodden people" whose "bold spirit of independence has been crushed by the white man."[24] Risley and Smith, on the other hand, emphasize the differences between Indians standing still on the shore (and thus figuratively trapped in the past) and whites gliding past on that new technological marvel the steamboat: "The swart Indian on the borders of his native river stands in fine contrast with the white captain who rules the floating palace that is steaming by."[25]

The French also play a significant role in this narrative of progress, representing a sort of halfway point between the primitiveness of the Indian and the commercial and technological enterprise of the Americans. Although, in Risley and Smith's view, there are certain aesthetic advantages to their having settled the town of Vide Pouche ("the taste and simplicity of the old French settlers are very apparent"), the French, they suggest, are rather like children: a people of "great simplicity and innocence of life—social, disinterested, fond of sport and gaiety." Because they are "destitute of that enterprise, energy of character, and aspiring disposition which the Americans exhibit," however, they too, like the Indians, are being passed by. *Perham's Pictorial Voyage* goes into even greater detail about the French (not surprisingly, since the panorama represents a voyage through eastern Canada), but is equally convinced that they are remnants of the past:

> The French Canadian remains to this day, in all his customs, as were his forefathers a century back; he makes no improvement either in the tilling of his land or his household habits. On his saint's day, or the Sabbath, he repairs to his village church clothed in the same style as his ancestors. During the summer he cultivates his land; and when the snows of winter cover the earth, he harnesses his little ponies, and accompanied by his happy family, visits his neighbors, and, seated round their large square stoves, made in the style of a past century, passes his long winter evenings in happiness, amusing himself with tales of "*La Belle France.*" Kind, hospitable, contented, he asks for no change of his condition, but only desires to be allowed to do as his father did

> before him. He dies—and his children divide his land, each taking a "*nidlet,*" and live over the same old scenes again. There dwells not on this earth a more happy, contented, and honest people.

With his "little ponies" and "happy family," the Frenchman sounds almost like a character in a children's book. But the most important way in which the French are portrayed as irredeemably trapped in an archaic way of life—and thus as fundamentally different from progress-driven Americans—has to do with their landownership practices, in particular the way they divide land among the children after the death of their father. By failing to practice primogeniture—the practice of leaving all the land to the eldest son—the French, Perham's pamphlet implies, doom themselves to remaining a group of happy-go-lucky small farmers, unable to amass the larger fortunes that enterprising Americans are capable of amassing. Risley and Smith's pamphlet also addresses French ownership practices, noting, "Their lands were generally held and cultivated in common, and their little communities constituted, as it were, but one great family."[26] In this way, they are linked to Indians, who also hold land communally, and who are likewise destined to play no part in the spatial reorganization of land west of the Mississippi. Thus the panorama pamphlets function as tutorials on how to see and think about land. Viewers are taught not only how to appreciate the landscape aesthetically but also to embrace the Anglo-American tradition of private landownership.

The idea of progress portrayed spatially is not limited to the representation of ethnic others on the riverbank. "The Story of Mike Fink, The Last of the Boatmen, A Tale of River Life" was a very popular story added to almost all of the pamphlets printed for Banvard's *Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi,* and its primary focus is on progress and the river's transition from wilderness to civilization. The urbane, unnamed narrator begins by telling of embarking on one of the river's first steamboats, and he meditates on the enormous changes that the steamboats have since brought about. At one of the places where the boat stops for wood (fuel), he encounters Mike Fink, whom he has known from boyhood. Mike is a stereotypical westerner of the period and might easily have stepped out of the pages of a James Fenimore Cooper novel or one of the "tall tales" that were so popular in the 1830s: he's a crack shot, has Herculean strength, and lives a free life unfettered by eastern norms. So outside those norms is Mike, in fact, that his appearance is repeatedly compared to a nonwhite's: "To a stranger," we are told, "he would have seemed a complete mulatto," and "but for the fine European cast of his countenance, he might have passed for the principal

warrior of some powerful tribe" (36). He is linked to Indians through his history as well: as a youth he worked as an Indian scout "and in every respect, became perfectly assimilated in habits, taste and feeling, with the red men of the desert" (41). As "the last of the boatmen," he is also—like an Indian—"representative of a class of men now extinct." Even when the boatmen are not explicitly compared to Indians, their lifestyle is portrayed in ways that are clearly designed to suggest savagery. They travel the river with "[t]heir bodies naked to the waist" and "exposed to the burning suns of summer and to the rains of autumns." Their supper consists of "meat half burnt" and "bread half baked." They drink whiskey both morning and night and have a term for their ration—a *fillee*—which suggests they are so far removed from ordinary society that they have developed, to a certain extent, their own distinct language.

Mike is unable to make the transition from manually powered flatboat to steamboat: he declares that he cannot "bear the hissing of steam" and that he wants "room to throw his pole." As a result, he and his kind—like the Indians and the French—are destined to be passed by in the march of progress. "The Story of Mike Fink," however, invests its main character with considerably more pathos than appears in any of the panorama pamphlet representations of Indians or the French and is clearly designed to evoke in the reader a pleasant feeling of nostalgia and regret. Like Cooper's Natty Bumppo, the character of Mike Fink dramatizes what is lost in the wake of progress, but in no way functions as an argument against that progress. Instead, his story unites readers in a tearful farewell to a character type who is part of the collective memory of the nation even though he can no longer live in it.

Alison Byerly has argued that river journeys—as well as the panoramas that aimed to reproduce the experience—were regarded in the nineteenth century as offering a unique insight into the nations through which the rivers passed.[27] This was especially true of the Mississippi, which often functioned as an emblem of the United States in antebellum literature and oratory. A good example appears in an 1839 Fourth of July oration delivered by Caleb Cushing. Cushing points out that those who opposed the Louisiana Purchase—who felt that it would "weaken the bands of Union"—were wrong. In fact, he argues, "the effect has been the reverse." "So long as a foreign Power held the western bank of the Mississippi . . . there could be, neither peace, prosperity, nor contentment among the people of the Western States. Their geographical position knit them more closely to each other, and to the Mississippi, than to the States on the Atlantic" and the inevitable result, he claims, would have been the creation

of "a separate empire of their own in the heart of the Continent." Now, he notes with great satisfaction, "the Mississippi is the bond of union to all the States; it is the silver cord on which the otherwise separate pearls of the Union are strung and held together."[28] In the pamphlet that accompanied *Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers,* the same basic notion of the Mississippi as a chain uniting disparate regions can be seen in the elaborate catalog of trade goods that make their way south on the river to the port of New Orleans, which is found in the section called "Life on the Mississippi." "[B]oats laden with pine planks . . . from New York," the author notes, float downstream alongside boats filled with "Yankee notions"; cattle, horses and produce from Illinois and Missouri; whiskey, hemp, and tobacco from Kentucky; and cotton from Tennessee. Even the "alliances to yield mutual assistance" formed by the boatmen seem calculated to soothe anxieties about the powerful sectional tensions that were already threatening the federal union when the pamphlet was published in 1848.[29]

Thus far in this chapter, I have tried to show how panorama pamphlets position the nation's growth within a larger story about progress. I want to turn now to another one of their prominent features: the stories about their artists that frequently appear as one of the sketches or stories that accompany the geographical material. Like the narrativization of space found in the river panoramas, these "portraits of the artist" are a direct response to Americans' desire to see their nation's expansion as coherent rather than as threatening and out-of-control. Figures like John Banvard and the daguerreotypist J. Wesley Jones (the artist responsible for the *Pantoscope of California, Nebraska & Kansas, Salt Lake & the Mormons* and the main character in *Amusing and Thrilling Adventures of a California Artist*) are portrayed, in the pamphlets, as brave, intrepid, and doggedly persistent. Determined to represent the scenery on canvas or film no matter what the risks or discomforts associated with that process, they become heroic figures who symbolically master unfamiliar geographical space by capturing it in their particular artistic medium. The process of sketching or daguerreotyping that space and transforming it into art becomes—like measurement—a means of formalizing space and bringing it into the realm of the known.

References to the panorama artist in early-nineteenth-century English pamphlets tend to be relatively straightforward. If they mention the artist at all, they do so in order to emphasize that the painting is worth seeing because of the artist's skill as well as the trouble to which he went in order

to execute the painting. In the pamphlet called *A Brief Account of the Colosseum* (which accompanied a panorama of London as seen from the top of St. Paul's Cathedral) for example, the artist E. T. Parris is described as "possessing a fertile mind, a considerable knowledge of mechanics, perspective, and also practical execution in painting." He also, we are told, exhibited "enthusiasm and perseverance."[30] Surely, the description implies, a painting that is the result of such qualities would be worth the price of admission. Later American pamphlets refer to the same qualities in the artist, but in a much more elaborate manner. Not merely enthusiastic and persistent like E. T. Parris, he becomes an adventurer. Furthermore, the subject of the painting—the space being captured by means of the artist's skill—comes to play a significant role in the artist's adventure.

John Banvard, the most renowned of the American panorama artists, was a master of public relations and was the first of the artists in the popular medium to turn his own life into a marketing tool. The basic story, as related in pamphlets and in newspapers, portrays him first as a boy in New York, the son of parents in "good circumstances." Early on he reveals a talent for drawing, as well an innate, boyish honesty of the George Washington "I cannot tell a lie" variety. After a reversal of fortunes, Banvard is then "thrown upon the world" and, naturally in such a story, makes up his mind to "go West."[31] While the story up to this point is a little bit different in each version, the episode that follows appears in all versions. In the West, the young Banvard has a sort of nationalist epiphany while floating down the Mississippi. As he gazes "with wonder and delight" at the scenery, he remembers reading the remark of a foreigner, that "America can boast the finest and most picturesque scenery in the world, but that she had not yet produced an artist capable of delineating it." "On this thought," the pamphlet continues, "he pondered and pondered till his brain began to whirl" and he finally "resolved within himself that he would take away the reproach from his country,—that *he* would paint the beauties and sublimities of his native land." His goal becomes "to produce for his country *the largest painting in the world* . . . which should be as superior to all other, in point of *size,* as that prodigious river [the Mississippi] is superior to the streamlets of Europe,—a gigantic idea!"

In the process of achieving this goal "our young adventurer" undergoes a series of setbacks as he attempts to raise money for the project. Having pursued a couple of dead-end jobs in Louisville, Banvard takes to the river. After a boating disaster in which he saves a man's life, he and some unnamed companions begin to show dioramic paintings in villages along the river. An encounter with what are presumably dinosaur bones, along

with an attack by banditti, follow. Finally Banvard begins to work as a painter in New Orleans, Natchez, and Cincinnati. Having finally raised enough money, he then travels "thousands of miles alone in an open skiff" for over four hundred days.[32]

In a melodramatic style, the narrative emphasizes the hardships he endures: he goes "weeks together without speaking to a human being, having no other company than his rifle" and, after finishing "his lonely meal," rolls himself in his blanket and sleeps under his boat. His skin burns and peels, his eyes become inflamed by his "constant and extraordinary efforts," and he even makes his drawings of New Orleans while yellow fever is raging in the city. Needless to say, his perseverance pays off in the long run, and spectators eventually flock to see his painting.

As additional sections of the pamphlet that follow "Adventures of the Artist" suggest, the enormous success of Banvard's panorama must be accounted for by the way it addresses a hunger for national and geographical self-definition. Various testimonials from riverboat captains and engineers as to the absolute accuracy of Banvard's representation of the Mississippi play a crucial part in convincing viewers that they are coming as close as possible to seeing the real thing.[33] The goal of "Adventures of the Artist" is to persuade viewers that Banvard has performed a valuable national service, and, judging by additional sections of the pamphlet, many Americans believed that he had. The section called "Tribute to Native Talent," for example, tells the story of a visit to the panorama in Boston by Governor Briggs of Massachusetts along with a number of senators and congressmen. After viewing the painting, the politicians make several speeches and ultimately pass several motions (clearly symbolic, rather than meaningful in any tangible, political way) commending the artist for his accuracy, his "enterprise," and for the honor he has brought to his country. Not only does the artist exemplify the nineteenth-century ideal of the rugged individual achieving success through hard work and enterprise, he also enables Americans to see their own country in a way that they found deeply gratifying.

Banvard creates in himself the prototype, and the sense of national service and artistic heroism that we see in his panorama pamphlets becomes a staple in others as well. One of the most intriguing variations on the Banvard model is John Ross Dix's *Amusing and Thrilling Adventures of a California Artist,* published in 1854, which tells the story of J. Wesley Jones's journey to California during the Gold Rush, as well as his return journey, during which he daguerreotypes the overland route between California and St. Louis. As a young man seeking a way to help his family financially, Jones

travels to California and survives both the typical hardships of the journey and betrayal by friends. After working as a lawyer in California for a while, he then conceives the idea of daguerreotyping the overland journey, and gathers a small group of brave and hardy young men to accompany him back to St. Louis. In Dix's words, he "was determined to . . . daguerrotype the entire country, and thus . . . give to the world a complete, magnificent, and reliable Mirror of the entire overland journey, and the State of California."[34]

Jones's journey *to* California emphasizes the lawlessness and social flux of the West: the narrative is written in a light tone and features moderately risqué tales of the company in which Jones travels, including a man trying to slip into the captain's bed (with the captain's wife) and an incident of wife-swapping on the prairie. In both of those stories, Jones takes a leadership role as the company decides how to handle the situations, which arise because they are traveling outside the realm of American law and custom.

After Jones as a lawyer participates in the imposition of law and justice on lawless Gold Rush California, his journey *back* emphasizes his mastery of the territory and its native inhabitants. In the first part of the journey he had heroically saved his companions ("Manfully had he struggled against all misfortunes, bearing well his part, and by his prudence, had brought all his party in safely across the desert").[35] On the return trip, his bravery and fortitude—like Banvard's—are exercised in the process of artistic representation. Most notable is a gun battle with Indians, in which Jones is injured, followed by his artistic capture of a place called "Steeple Rocks." His traveling companions have no wish to stop in such a dangerous place, at which point, "Fired with the excitement of the moment, our Artist forgot his wounds and debility, and rising from his litter said, 'Gentlemen, I shall daguerrotype this scenery though deserted by every man.'" Inspired by his bravery, the men stay. It is not their numbers, however that enable Jones to complete his task. Rather, when the Indians arrive, "menacing destruction," Jones's quick thinking saves the day. He turns the "daguerrotype instrument" on them, and they flee. In the end, "The gigantic rocks were faithfully mirrored on his plates." Like earlier panorama pamphlets' representation of Indians standing on the shore of the Mississippi while steamboats stream past, the passage celebrates the superior technology of Americans and suggests that Indians are helpless when confronted by it. In later sections of the pamphlet, Jones, like Banvard, is celebrated as a national hero. He had, as a writer for the *Boston Traveller* put it, "reveal[ed] to us that land so romantically interwoven with our nation's destiny."[36]

In 1867, a group of senators and other prominent figures was taken on a

railroad excursion, organized by the Union Pacific Railroad, to see the progress being made on the transcontinental railroad, which would be completed two years later. Many gave speeches to commemorate the occasion, and the speech of Judge Orth of Indiana is particularly revealing of the way that panoramas as an art form had come to be associated with national geography. He notes that the party has passed very rapidly from the "densely populated portions of our country . . . to this edge of the 'American Desert'" and that, "so new and varied has been our experience, like the shifting scenes of a beautiful panorama, that our minds are almost bewildered, while our hearts are full of emotions that all this, too is part and parcel of 'our own, our native land.'" For Orth, the panorama metaphor helps to explain his "almost bewildered" response to the magnitude and diversity of the territory that the railroad is joining together, while at the same time it helps him to articulate a deeper certainty that that territory is in fact a coherent whole and is "part and parcel" of his homeland.[37]

Because of this capacity to reveal national geography—along with the tendency to convey a sense of control or mastery—panoramas and the accompanying pamphlets held a powerful appeal for antebellum Americans. In recent decades, scholars have done extensive work on identifying ideologies that accompanied the United States' aggressive redrawing of its boundaries in that era. More still remains to be done, however, on the means by which those ideologies came into being and were transmitted on an everyday level. Thinking about how the emergence of new media, such as panoramas and the pamphlets that accompanied them, might have played a role in shaping viewers' perceptions is an important step. Panorama pamphlets, like other cultural artifacts such as novels, paintings, surveying narratives, and (most obviously) maps, are a record of the process by which Americans reimagined the geographical scope of their nation. The geographical expansion of the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century—and its transition to empire—will only be fully understood when we have a clearer picture of that process.

Chapter Five

Views from the Edge of Empire

> Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all.
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

Few, if any, passages in the American Renaissance canon have been quoted as often as this one from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* (1836). Emerson's transformation into a transparent eyeball has been called "the representative anecdote of his experience of inspiration."[1] In fact, however, dramatic visual moments carry a heavy rhetorical burden throughout Emerson's essays, as he himself realized. When he proclaims that "in the woods" there is "no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair" (39), the caveat reveals how crucial seeing is to him. Earlier in *Nature,* he even dissolves property ownership by uniting various farms with his eyes. "The charming landscape which I saw this morning," he points out, "is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond." According to Emerson, however, none of these men truly owns the landscape: "There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title."[2] Thus his own gaze enables him to order and reshape his environment, to discern the true meaning of the physical world, and, above all, to integrate disparate geographical pieces into a meaningful whole. In "Circles" (1841), seeing becomes a crucial metaphor for understanding itself: "The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it" (232). And in "The Poet" (1844), he longs for a national poet, who "with tyrannous eye" will be able to see the poetry in America's "ample geography" (281). In all of these examples, seeing is promoted as an active means of figuratively controlling fragmented or unruly space, whether that space is figurative ("our present life") or literal (the

farms he sees as he looks at the landscape or America's "ample geography").

Though the symbolic power of dramatic visual moments became a hallmark of his style, Emerson was by no means unique in imagining vision as a form of symbolic control or possession. In fact, his use of such moments to convey a sense of mastery or suggest transcendent experience is the domestic counterpart of the "monarch of all I survey" topos that appeared at the margins of expanding American and European empires. Panoramas, for example, enabled Americans and Europeans to come to terms with their expanding empires by enabling them to visualize newly conquered regions. Dramatic moments that parallel such visual experiences occur in a variety of nineteenth-century printed materials as well, including travel narratives and the popular Mexican War fictions of George Lippard.[3]

But where Emerson, Lippard, and various travel writers employed the "master of all I survey" topos—and responded to new visual technologies that reinforced vision's signification of mastery—in a relatively simple and straightforward manner, Herman Melville and Margaret Fuller explored the relationship between vision and territoriality in far more sustained and searching ways in their first books. In *Typee* and in *Summer on the Lakes in 1843,* these writers, like Emerson, found the gaze from above a means of ordering their experience of geographical space. But their experiences in the Marquesas and in the Northwest Territory—in particular their attunement to the complexities of the cross-cultural encounters happening in both regions—provoked them to question the model of control or integration through vision that their contemporaries embraced. That questioning of imperial modes of perception, in turn, facilitated in each of the young authors the development of a unique, mature voice.

In 1857, when Melville gave his lecture "Sight Seeing in Rome" in front of a panorama of Rome on display in Montreal, he participated in one of the most popular pastimes of his age.[4] But in *Typee,* he subverts the nineteenth century's faith in the power of vision. The protagonist Tommo's experiences on Nukuheva suggest that, in his experience, vision fails to signify possession or dominance (as Pratt, Said, and other scholars of colonialism have argued) or even to reveal information (the basic premise of Victorian travel writers). In fact, *Typee* is a kind of ironized travel narrative, whose ironization of that popular genre is based on a series of charged visual moments that begins with Tommo and Toby's escape from their ship, the *Dolly,* and ends with Tommo's escape from his comfortable captivity in the

Typee valley.[5] An analysis of such moments in *Typee*—whose very subtitle ("A Peep at Polynesian Life") hints at the importance of seeing, or not seeing, in the narrative—reveals Melville both questioning vision's role in understanding, and, in the process, examining the very nature of culture itself. (He seems, in fact, to have anticipated the anthropological conception of culture that developed in the twentieth century, despite the fact that he had no word to name it.) He expresses deep pessimism about transnational or transcultural comprehension, at a time when most travel writers conveyed unexamined confidence in the power of empirical observation to solve the puzzles presented by alien peoples and landscapes.

That Melville grapples with the idea of culture is not an entirely new discovery.[6] But I want to argue that it is important to tie this insight more directly to the popular culture of Melville's historical moment. For his response to the Marquesans was not shaped solely by incipient cultural relativism or Romantic sensibility. It was also necessarily shaped by his awareness—sharpened by his desire to make his first book a success—that new visual media like the panorama, and the visual metaphors they prompted in writers and orators of the period, had become constitutive of the way Europeans and Americans thought about and engaged with the world.

Nonetheless, *Typee* does still resemble a conventional travel narrative in its exclamations over the gorgeous scenery of Nukuheva ("the scenery viewed from this height was magnificent").[7] And, like a typical travel writer, Melville is anxious to impress his readers with the authenticity of his descriptions by insisting that the South Seas made such a strong impression on him that he can still see Nukuheva in his mind's eye. Accordingly he peppers his narrative with declarations like, "I can recall even now with vivid distinctness every feature of the scene" (66–67) and "The soft shadows of those lofty palm-trees—I can see them now" (237).[8] After Tommo and Toby make their escape from the ship and are climbing toward the island's highest point, Tommo momentarily combines the rhetoric of vision with the sense of superiority characteristic of other nineteenth-century travel narratives. From the elevated place where the two fugitives stand, he notes that the natives appear "to the eye scarcely bigger than so many pigmies; while their white thatched dwellings, dwarfed by the distance, looked like baby-houses" (79). In other words, their spatial position corresponds to Euro-Americans' standard self-perception of their own cultural and evolutionary position in relation to the Pacific Islanders. At this moment, then, Tommo briefly sees much like the protagonists—the "seeing man"—of traditional travel narratives and like the metropolitan viewers of panoramas of exotic locales.

Tommo manifests Western superiority earlier in the narrative, too, when, comparing "the patriarch sovereign of Tior" and a French admiral, he exclaims:

> At what an immeasurable distance, thought I, are these two beings removed from each other. In the one is shown the result of long centuries of progressive civilization and refinement, which have gradually converted the mere creature into the semblance of all that is elevated and grand; while the other, after the lapse of the same period, has not advanced one step in the career of improvement. (66)

Here the image of the admiral as "the semblance of all that is elevated" analogizes the admiral and the soon to be literally elevated Tommo, as do the "immeasurable distance" that separates the patriarch and the admiral and the "one step" that the patriarch has failed to take.

But just when it seems that Tommo may in fact be narrating another travel book affirming the cultural superiority of the West, he undercuts that notion by ironizing his own perception and that particular historical mode of vision. At the end of his description of the "novel spectacle" and the "picturesque grouping of the mingled throng of soldiery and natives," he reveals to the reader that he has been holding a "golden-hued bunch of bananas" from which he "occasionally partook while making the aforesaid philosophical reflections." "Instead of striding before us as an intrepid naval hero with an Enlightenment world view and imperial ambitions," as T. Walter Herbert has pointed out, "Melville presents himself as a man eating bananas."[9]

Melville further departs from the conventions of the travel narrative genre by turning Tommo's narrative into an intermittent allegory, in which he depicts the island's topography not simply as a feature of an exotic locale and the site of his own new experiences, but as a signifier of culture's constraining qualities. The natives live in valleys situated between ridges leading to a central peak at the center of the island. But because the various clans inhabiting the island are hostile to one another, the islanders are reluctant to leave their valleys. So much so, in fact, that Tommo "several times met with very aged men, who from this cause had never passed the confines of their native vale, some of them having never even ascended midway up the mountains in the whole course of their lives" (64). As a result, these natives have "little idea of the appearance of any other part of the island," despite the fact that it is no more that sixty miles in circumference. In part this observation on Tommo's part may be a reflection of

James Clifford's view that Western writing typically portrays nonwesterners as the *objects* of observation and interpretation and not themselves travelers or observers.[10] But it should be added that this representation of the natives as static and contained in their own valleys is *also* an element of Melville's allegory: the natives are trapped within their own cultures, unable to transcend the limitations of those cultures in order to attain the freedom, symbolized by visual scope, to which Tommo and Toby aspire.

Melville portrays Tommo and Toby's escape from the severe discipline of shipboard life in spatial and visual terms that reinforce both the allegorical significance of the island's topography and the power of culture's hold on all individuals (not just nonwhites). As they set off for the uninhabited, elevated portions of the island, Tommo admonishes, "Now, Toby, not a word, nor a glance backward, till we stand on the summit of yonder mountain" (77). This command to not look back recalls the biblical story of Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt for looking back at the city of Sodom after Lot's family has been warned by God to leave. That story underscores the powerful emotional bonds that tie people to their homes and their pasts. But it also, on a more literary level, establishes the symbolic potential of the act of seeing. The simple act of turning back to look is made to carry all the burden of conveying the unnamed woman's attachment to her city. By alluding to the story, Melville signals that in *Typee,* seeing will also carry a heavy symbolic burden, representing both transcendence from the constraints of one's own culture and genuine understanding.

As he contemplates his escape from the ship, Tommo imagines "how delightful it would be to look down upon the detested old vessel from the height of some thousand feet, and contrast the verdant scenery about me with the recollection of her narrow decks and gloomy forecastle" (69). It is an Emersonian moment. In "Circles," literature is presented as a means of transcending the mundane and the traditional. Using a metaphor that may well derive from the circular panorama form—in which viewers looked down at the circular painting from a viewing platform—Emerson declares, "The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it."[11] In imagining himself "looking down upon the detested old vessel from the height of some thousand feet" while surrounded by "verdant scenery," Tommo too envisions not only a more pleasant, less oppressive environment, but also just such a platform from which he can "command a view" rather than be commanded by the ship's captain.

The island of Nukuheva fails to live up to Tommo's idyllic imaginings, however. Far from being immediately free from restriction and enclosure,

Tommo and Toby discover that in order to reach the highest point on the island, they must hack their way through a thicket of cane "as tough and stubborn as so many rods of steel," signifying, perhaps, the way that hardships encountered in the natural world can obscure transcendent vision just as cultural hierarchies (embodied by the ship's hierarchy) can. When they finally reach the top of the mountain, they make "a most unlooked-for discovery" that highlights the impossibility of escaping culture for long:

> Instead of finding the mountain we had ascended sweeping down in the opposite direction into the broad and capacious valleys, the land appeared to retain its general elevation, only broken into a series of ridges and intervales which so far as the eye could reach stretched away from us, with their precipitous sides covered with the brightest verdure, and waving here and there with the foliage of clumps of woodland; among which, however, we perceived none of those trees upon whose fruit we had relied with such certainty. (81)

Melville has settled more firmly into the allegorical mode as his two protagonists have progressed up the mountain, and when they finally attain the peak, it is clear that their inability to find sustenance corresponds to their position outside any of the island's cultures. The mountaintop allows them an unparalleled opportunity to see the whole island, which is impossible to do within culture, which in Melville's view is always somewhat restrictive. But on this exalted site they can find no food. If from inside culture, they cannot see the whole picture, out of it, they cannot survive. In order to live, Tommo and Toby must leave the elevated place outside of any culture that allows them an unencumbered view of the island. As they attempt to decide which of two valleys to enter, the question "Typee or Happar?" becomes increasingly vexing. The dilemma exemplifies, in geographical terms, the inevitable loss they will experience in descending from the island's central peak. The descent into culture, necessary for survival, involves a narrowing of possibilities.

After they make their way down into the Typee valley, the island's allegorical geography ceases to be the chief focus of the narrative. However, Tommo continues to explore seeing as a dubious means of understanding an alien culture, and we are given to understand that in the enclosed space of the Typee valley and Typee culture, the blinders of one's own culture always restrict one's view. When describing the unfamiliar customs and people he encounters, for example, Tommo makes a point of showing that seeing is the first step in the imaginative process that allows experiences to

be made sense of: "when my eye, wandering from the bewitching scenery around, fell upon the grotesquely tattooed form of Kory-Kory, and finally encountered the pensive gaze of Fayaway, I thought I had been transported to some fairy region, so unreal did everything appear" (191). Here his eye is the subject of the clause and performs all the actions until the end, when he finally invokes a "fairy region"—a bit of imported folklore—to make the foreign scene square with his previous experience.

Tommo's feelings for Fayaway also allow him to overcome revulsion at certain Typee customs, and seeing plays an important role in this process as well. When Tommo first sees the Typees, including Fayaway, eating raw fish, he exclaims, "Oh, heavens! Fayaway, how could you have contracted so vile a habit?" Tommo's use of the word "contracted" makes the cultural practice (the "habit") sound like a disease. But he notes that "after the first shock had subsided, the custom grew less odious in my eyes, and I soon accustomed myself to the sight" (282). Here as when comparing Typee to a "fairy region," Tommo depicts seeing as an activity that does not really involve *him.* As before, it is the first step that enables him to accustom himself to this alien world, but it is also portrayed as somehow passive. In the earlier description, Tommo's eye wanders, falls, and encounters. In this one, it does even less: it is simply the site where the foreign custom grows "less odious." This passivity contrasts sharply with Emerson and with the various travel writers that Mary Louise Pratt refers to collectively as "seeing man." For them seeing is an act of power, a means of exerting one's own will either as an individual or as a representative of one's nation or empire. That Tommo is unwilling or unable to engage in that kind of active, even aggressive, vision, suggests, on one level, his own powerlessness in the alien environment of the Typee valley. (It is similar, in that sense, to his leg wound.) At another level, however, it calls into question the imperial project that Pratt's confident and active seers underwrite.

This divergence of Melville's protagonist from the visual style of his fellow Western travelers—in which he himself had participated earlier in his visit to Nukuheva—may suggest an appealing capacity on Melville's part to "think outside the box" of his own culture. For in acknowledging his inability to think of himself as "the master of all he surveys," he does question his own culture's modus operandi in relation to non-Western peoples. Elsewhere in the narrative, however, Tommo communicates both an inability and an unwillingness to cross other cultural boundaries, which are likewise signified in visual terms. Through his encounter with an alien culture, Tommo finds that culture functions as a barrier to seeing in ways that Emerson never imagined.

Where the lovely Fayaway is concerned, Tommo wants to credit seeing with the power to help him transcend cultural constraints. To her alone of all the Typees he attributes empathy. And it is the way she looks at him that leads him to believe that she truly understands his plight even though they have no common language through which to communicate:

> Whenever she entered the house, the expression of her face indicated the liveliest sympathy for me, and moving towards the place where I lay, with one arm slightly elevated in a gesture of pity, and her large glistening eyes gazing intently into mine, she would murmur plaintively, "Awha! awha! Tommo," and seat herself mournfully beside me. (160–61)

But in describing the way she seats herself beside him and gazes at him with her "large glistening eyes," Tommo makes her sound very much like a loyal dog (later in the book he explicitly compares Fayaway's father to "a superannuated House-dog" [206]). Thus while the expression in Fayaway's eyes as she gazes into his provides Tommo with the very welcome sense that someone understands him, he undercuts the idea of vision as a means of communication by portraying her as simply an affectionate animal. Vision, in the Typee valley, holds out the promise of connection between people, but it proves illusory.

Tommo's pessimistic attitude toward seeing as a means of understanding across cultures—and his deep-seated and involuntary allegiance to his own culture—appears also in his representation of tattooing. Tattooing is, next to cannibalism, the Typee custom that upsets Tommo most, since it suggests to him the permanent marks that culture leaves on the individual. When he remarks that Kory-Kory's "countenance, thus triply hooped, as it were, with tattooing, always reminded me of those unhappy wretches whom I have sometimes observed gazing out from behind the grated bars of a prison window" (131), he sets it up as an emblem of the individual held captive in his own culture. Kory-Kory, at this moment, stands in absolutely inverse position to Tommo and Toby once they had reached the peak of the island. While Tommo and Toby, momentarily free of cultural constraints, had unlimited vision, Kory-Kory is ensconced in his cultural customs, and those customs, like bars on a window, restrict his view. That Marnoo, the taboo islander who is unique in his freedom to move about the island and visit various tribes, has no tattoos on his face likewise suggests that facial tattooing signifies a kind of entrapment within cultural limitations. (And, as with Tommo and Toby, freedom from cultural limitations is figured in terms of the freedom to traverse the island's geography.)

Facial tattooing becomes even more symbolically charged—and more dramatically linked to Melville's symbolic treatment of visual experience—when Tommo stumbles across an old man having his tattoos touched up, and becomes himself a potential "human canvas" for the "old masters of the Typee school":

> The parts operated upon were the eyelids, where a longitudinal streak, like the one which adorned Kory-Kory, crossed the countenance of the victim. In spite of all the efforts of the poor old man, sundry twitchings and screwings of the muscles of the face denoted the exquisite sensibility of these shutters to the windows of his soul, which he was now having repainted. (292)

Here, by linking the old man to Kory-Kory, Tommo reminds readers of the link between facial tattooing and prison bars that obstruct vision. He takes the idea (and the fear) one step further, however, by describing tattooing directly on the eyelids, with their "exquisite sensibility." The image of tattoos on the "shutters to the windows of the soul" goes beyond the notion of obstructed vision to suggest a fundamental modification of one's way of seeing—a modification that marks the very essence of who one is (the soul).

Tommo makes it clear (again using the imagery of vision) that if his face were tattooed, he could never return home: "This incident opened my eyes to a new danger; and I now felt convinced that in some luckless hour I should be disfigured in such a manner as never more to have the *face* to return to my countrymen, even should an opportunity offer" (293). His unwillingness to return home should he be tattooed against his will suggests an awareness that his culture's gaze would place him outside that culture. His fear of being tattooed is in part a fear of becoming an aesthetic *object,* as he demonstrates clearly in his anxiety about the "old masters of the Typee school" using his face as a canvas. The tattoo artist's attempt to practice his art on Tommo's face functions as a turning point in the narrative, after which Tommo is determined to escape. He never again allows himself to be lulled into passive enjoyment of the pleasures of Typee life.

In Tommo's view, limitations in vision are part of the human condition, as he points out when describing the sacred effigy of a dead chief: "Aye, Paddle away, brave chieftain, to the land of spirits! To the material eye thou makest but little progress; but with the eye of faith, I see thy canoe cleaving the bright waves, which die away on those daily looming shores of Paradise" (239). Making a rather conventional religious distinction allows

Tommo temporarily to be more optimistic about seeing (faith inspires better vision), but this optimism, like the hushed, sacral atmosphere of the shrine, does not carry over to the rest of *Typee.* Elsewhere Tommo and the rest of the characters are largely doomed to see with material eyes.

Vision continues to play an important role as Tommo escapes from the geographical confinement of the Typee valley and the cultural confinement of the Typee tribe. While held captive in Typee, Tommo is forbidden to go within sight of the ocean. Consequently, he notes that he "had always associated with it the idea of escape" (235). When he hears that a rescue party may be near at hand, he makes his way with great difficulty down to the sea, where he exclaims, "Oh glorious sight and sound of ocean! with what rapture I hail you as familiar friends!" (328). While the members of Tommo's foster family—Marheyo, Kory-Kory, and Fayaway—seem to understand his desire to leave and even advocate his return to his own culture, Mow-Mow, "the one-eyed chief," opposes it so vehemently that Tommo has to hit him in the throat with a boat hook in order to escape. MowMow's single eye and his vehement opposition to Tommo's leaving the valley—along with the hints of cannibalism that suffuse the narrative—may also be a reference to Odysseus's escape from the Cyclops in the *Odyssey.* Odysseus's strategy in that episode—telling Cyclops he is called "nobody," so that when blinded Cyclops will cry out that "nobody" blinded him and none of the other Cyclopes will come to his aid—clearly resonates with Tommo's own liminal position in *Typee.* Just as Odysseus is adrift between the world of war (Troy) and the world of peace and home (Ithaca) and consequently has no clearly defined identity (he *is* in fact nobody), so too Tommo is willingly adrift between cultures.

The narrative ends with Tommo headed out to open sea on the Australian whaler *Julia.* The ocean's boundlessness enables it frequently to function as a symbol of freedom in Melville's fiction, as the effigy of the dead chief paddling his canoe to Paradise earlier in *Typee* hints. The unrestricted movement through space that the open sea offers is analogous in many ways to the unrestricted vision of space offered by Tommo's elevated position earlier in the story. But the narrative's structure makes it clear that unrestricted vision, though an appealing possibility, is ultimately an untenable version of freedom because it requires the impossible—emergence from any form of culture. Unrestricted movement through space, though it consigns Tommo to shipboard discipline and to what he would only ironically call Western "civilization," is for Melville a more viable means of feeling unoppressed by one's physical surroundings. Although the ship hems Tommo in, just as the Typee valley did, movement makes the ship's boundedness preferable. Moreover, life aboard a South Seas whaler in the 1840s

allows him to compromise where culture is concerned. The ship is a kind of middle ground that solves, or at least postpones, the problem of being in or out of culture that the narrative posed earlier. Whereas the culture he encountered in the static and bounded Typee valley was both alien and homogenous, the culture on board the constantly moving ship is familiar yet liberally mixed with alien elements—a tamer precursor of the motley ship of state found in *Moby-Dick.*

Although the Marquesas and the Northwest Territory, which is the setting of *Summer on the Lakes,* differ in a number of fairly obvious ways, they share some crucial features. Both are areas on which the United States had—to different degrees—imperial designs.[12] Both have native inhabitants who prompt Melville and Fuller to question those designs. Like *Typee,* Margaret Fuller's first book[13] teems with dramatic visual moments. Within her account of a journey through the Great Lakes region Fuller embeds stories of historical figures with second sight, careful analyses of her own visual encounters with the unfamiliar landscape, critiques of other travelers' perceptual styles, moments of visual rapture, and anecdotes about Native Americans cowed by the gaze of white settlers. Examining these various dramatizations of seeing reveals *Summer on the Lakes* to be a startling and sophisticated work that we are only beginning to know. It is a book in which Fuller carries on an extended conversation with herself about the best way to see, as well as about the moral implications of seeing, which she recognizes as one form of possession and control. Above all, Fuller's meditations on the act of seeing express a central contradiction that her narrative never fully resolves. Often she is desperately eager to see as a transcendent individual, to remove the lenses that she believes her culture and her nationality have imposed upon her eyes. At other moments, however, she clearly regards national identity—that part of one's character constituted by membership in a particular national group—as a positive means for bringing what one sees into focus and giving it meaning.

That Fuller, writing in 1843, should explore her ambivalence about national identity by dramatizing visual experience is hardly surprising. Angela Miller has argued that in the mid-nineteenth-century United States visual images played an "essential role . . . in creating a community transcending bonds of clan, caste, or religion, and working across space and time."[14] Fuller complicates this historically specific link between nation and visuality, however, not only by expressing mixed feelings about the effects of national identity on perception but by using visual moments to critique American nationalism itself.

Summer on the Lakes marks a turning point in Fuller's career. The letters

she wrote during her trip indicate that she believed her "life enriched by the images of the great Niagara, of the vast lakes."[15] They also suggest that Fuller's journey clarified and intensified her growing sense of dissatisfaction with life in Concord and Cambridge. As she wrote to Emerson, "Truly there is no place for me to live. . . . I like not the petty intellectualities, cant, and bloodless theory there at home, but this merely instinctive existence . . . pleases me no better."[16]

In the process of breaking her ties to New England, Fuller uses dramatic visual moments to stage a sustained critical dialogue with her friend and mentor Emerson.[17] She displayed an interest in, and questioned, Emerson's way of seeing as early as 1838, when she wrote an apostrophe to him in an unpublished journal fragment:

> but my foot is on the earth, and the earth thou
> [Emerson] dost not know, maugre all thy boasted
> prowess of vision.
> ["]Oh thou art blind
> With thy deep seeing eyes"
> And therein lies alike thy power and thy weakness![18]

Her trip to the West in 1843 enabled her to formulate her differences with Emerson more fully, and to use seeing for her own purposes. Whereas Emerson uses visual moments primarily to dramatize his determination to rise above the constraints of history and culture, Fuller uses them to weigh the appeal of such transcendent vision against the attraction of seeing from a particular national standpoint.

Even as she brought a transcendentalist sensibility to bear on her perceptions of the West, she was turning her back on the milieu of Concord and Boston. In this sense, her encounter with the West, as recorded in *Summer on the Lakes,* is a kind of overture or prologue to her career as a journalist in New York and to her later involvement with the Italian nationalist movement. Fuller's investigation of vision in *Summer on the Lakes* is a record of pivotal growth in the nineteenth-century America's premier woman intellectual as well as an intriguing study of the significance of nationality. As such, it deserves our closer scrutiny.

One of the ways that Fuller approaches the question of how best to see is by presenting her readers with exemplary seers, people whose abilities to see the world far surpass those of the people around them. Undoubtedly the most unusual of these visionaries is the Seeress of Prevorst, a German mys-

tic whose story Fuller reads while traveling. The Seeress is Frederika Hauffe, a German peasant girl who died in 1829 at the age of twenty-nine. Around the time of her marriage Hauffe begins to enter into somnambulic states and soon finds herself gifted (or cursed) with "the second sight, numerous and various visits from spirits and so forth."[19] She sees a person's "bodily state" in her left eye and "his real or destined self" in her right eye, and is also able to see the future in "mirrors, cups of water; [and] in soap bubbles" (165). As these talents develop, however, her body wastes away, and she is subject to suspicion and hostility from her fellow villagers.

Many early critics dismissed Fuller's discussion of the Seeress of Prevorst as irrelevant to the basic narrative.[20] But with the current resurgence of interest in Fuller, critics have come to see the Seeress's story and other "digressions" as integral parts of *Summer on the Lakes.* Stephen Adams, for example, argues that "materials ostensibly unrelated to the trip do not merely pad out an otherwise skimpy narrative, but help control and direct the book's shape and major themes,"[21] and Annette Kolodny has argued convincingly that Fuller includes seemingly irrelevant stories, including that of the Seeress, to underline "the poor fit between individual ability and social role" for women.[22] To Kolodny's point it should be added that the episode concerning the Seeress is crucial because the character represents an extreme kind of vision; her talent for seeing is so extraordinary that she is entirely out of step with the physical world around her. She is already, as Fuller points out, "invad[ing] the next sphere" (145). The Seeress's story provides Fuller with a tantalizing portrait of a woman with remarkable, and therefore controversial, visual powers.

Fuller links her own sightseeing trip through the Great Lakes region with the Seeress's second sight:

> I trust by reverent faith to woo the mighty meaning of the scene, perhaps to *foresee* the law by which a new order, a new poetry is to be evoked from this chaos, and with a curiosity as ardent, but not so selfish as that of Macbeth, to call up the apparitions of future kings from the strange ingredients of the witch's caldron. (86; emphasis added)

In Fuller's extended metaphor, "the witch's caldron" is the rapid and ugly growth that "all the noble trees are gone . . . to feed" (86). But the reference to *Macbeth* is not merely a springboard for criticizing destruction of the environment. Fuller's comparison of herself to Macbeth suggests that she regards her own attempt to interpret the West in *Summer on the Lakes* as a daring reach for greater power. Like the Seeress of Prevorst, Macbeth's

witches possess second sight; in contrast to the Seeress, however, they are diabolical. Fuller is careful to set herself apart from such diabolical vision by proclaiming her loyalty to virtues traditionally considered feminine in the sentimental culture of the mid–nineteenth century: she professes her "reverent faith" and declares her own curiosity to be "not so selfish" as Macbeth's. But the Macbeth allusion clearly signals that she considers her project to be dangerously ambitious.

Though Fuller is able to identify exemplary seeing in European figures like the Seeress, becoming a seer herself proves more difficult as she encounters the overwhelmingly unfamiliar landscape of the prairie. Because she is accustomed to a landscape with trees and hills, the prairie at first seems "to speak of the very desolation of dullness," and she is especially appalled by what she terms the "limitless horizon"—a phrase that echoes Emerson's comment that "[t]he health of the eye seems to demand a horizon." Gazing on the monotony of the Great Lakes, Fuller rejoices at the sight of "a sail, or the smoke of a steamboat" (89). The desire for a human focal point, like her comment on the horizon, suggests an initial inability to orient herself in the vertiginously large and vacant space surrounding her.

Fuller soon comes to appreciate the landscape, however, and takes the opportunity to point out that seeing is an activity that must be learned: "I began to love because I began to know the scene, and shrank no longer from 'the encircling vastness.' It is always thus with the new form of life; we must learn to look at it by its own standard" (90). Learning to look at "the new form of life" is not, however, a simple matter of applying oneself. In fact, trying too hard to see is a bad idea because, she notes, "nature always refuses to be seen by being stared at" (85). Fuller then goes on to link two apparently incompatible images in her description of nature. She first remarks that nature, "[l]ike Bonaparte," "discharges her face of all expression when she catches the eye of impertinent curiosity fixed on her." Fuller then switches immediately to an image of nature as tender mother, and declares that "he who has gone to sleep in childish ease on her lap or leaned an aching brow upon her breast, seeking there comfort with full trust as from a mother, will see all a mother's beauty in the look she bends upon him" (85). This attempt to link the traditional image of nature as nurturing, all-giving, pre-Oedipal mother with a man whose name became a catchword for imperialistic ambition suggests how contradictory she finds her experience of the West. Clearly the image of nature as Napoleon suggests that she feels vulnerable before the landscape. Yet the image of the ideal observer as child signifies far more than helplessness. Paradoxically, seeing

"new forms of life" is an activity that must be learned, yet it also requires that the observer become like a trusting infant, in other words, a person still unmolded by culture.

Fuller declares her own ability to transcend the limitations of her culturally inflected personal history when, sightseeing in Detroit, she describes the fort that General Hull surrendered during the War of 1812: "I am a woman, and unlearned in such affairs; but, to a person with common sense and good eyesight, it is clear, when viewing the location, that, under the circumstances, he had no prospect of successful defence" (223). Vision, in other words, is a democratic attribute that enables people of either gender and of various levels and kinds of education to make equally valid observations regarding history.[23] Fuller's "good eyesight" renders the shortcomings of her education irrelevant.

Here and in her representation of the infant as ideal observer Fuller resembles Emerson, for whom unmediated vision signifies the individual's capacity for transcendence. Fuller gives her exploration of unmediated vision a particularly Emersonian slant when she describes learning to appreciate the prairie. She employs an image of her eye speaking, or, more specifically, complaining, to convey her initial inability to appreciate the new landscape: "my accustomed eye kept saying, if the mind did not, What! no distant mountains? what, no valleys?" (90). Only when her eye stops talking is she able to look at the West on its own terms. She portrays the moment of understanding as a moment of supreme stillness and silence. On the roof of the house where she stays in Chicago, Fuller finds that after "all the lights were out in the island grove of men beneath my feet, . . . [I] felt nearer heaven that there was nothing but this lovely still reception on the earth" (90).

That Fuller is on the roof when she arrives at her deep understanding and appreciation of the prairie suggests that she must literally rise above the community in order "to look at the West by its own standard." In the transparent eyeball passage of *Nature* Emerson, "In the wilderness" and "on the bare ground," is "uplifted into infinite space" to experience a transcendent moment as an allseeing eye.[24] So too Fuller, on the prairie, is able truly to see the West only on the roof of the house, with the lights of Chicago turned off. They are the sight-dimming lights of culture.

Fuller brings the idea of unmediated vision specifically into the context of nationality when she praises Murray,[25] the author of a travel book on the region, who is "the only Englishman that seems to have traversed these regions, as man, simply, not as John Bull" (88). Murray's ability to see the West "as man, simply," and not as an Englishman ("as John Bull"), wins

Fuller's admiration and stands in sharp contrast to the behavior of a rigid, young Englishwoman whom Fuller encounters while staying at a rustic inn. So completely unable to transcend her national habits and prejudices is the woman that Fuller refers to her metonymically as "England." While Fuller and the other women at the inn make the best of the primitive conditions they encounter, "England sat up all night, wrapped in her blanket and shawl, and with a neat lace cap on her head." Typically, Fuller describes the woman's limitations in terms of her way of seeing: "She watched, as her parent country watches the seas, that nobody may do wrong in any case" (94). Her perceptions shaped by her nationality, the woman becomes a mere extension of her country.[26]

Despite this adamant condemnation of perception defined by nationality, Fuller at other moments in her narrative aims not for unmediated visual experience, but for the emergence of a coherent national identity through seeing. This basic contradiction marks *Summer on the Lakes* as a major turning point in Fuller's thought on national identity and its significance. At the beginning of her public career, she told the women who attended her "Conversations" that they must "denationalize" themselves, evidently regarding nationality as an obstacle to an Emersonian expanded consciousness and direct experience.[27] Near the end of her life, on the other hand, her dispatches from Europe for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* reveal her to have been passionately in favor of and deeply moved by the Italian nationalists, whom she found "filled with new hopes . . . [and] unknown energy."[28]

Six years earlier, in 1843, Fuller's travels through land newly incorporated into the United States[29] prompted her first sustained meditation on nationalist sentiment. As we have seen, territorial expansion became an increasingly significant threat to national cohesion during the first half of the nineteenth century. Face to face with the alien West, Fuller feels the threat of fragmentation acutely, and her encounter with the newly emerging states of the Northwest Territory is informed in crucial ways by the discourse of sectional compatibility discussed in my introduction: Randolph's claim that westerners were "people bound to us [easterners] by no common tie of interest or sentiment,"[30] Webster's belief that there could be no "sympathy between these New Mexicans, these Californians, and the inhabitants of the valley of the Mississippi, . . . or of the Eastern States,"[31] and Emerson's anxious insistence that "an hourly assimilation goes forward, and there is no danger that local peculiarities and hostilities should be preserved."[32]

In response to the threat of fragmentation, Fuller, like many other Americans at midcentury, hopefully imagines a collective national identity emerging through visual encounters with the American landscape. Beginning around 1825, landscape painting enjoyed an unprecedented vogue in the United States as American scenery became a means of defining American nationhood. Angela Miller, following in a long line of commentators on American art, believes that landscape painting encouraged national consciousness in the face of increasing sectional tension. When Americans gathered together to look at painting, Miller asserts, "an aesthetic experience would occur that transformed paint and canvas into a shimmering icon of collective identity."[33]

In chapter 3 of *Summer on the Lakes* Fuller describes the view from a place called "Eagle's Nest." Remembering her visit to the site "one glorious morning" that also happens to be the Fourth of July, she writes:

> certainly I think I had never felt so happy that I was born in America. Wo[e] to all country folks that never saw this spot, never swept an enraptured gaze over the prospect that stretched beneath. I do believe that Rome and Florence are suburbs compared to this capital of nature's art. (100–101)

Strong feelings of national pride contributing to intense visual experience (and vice versa) indicate that Fuller sees nationality as positive in this passage. Her lament—"Wo to all country folks that never saw this spot"—suggests that all Americans would be better off for having seen such magnificent landscape, and her use of "country folks" also places individuals firmly within the context of their nationality. In her use of the uncharacteristically colloquial "folks," there may be an echo of Herder, Fuller's "favorite,"[34] who regarded a *Volk* as "one people having its own national culture as well as its language."[35]

Even more explicitly, Fuller expresses her desire to make visual experience an agent of collective identity in her invocation of Sir Walter Scott: "Continually I wanted Sir Walter Scott to have been there. [Mackinaw] would have furnished him material for a separate canvass" (175). Scott, whose novels have been conventionally seen as "vehicle[s] for inventing a supposedly 'national' culture, history, identity, and destiny that would unite all regions and classes during an age of rapid and often violent change,"[36] provides Fuller with an example of how art can promote nationalist spirit. To portray Scott as a painter, who might paint a "separate canvass" of the West if he were alive, reveals the extent to which Fuller consid-

ered visual, rather than strictly verbal, experience a means of fostering a national consciousness. Fuller expresses a similar desire for Scott's presence five years later when she describes the bombardment of Rome in one of her dispatches from Italy: "I longed for Sir Walter Scott to be on earth again, and see [the Italian men]; all are light, athletic, resolute figures, many of the forms of the finest manly beauty of the South, all sparkling with its genius and ennobled by the resolute spirit." Here, however, Fuller suggests that the Italians *already* embody national feeling in an aesthetically pleasing way, and that Scott would recognize this if he saw them. In *Summer on the Lakes,* Fuller's comment that Mackinaw would have provided Scott with "material for a separate canvass" suggests that the Great Lakes region is still raw material, still in need of an artistic hand in order to reflect a collective national identity.

The primary obstacle that prevents Fuller from wholeheartedly advocating her Romantic nationalism-inspired ideal of collective national identity is her firsthand experience of Indians, who are portrayed sympathetically throughout *Summer on the Lakes.*[37] Unlike the underdog Italian nationalist movement that Fuller later passionately supported, which defined itself against imperial Austria, American nationalism in the 1840s fueled aggressive territorial expansion against a relatively weak Native population.[38] Fuller conveys her misgivings about white treatment of Indians, like her yearnings for a collective national identity, through dramatic visual moments. Two of the anecdotes Fuller offers to condemn white treatment of Indians portray Indians violated or controlled by a white man's gaze. In the first, Fuller describes her visit to the site of an abandoned Indian village, and then paraphrases a story she was told by a white man who lives nearby:

> Our host said that, one day, as he was lying there beneath the bank, he saw a tall Indian standing at gaze on the knoll. He lay a long time, curious to see how long the figure would maintain its statue-like absorption. But, at last, his patience yielded, and, in moving, he made a slight noise. The Indian saw him, gave a wild, snorting sound of indignation and pain, and strode away. (138)

In this paraphrase, Fuller's portrayal of the white man lying "beneath the bank" in order to remain unseen while he watches the Indian turns him into a kind of hunter or stalker. Fuller is clearly aware of the gaze as a symbolic means of possession or control, and the fact that the Indian is himself "at gaze" suggests a desire to repossess the land he has lost. The white man's

surveillance already dehumanizes the Indian, but Fuller adds to the effect by describing the Indian's "wild, snorting sound of indignation and pain" after he realizes that he has been watched. The sound the Indian makes is that of a wounded animal. When Fuller reverts back to her own thoughts, she resorts to visual metaphors to express her feelings about the episode. She conveys her despair and incomprehension by remarking that she can "scarcely see how they [Indians] can forbear to shoot the white man where he stands."

In the second story about an Indian and a white man's gaze, Fuller makes the connection between the gaze and weapons even more explicit. She describes the same man "travelling through the wilderness with an Indian guide." When the white man refuses to give the Indian "a bottle of spirit," the Indian tries to take it by force. The white man then finds that although he is unarmed and the Indian has a gun, he can use his gaze as a weapon. Fuller quotes the white man saying, "I knew an Indian could not resist the look of a white man, and I fixed my eye steadily on his. He bore it for a moment, then his eye fell; he let go the bottle" (138). After staring the Indian down, the white man throws the gun "to a distance" like a stick. He then tells the Indian to "go and fetch it." In this story, then, as in the first, the white man's gaze turns the Indian into an animal, this time a dog. "From that moment," the white man notes, the Indian "was quite obedient, even servile, all the rest of the way."

By conveying white domination of Indians through visual encounters, Fuller places it in the context of other dramatic visual moments in her text. Whereas her ecstatic gazing from "Eagle's Nest" celebrates the power of nationality to give thrilling meaning to what one sees, Fuller's anecdotes about Indians controlled by a white man's gaze call into question both seeing as a means of knowing the world, and the advantages of her American national identity.

American nationalism poses additional problems for Fuller because it seems to encourage greed and vulgarity, rather than the idealistic vigor that she will later find appealing in the Italian nationalists. She notes that settlers think only "of what they should get in the new scene," and that the West is "to them a prospect, not of the unfolding of nobler energies, but of . . . larger accumulation" (80). Fuller's description of picturesque Mackinaw conveys her revulsion at the effects of rapid expansion, as well as her awareness of the gaze as an instrument for dominance or control:

> How pleasing a sight, after the raw, crude, staring assemblage of houses, elsewhere to be met in this country, an old French town, mellow in its

> coloring, and with the harmonious effect of a slow growth, which assimilates, naturally, with objects round it. The people in its streets, Indian, French, half-breeds, and others, walked with a leisure step, as of those who live a life of taste and inclination, rather than of the hard press of business, as in American towns elsewhere. (174)

Mackinaw wins her approval because it exemplifies harmonious and natural assimilation; both people and objects seem to blend in easily with their surroundings. By punning "sight" with "site," Fuller alerts her readers to the importance of vision in this assessment of a former French colonial outpost now in possession of the United States. She goes on to configure her disapproval of newly built, purely American towns in terms of both looking and being looked at. Not only are American towns unpleasant to look at ("raw, crude"), but they actively offend her by rudely staring. In describing these towns as staring, Fuller portrays them turning the tables; they turn *her* into an object of scrutiny and rob her of her subject status as observer. In the materialistic United States, her trope suggests, things control people.

Many of the people Fuller encounters on her journey reinforce her fears of American materialism. One of Fuller's most damning indictments of the utilitarian American character comes in the form of an anecdote about a man who comes to "take his first look" at Niagara Falls as she stands there. "He walked close up to the fall, and, after looking at it a moment, with an air as if thinking how he could best appropriate it to his own use, he spat into it" (73).

Fuller's encounters with the dominative powers of seeing lead her to reject the kind of seeing predicated on a lofty, controlling position, which she had seemed to favor in her description of the view from "Eagle's Nest," in favor of a far more vulnerable position on the ground:

> Do you climb the snowy peaks from whence come the streams, where the atmosphere is rare, where you can see the sky nearer, from which you can get *a commanding view* of the landscape. I see great disadvantages as well as advantages in this dignified position. (148–49; emphasis added)

She rejects, in other words, what Albert Boime has termed "the magisterial gaze" as well as the self-congratulatory nationalist rhetoric that deployed it.

In "The Poet," published in the same year as *Summer on the Lakes* (1844), Emerson longs for a poet "with tyrannous eye," able to see the poetry in

America's "ample geography." In rejecting "a commanding view" Fuller, though she too finds the notion of a national art compelling, reveals deep misgivings about a "tyrannous" mode of perceiving the world. During her journey to the West Fuller confronts head-on the rapacious nature of American nationalism. Though she wants to participate in what she regards as the transformative energies of nationalism, she is not sure that her own nation makes that possible.

Whereas Melville acknowledges that he simply cannot sustain a position as commanding surveyor of Nukuheva, Fuller takes a look at the moral implications of a similar position in the Northwest Territory and chooses to step down. Like Melville, Fuller opts for movement through space rather than a commanding view of it. A key difference is that while Melville, by shipping on board a whaler, acquires a provisional, eclectic community, Fuller, by preferring to "walk [her]self through all kinds of places," stresses her freedom from the constraints that any community would impose.

Chapter Six

Body Size and the Body Politic

In chapter 1 of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie* (1827), a historical romance centered on social and political problems arising from the Louisiana Purchase, the Bush clan—a family of westward-moving squatters portrayed so as to evoke the nomadic families of the Old Testament patriarchs—comes face to face with a "spectacle as sudden as it was unexpected."[1] When it appears, Cooper has already established the prairie as a landscape that plays tricks on the eye: "the eye became fatigued with the sameness and chilling dreariness of the landscape" and "the low stands of the spectators exaggerated distances." Still, the reader shares the family's surprise when, as they travel across "long, and seemingly interminable tracts of territory," a mysterious figure looms out of the West:

> The sun had fallen below the crest of the nearest wave of the Prairie, leaving the usual rich and glowing train on its track. In the centre of this flood of fiery light a human form appeared, drawn against the gilded background, as distinctly and seemingly as palpable, as though it would come within the grasp of any extended hand. The figure was colossal; the attitude musing and melancholy, and the situation directly in the route of the travellers. But embedded, as it was, in its setting of garish light, it was impossible to distinguish its just proportions or true character.[2]

The scene powerfully dramatizes the problems presented by annexation of territory.[3] The "rich and glowing train on its track," though ostensibly referring to the light of the sun as it sets, also suggests locomotives headed West: technology and progress conquering geographical space. Yet this

vision of glowing progress is hardly an idyllic scene; the terms "flood" and "fiery light" give the episode apocalyptic overtones.

That the figure seems "as though it would come within the grasp of any extended hand" is Cooper's way of representing the distorted sense of distance and depth perception the prairie induces. But the image of the extended grasping hand also symbolizes American imperialism, the larger movement behind the Bushes' encounter with the mysterious figure on the prairie. The most important aspect of the figure, however, is its "colossal" size. The family's inability to determine Natty Bumppo's "just proportions or true character" suggests that, in Cooper's mind, the Louisiana Purchase presented Americans with a set of formidable problems to be solved. The first few pages of *The Prairie* make it clear that by 1827 the risky "purchase of the empty empire" has ended well in Cooper's opinion: the land has been settled by "a race long trained in adventure and nurtured in difficulties" and, though the "more affluent" residents of French Louisiana resisted amalgamation, the "more humble population . . . was almost immediately swallowed in the vortex which attended the tide of instant emigration."[4] Furthermore, a new state has already emerged from the territory and been "received into the bosom of the national Union, on terms of political equality."[5] In other words, two of the central problems arising from annexation have been solved: how to neutralize the negative effects of supposedly inferior racial stock, and how to incorporate the new territory and its settlers into the United States as a political entity.

By 1854, however, when Thoreau published *Walden,* questions about how to deal with geographical space, what kind of grid to impose on new territory, were once again on the public mind more powerfully than ever before. The Compromise of 1850 merely intensified fears by attempting to resolve the same questions posed by annexation in a manner that everyone recognized as completely unsatisfactory. In the "Winter Animals" chapter of *Walden,* Thoreau dramatizes the risks inherent in large-scale annexation of territory in a passage intriguingly similar to Cooper's description of the Bush family's first encounter with Natty Bumppo:

> When I crossed Flint's Pond, after it was covered with snow, though I had paddled about and skated over it, it was so unexpectedly wide and so strange that I could think of nothing but Baffin's Bay. . . . and the fishermen, at an indeterminable distance over the ice, moving slowly about with their wolfish dogs, passed for sealers or Esquimaux or in misty weather loomed like fabulous creatures, and I did not know whether they were giants or pygmies. (180–81)

The snow defamiliarizes Flint's Pond (usually described in far more mundane terms than Walden Pond), making it as wide and strange to Thoreau as the prairie was to the Bush family. Just as Cooper compares the prairie to the ocean ("The earth was not unlike the ocean. . . . There was the same waving and regular surface, the same absence of foreign objects, and the same boundless extent to the view"),[6] Thoreau compares the snow-covered pond to a particularly wild and remote body of water, Baffin's Bay. Just as the prairie landscape "exaggerated the distances," Thoreau views the fishermen from an "indeterminable distance." Like the opening pages of *The Prairie,* too, Thoreau's passage has racial undertones. The fishermen "passed for sealers or Esquimaux," and Thoreau "did not know whether they were giants or pygmies." The words Esquimaux and pygmies provide atmosphere, of course, making it clear that Flint's Pond has been transformed by the snow and is now a wild and mysterious region. But the choice of *pygmy,* rather than a less racially coded word like *dwarf* or *midget,* also suggests that expansion and imperialism are important contexts for *Walden* and indicates as well the extent to which other races came to figure in nineteenth-century images of uncharted space, even when that space was in reality located near long-domesticated Concord. Most importantly, Thoreau, like the Bushes, is unable to ascertain the true size of the figures he sees.[7] By portraying their protagonists' encounters with vast, unfamiliar space in similar terms, Cooper and Thoreau highlight the problematic nature of Americans' relationship to newly annexed territory.

The belief that the survival of the United States (or at least its democratic political system) depended on its continuing to be a manageable size appears repeatedly in antebellum American writings of all kinds. Explorer Zebulon Pike, writing in 1810, was relieved to find the western prairies unsuitable (so he believed) for habitation by a settled, farming people, reasoning that "restriction of our population to some certain limits" would ensure "a continuation of the Union."[8] Intensifying concern about the nation's size during the 1840s and 1850s is reflected in pervasive and innovative nation-as-body metaphors that are used not, as in the traditional body-politic metaphor, to convey an organic wholeness, but to express attitudes about expansion. Caleb Cushing, in a Fourth of July oration (a common vehicle for dire predictions about the consequences of national expansion) in 1839 warns the nation has become "a young giant" and that "we ourselves are not sensible of the strength and vigor of the young giant's limbs."[9] (He is concerned, specifically, that the United States may go to war with Britain over territorial boundaries in the West.) In a similar vein, Thoreau writes, "The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are

whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them."[10] This resembles, in imagery if not in tone, Margaret Fuller's ardent hope that American youth would "help to give soul" to the nation's "huge, over fed, too hastily grown-up body."[11] The similarity between these statements—their shared vision of the nation as an unhealthily voracious body—reflects a widespread fear among northeastern intellectuals of annexation's consequences for their country. Thoreau adds a new dimension to the metaphor by imagining the nation not just as a body, but as an insect body in the larva state, thus suggesting that at some future time it could undergo metamorphosis into a higher form.

Not just antiexpansionists, but expansionists, too, employed the nation-as-body metaphor. John L. O'Sullivan, coiner of the term *Manifest Destiny*—declared in 1846 that the United States "has reached a period which, like the marked physical transition in the human frame from the age of childhood to the noble stature and vigor of young manhood, is stamped with the distinct features of expansion, change, development."[12] Thus for both parties body metaphors provide a way of thinking and talking about a hotly debated and highly emotional issue. O'Sullivan can minimize problems associated with expansion by making it seem as natural and inevitable as adolescence. Thoreau and Fuller, on the other hand, can express their moral qualms about it by equating its effects with the more concrete physical effects of too much food on the human body.

But, as the passages from *The Prairie* and *Walden* suggest, Americans' struggle with the vertigo inspired by the nation's astonishingly rapid growth also manifests itself in representations of the literal human body. A number of visual and literary artistic productions of the period portray human beings dwarfed by their surroundings. In Melville's third novel, *Mardi* (1848), for example, the becalmed sailor who comes to doubt the validity of parallels and meridians understands his agoraphobic experience in terms of an *Alice in Wonderland*–like change in his own size: his voice begins to feel "in him like something swallowed too big for the esophagus," and he imagines his ship speaking to him like "the old beldam" to "the little dwarf."

Other artists, on the other hand, attempt to dispel fears that acquisition of territory will destroy or diminish the acquirer by depicting westerners as monstrously large. The Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper's epic of westward expansion, provide the most obvious examples of this rhetoric of size. In these novels the forester, settler, or woodchopper whose presence in the wilderness presages its later destruction is always gigantic. In *The Pioneers* (1823), frontier woodchopper Billy Kirby is "of great stature" and walks

"with the tread of a Hercules." In *The Prairie* (1827), Ishmael Bush's frame is "vast, and in reality of prodigious power. . . . like the slumbering and unwieldy, but terrible strength of the elephant." His sons take after him, as becomes clear in chapter 2 when the eldest cuts down one of the few small trees to be found on the prairie: "He stood, a moment, regarding the effect of the blow, with that sort of contempt with which a giant might be supposed to contemplate the puny resistance of a dwarf." Hurry Harry, the forester of *The Deerslayer* (1841), is "a man of gigantic mould" who "exceeded six feet four" and whose strength "fully realized the idea created by his gigantic frame."[13] He is first seen emerging from the forest into a clearing (as Americans of the period were emerging from the wooded eastern United States onto the western prairies), where he exclaims, "Here is room to breathe in!"

Images of large westerners also appear regularly in the work of other writers. In *Moby-Dick* (1851) the "cassock" is described as "longer than a Kentuckian is tall," and Bulkington's "fine stature" immediately convinces Ishmael that he must be "one of those tall mountaineers from the Alleganian Ridge."[14] In Melville's *Israel Potter* (1855), Ethan Allen's Herculean dimensions are a significant part of what makes him "essentially western": "Allen . . . had a person like the Belgian giants. . . . Though born in New England, he exhibited no trace of her character. He was frank; bluff; companionable as a Pagan" and possessed of "that inevitable egotism relatively pertaining to pine trees, spires, and giants."[15] In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Whitman refers to himself as "comrade of free North-Westerners, (loving their big proportions)."[16] Tall tales set in the Southwest (then Kentucky, Tennessee, etc.), which flooded America's periodicals, almanacs, and books from around 1831 to 1860, also emphasized size.[17] In T. B. Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841), one of the period's most popular tales, the hero makes a "knock down argument" in favor of big mosquitoes: "mosquitoes is natur, and I never find fault with her. If they are large, Arkansas is large, her varmints ar large, her trees ar large, her rivers ar large, and a small mosquitoe would be of no more use in Arkansas than preaching in a canebreak."[18] The crude Crockett almanacs of the period are "Rabelaisian in excess," and Davy Crockett, though portrayed as average in size, brags about performing feats that only a giant could have managed: "I can . . . tote a steamboat on my back . . . and swallow a nigger whole."[19] Harriet Beecher Stowe draws on the same mythology of the old Southwest in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* when she describes a "[g]reat tall, raw-boned Kentuckians" sitting in a barroom and "trailing their loose joints over a vast extent of territory."[20]

Visual art of the nineteenth century, particularly in its more popular

Figure 2. Anonymous banknote engraving, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch, and Edson, ca. 1852. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62–96813.)

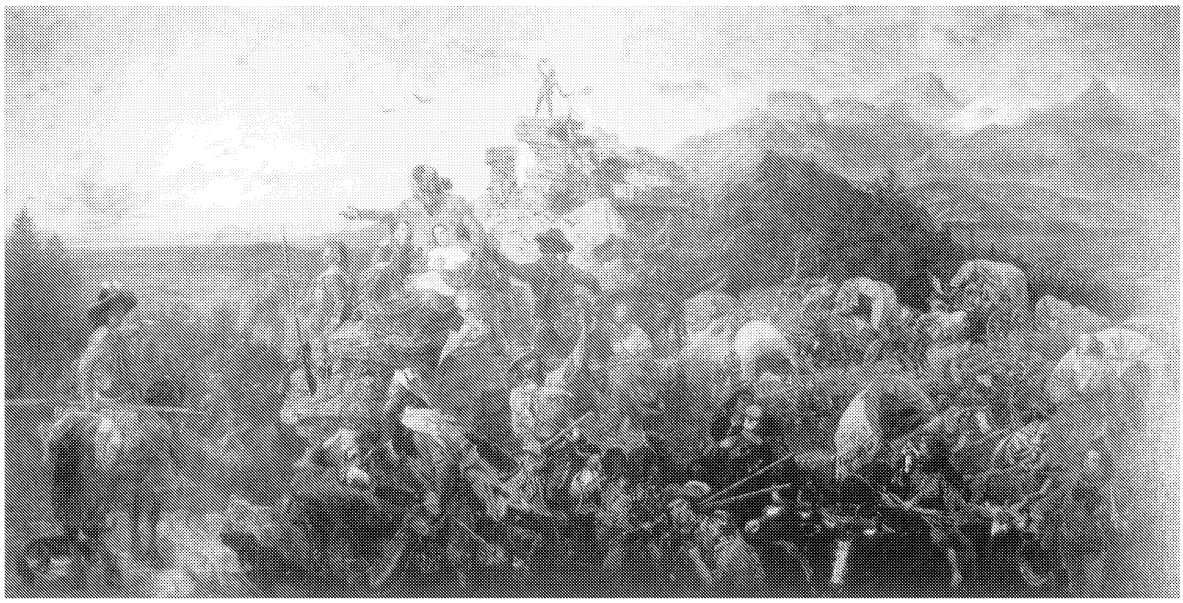

Figure 3. Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, 1862. Architect of the Capitol.

Figure 4. George A. Crofutt, *American Progress,* chromolithograph, ca. 1873, after an 1872 painting by John Gast. (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division LC-USZC4–668.)

forms, similarly associates western settlers with exaggeratedly large size. An anonymous 1852 banknote engraving depicts a massive wood-chopping settler who is entirely out of proportion to the trees, log cabin, and covered wagon in the background (see fig. 2). Emanuel Leutze's mural *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* (1862), painted for the west wall of the Capitol building, portrays a westerner (identifiable by his coonskin cap) who is literally twice the size of the two women he shelters (see fig. 3). A popular print taken from John Gast's 1872 painting *American Progress* represents Progress as a massive toga-clad woman who floats, stringing telegraph wire behind her, above westward-moving travelers (see fig. 4). In this case, vastness is not embodied by the settlers themselves, but is displaced onto a mythical figure who accompanies them.

This nineteenth-century obsession with body size has a telling antecedent in the eighteenth-century debate between the French naturalist Buffon and Thomas Jefferson. The cornerstone of Buffon's midcentury comparison of the animal species of the Old and New Worlds is his asser-

tion that because of unfavorable environmental conditions (primarily excessive cold and dampness), all animals are "considerably smaller in America than in Europe, and that without exception."[21] According to Buffon, even European animals introduced in America became significantly smaller than their European counterparts. Although Buffon acknowledges that "the savage of the new world is about the same height as man in our world," he avoids recognizing this fact as a flaw in his argument by claiming that Indians have smaller "organs of generation" and "no ardor for the female."[22] His belief in the greater size, and so, by his own logic, the greater stability and maturity, of European animals reflects, as Antonello Gerbi points out, "the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of the period."[23] According to Gerbi, Buffon is "at heart the instinctively superior European, accustomed to observe the strange creatures of other climes with an air of curious if benevolent condescension."

But this is only half the story. Buffon's writings on American fauna also reveal an uneasiness about what he sees as the overpowering qualities of the American continent. Though Buffon's denigration of the fauna of the New World clearly stems partly from Eurocentric bias, it also reflects a fearful sense that the American continent, untamed by humankind, has the capacity to overwhelm and diminish its inhabitants. In Europe, according to Buffon, "the great seeds . . . have received their fullest form, their most complete extension." In America, on the other hand, they are "reduced, shrunken beneath this ungenerous sky and in this empty land, where man, scarce in number, was thinly spread, a wanderer, where far from making himself master of this territory as his own domain, he ruled over nothing."[24] The continent's power to shrink its inhabitants may, however, be controlled through human activity: "[I]n several centuries, when the earth has been tilled, the forests cut down, the rivers controlled and the waters contained," Buffon assures his readers, "this same land will become the most fruitful, healthy, and rich of all."[25] Climactic changes arising from human mastery of the continent will not lead native species to increase in size, but "at least the animals transported there will not decrease in size."[26]

Thomas Jefferson, who devotes over one-eighth of his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781) to a nationalist refutation of Buffon's theory, catalogs the size of various American animals in his effort to prove Buffon wrong. The mammoth, whose previous existence in North America was proved by skeletons found east of the Mississippi ("as large as those found in the old world"), is the largest animal that Jefferson names. He even argues, on the basis of Indian legend, that the mammoth may still exist west of the Mississippi, in "[t]hose parts still . . . in their aboriginal state, unexplored and

undisturbed by us, or by others for us."[27] Thus where Buffon saw "this empty land . . . where man was thinly spread" as capable of shrinking animals and male "organs of generation," Jefferson sees the unsettled and unexplored regions of North America as capable of harboring immense animals long extinct in other parts of the world. Where Buffon saw a threat, Jefferson sees the potential for a remarkable exception. Buffon differs from Jefferson primarily in that he believes the size of the continent's inhabitants to be *inversely* proportional to the continent itself. In both cases, however, the American continent inspires powerful interest in the size of its inhabitants, and a sense that the latter should somehow correspond with the former.

Like both Buffon's theory and Jefferson's refutation of it, antebellum representations of westerners as unusually large suggest a direct correlation between body size and environment. But far more than that of the eighteenth-century, the nineteenth-century discourse of size reflects the culture's need to see western settlers as adequate to the task of subduing newly incorporated territory. The vast frames of Cooper's frontiersmen indicate their physical capacity to impose their will on the landscape; unlike small Pip, who in *Moby-Dick* goes insane after his "ringed horizon began to expand around him miserably," Ishmael Bush and the oversized figures in the period's popular art *should* be able to handle, and indeed thrive on, the "intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity" (414). The representation of westerners as large also naturalizes and legitimates aggressive expansion. Just as large mosquitoes are appropriate to Arkansas in Thorpe's tall tale, large people are appropriate to the increasingly large nation. Still, writers and orators also raise the possibility that Americans won't measure up. In the 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass,* Whitman warns, "The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness . . . of the spirit of the citizen," while Daniel Webster rather desperately pleads: "let our comprehension be as broad as the country for which we act, . . . let us not be pigmies in a case that calls for men."[28]

Readers of *Moby-Dick* have long commented on the size of Melville's most famous novel. One of the most recent to do so is Edward Said, who in his introduction to the Library of America edition addresses the question head-on: "But why, finally, such bulk, such almost gargantuan mass for what is after all a work of fiction?" He offers two answers. First, that Melville is "an irrepressible enthusiast," and second, that "*Moby-Dick* is . . . a book about going too far, pressing too hard, overstepping limits" (Said

notes that Ahab is "a giant").[29] Both of these answers are fine as far as they go, but they also raise further questions. Why should Melville have chosen to *thematize* size in his gargantuan book? What is the significance of the references to size and its connection to art within the novel? Furthermore, both of Said's responses to his own questions imply that *Moby-Dick*'s size is exclusively the result of Melville's temperament and private obsessions. For a critic who acknowledges that in *Moby-Dick* "Melville has very accurately caught something of the imperial motif that runs consistently through United States history and culture," this is an odd blind spot.[30] Neither of Said's hypotheses takes into account the possibility that, in writing a massive, unwieldy book in which size and space both play starring roles, Melville was also responding to the proliferation of size imagery circulating in his own culture.

When the *Pequod* sails out of Nantucket on Christmas Day, its crew enters a vast, boundary-less world. Like many of his contemporaries, Melville dramatizes this encounter by highlighting the physical size of human beings in relation to their geographical surroundings. He distinguishes himself from them, however, by parodying the self-enlarging rhetoric of his era in the very form of *Moby-Dick*. Melville scholars have long acknowledged that political symbolism plays an important role in that novel. Nowhere is its importance greater than in the representation of the politics of annexation, which forms a crucial backdrop for the parodic treatment of the rhetoric of size. According to this reading, the *Pequod* is an American ship of state, which pursues the whale as the American republic pursued territory to annex.

Melville portrays the whale, remarkable chiefly for its enormous size, in terms that suggest either geographical space in general or, more specifically, the American continent.[31] When, for example, the book's narrator demands that readers acknowledge the sperm whale's power—"I trust you will have renounced all ignorant incredulity, and be ready to abide by this; that though the Sperm whale stove a passage through the Isthmus of Darien, and mixed the Atlantic with the Pacific, you would not elevate one hair of your eye-brow" (338)—the reference to the mingling of the Atlantic and the Pacific recalls images of a continental republic spreading from one coast to the other, which were a mainstay of the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. (A characteristic editorial in the *New York Herald* complacently announced that "the pioneers of Anglo-Saxon civilization and Anglo-Saxon free institutions, now seek distant territories, stretching even to the shores of the Pacific."[32] O'Sullivan himself, in the editorial that made *Manifest Destiny* a household phrase, declared that it was the United States'

"right . . . to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us.")[33]

In "Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish," too, we hear familiar echoes of such rhetoric: "What to that redoubted harpooneer, John Bull, is poor Ireland, but a Fast-Fish? What to that apostolic lancer, Brother Jonathan, is Texas but a Fast Fish? . . . What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish. . . . What was Poland to the Czar? What Greece to the Turk? What India to England? What at last will Mexico be to the United States? All Loose-Fish" (398). The name Jonathan evokes the nation's figurehead or mascot—the counterpart to Britain's John Bull. But by calling him Brother and apostolic lancer Melville indicates the extent to which evangelical Christianity bolstered the discourse of expansionism. (In 1846, in the course of an address before the House of Representatives arguing the United States' claim to Oregon, John Quincy Adams asked the clerk to read Psalms 2:8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.")[34]

Throughout *Moby-Dick*, largeness is regarded as evidence of the whale's value and singularity. When praising the whale's skin, Ishmael invites us to "see . . . the rare virtue of interior spaciousness. . . . Of erections, how few are domed like St. Peter's! of creatures, how few vast as the whale!" (307). Even the captain of the Samuel Enderby, who abandons the hunt for Moby Dick after losing his arm, notes with admiration that the white whale was "the noblest and biggest I ever saw, sir, in my life" (438). Similarly, the sea's hugeness ("its unshored, harborless immensities" [134]) is the source of its power and mystery.

In "The Sperm Whale's Head" (chap. 74), however, we are offered a different invitation:

> Is it not curious, that so vast a being as the whale should see the world through so small an eye, and hear the thunder through an ear which is smaller than a hare's? But if his eyes were broad as the lens of Herschel's great telescope; and his ears capacious as the porches of cathedrals; would that make him any longer of sight or sharper of hearing? Not at all.—Why then do you try to "enlarge" your mind? Subtilize it. (331)

The contrasts between the lens of Herschel's great telescope and the whale's eye and between the porches of cathedrals and the whale's ear, which is smaller than a hare's, are characteristic of Ishmael's recurring interest in contrasts in size. The moral of these particular contrasts seems to be the futility of human attempts to construct huge technological or architectural

wonders to perform the same functions that natural wonders like the whale's eyes and ears perform easily in spite of their small size. That contrasts in size intrigue the narrator of *Moby-Dick* should come as no surprise: before the *Pequod* sets sail Ishmael, discussing warmth and coldness, remarks that "there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself" (53). Though Ishmael is famous for his contemplative, relativistic stance toward the world (acquired in part through contact with Queequeg), he is quite willing to see contrasts in size as indicators of value. In the case of "The Sperm Whale's Head," such contrasts serve the further purpose of discouraging men from attempting to enlarge their minds. Indeed, any human attempt to appropriate size is portrayed as ridiculous and futile.

In the case of Flask and Daggoo, however, large contrasts in size signal disparities in virtue or moral worth. When Ishmael notes that "this imperial negro, Ahasuerus Daggoo, was the Squire of little Flask, who looked like a chess-man beside him" (121) and that "[o]n his [Daggoo's] broad back, flaxen-haired Flask seemed a snow-flake" (221), he suggests that Flask, when compared to the far more noble Daggoo, resembles a mere toy and has the endurance, as well as the coloring, of something tiny and ephemeral. In both cases, Flask's diminutive size represents what Ishmael characterizes as his "pervasive mediocrity."

Flask's need to use Daggoo as a platform, in fact, arises from yet another contrast in size, this one between Flask's physiognomy and his personality: "But little King-Post was small and short, and at the same time little King-Post was full of a large and tall ambition, so that this loggerhead standpoint of his did by no means satisfy King-Post" (221). When Daggoo offers his shoulders for Flask to stand on, Flask readily accepts the offer, but carps, "I wish you fifty feet taller." The incident exemplifies the familiar gaze from above—the reaching for a higher vantage point from which to see a greater area with more clarity. More importantly, it represents America's willingness to use the physical labor of other races, particularly the slave power of Africans, to fuel its expansion. The loggerhead, Flask's original lookout point, is, like the strip of land that made up the original thirteen states, "not more spacious than the palm of a man's hand" and rises only two feet above the level of the whale boat. By standing on Daggoo's shoulders, Flask can see, and thus symbolically possess, a much greater area.

Toward the end of *Moby-Dick* Ahab makes a similar move when he has Starbuck lift him up to the mainmast in a basket. He insists that he himself will be the first to spot Moby Dick and that "Ahab must have the doubloon." Aloft, "with one hand clinging round the royal mast," Ahab can see

"for miles and miles . . . within the wide expanded circle commanded at so great a height" (538). The moment is yet another instance of the "monarch-of-all-I-survey" topos, with the doubloon symbolizing the economic rewards to be reaped by aggressively seizing territory. The fact that Ahab's basket hangs from the mainmast becomes significant when Ishmael calls it "the royal mast." Ahab's hand around it suggests that it is a kind of enormous scepter that grants royal status and gigantic size. Yet Ishmael's description of that hand as "clinging" to the mast implies that Ahab is pathetically dependent on the inanimate tools of the whaling trade for his power, and on the symbolic power that language (their names and nicknames) gives them. It is not only in relation to one another that contrasts in size function as hallmarks of Flask and Daggoo as characters. Ishmael criticizes Flask's judgment by observing that to him "the wondrous whale was but a species of magnified mouse, or at least water-rat" (119). Flask's inability or unwillingness to acknowledge the whale's true size, and his need to see the whale as small in order to feel large and powerful himself, is reminiscent of the self-inflating rhetoric of the Crockett almanacs, and reveals Flask's own inadequacy. Daggoo, on the other hand, earns the narrator's admiration for eating remarkably small mouthfuls of food. After describing the "motion of his colossal limbs, making the low cabin framework to shake, as when an African elephant goes passenger in a ship," Ishmael notes that "for all this, the great negro was wonderfully abstemious, not to say dainty. It seemed hardly possible that by such comparatively small mouthfuls he could keep up the vitality diffused through so broad, baronial, and superb a person." "[D]oubtless," he adds, "this noble savage fed strong and drank deep of the abounding element of air; and through his dilated nostrils snuffed in the sublime life of the worlds. Not by beef or by bread, are giants made or nourished" (152–53).

In an ironic variation on the noble savage motif, the narrator ties Daggoo to the natural world by suggesting that, as a giant, he subsists not on beef or bread like ordinary human beings, but on the abounding element of air and the sublime life of the worlds. But by pointing out that the massive Daggoo eats such comparatively small mouthfuls, Ishmael suggests at the same time that Daggoo is a natural gentleman graced with innate good manners. Just as the contrast between the actual size of the whale and Flask's conception of it reveals Flask's flaws, the contrast between Daggoo's size and the size of his mouthfuls reveals his restraint and nobility.

If Flask is a grown man whose smallness of stature represents his smallness of mind and spirit, then Pip must be seen as someone whose smallness represents his utter vulnerability. Pip is still a child, and so, unlike Flask, his smallness is not a shortcoming. Here, Melville uses contrasts in size not to

make points about discrepancies in value or integrity, but to highlight discrepancies in power. The first episode in which a contrast in size makes us aware of Pip's smallness and his fearfulness comes at the end of the chapter "Midnight, Forecastle," in which the sailors have a dance after swearing allegiance to Ahab's vengeful quest. As the celebration ends in a fight and then a squall, Pip exclaims, "Oh, thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here" (178). God's size and color in Pip's imagination link him to Moby Dick, also massive and white. The link suggests that God, too, is vengeful and all-powerful. Later in the novel, when Stubb temporarily abandons him in the open sea, Pip is again confronted with a hugeness that emphasizes his own smallness and vulnerability. It is "the intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity" that drives him insane. Here too the narrative reflects a link to the politics of annexation. Just as the sectional conflict brought on by expansion and annexation leads to the Fugitive Slave Law, which required that escaped slaves be sent back to their masters, so, after the horizon "expand[s] around him," Pip speaks of himself in the third person in the language of handbills advertising escaped slaves: "Reward for Pip! One hundred pounds of clay—five feet high—looks cowardly" (522) and "have ye seen one Pip?—a little negro lad, five feet high, hang-dog look, and cowardly!" (535). In both examples, Pip's size and fearfulness identify him, the repeated juxtaposition of the two qualities reinforcing their connectedness within the logic of the narrative.

As with Daggoo and Flask, Melville uses contrast to emphasize Pip's size. Pip's cowardice and small size acquire meaning in relation to the foolhardy courage and inflated sense of their own powers possessed by other members of the crew, particularly Flask and, in far more interesting and peculiarly admirable ways, Ahab. Flask enlarges himself by standing on Daggoo. In "The Cassock," the sailors gain a sense of invincibility by appropriating the whale's body: wearing the skin of the whale's phallus, which Ishmael describes as "longer than a Kentuckian is tall, nigh a foot in diameter at the base, and jet-black as Yojo, the ebony idol of Queequeg" (419). Michael Paul Rogin—who reads this chapter as being primarily about the commodification of the natural world, the transformation of the whale's body into oil—observes quite rightly that the "phallus-skin armor" that the mincer wears is an image of "a borrowed, self-preserving, masculine aggression," adding that "the cassock aggrandizes its wearer" and "allows the mincer to produce sperm."[35] It should be added that the episode is a send-up of the oversized figures in the period's literature and art, an astute commentary on the comical futility of such cultural work. Pip seems unable, however, to participate in such enlarging practices and so is overwhelmed

by the ocean's immensity. Yet his vulnerability also enables him to confront the oceans's vastness honestly, and so to acquire a kind of costly truth to which the sailors, encased in the whale's phallus, have no access: After his experience alone at sea, he plays the part of wise fool to Ahab. Ultimately, of course, neither "the cassock" nor Flask's elevated position on Daggoo's shoulders can protect the whalers from the power of the massive white whale. In the apocalypse of *Moby-Dick*'s final chapter, the self-inflating practices of the sailors, already shown to be comical, are exposed as utterly ineffectual as well.

In portraying such practices as useless, Melville indicts the self-aggrandizing rhetoric of his age. The destruction of the *Pequod* foreshadows the fate of a nation too caught up in the thrill of its own expansiveness to acknowledge that such rhetoric offers no protection against forces unleashed by annexation. *Moby-Dick* is not simply a critique of American imperialism, in other words, as many readings of the novel as political allegory have suggested, but is also a comic exploration of one cultural mechanism—the rhetoric of size—by which expansion was justified or made to seem reasonable. The tension between Melville's sense that such rhetoric was ludicrous and his attraction to the self-enlarging impulses that it quite literally *embodied* is in fact part of what generates the power of the novel.

Though Melville uses various characters and their relationship to one another to parody this rhetoric, he is too keenly aware of the appeal of self-enlargement to allow the narrator any sense of superiority to them. Indeed, *Moby-Dick* is itself a conscious exercise in exuberant self-enlargement. Ishmael points to the significance of size in aesthetic projects several times over the course of his odyssey, at first merely raising the issue of size and proportion, but later engaging in the kind of self-magnification that he simultaneously laughs at. At the beginning of the novel, he directs the reader's attention to the small size of the chapter at hand—"The Lee Shore"—in relation to the figure it memorializes, whose very name suggests his magnitude: "this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington" (106).

In "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales," Ishmael again reinforces the obsession with size that shapes the novel when he critiques an illustration "purporting to be a 'Picture of a . . . Spermaceti whale, drawn to scale'": "it has an eye which applied, according to the accompanying scale, to a full grown sperm whale, would make the eye of that whale a bow-window some five feet long. Ah my gallant captain, why did ye not give us Jonah looking out of that eye!" (262). This rhetorical question is clearly intended to poke fun at the illustration but also hints at the modus operandi of *Moby-Dick* itself, namely, disproportion taken to imaginative extremes.

In "The Town-Ho's Story," Ishmael portrays himself at an earlier period participating in the worship of largeness that accompanied U.S. expansion. When he wants to swear to the truth of the story he has just told, he requests that Don Sebastian "be particular in procuring the largest sized Evangelists you can" (259), as if swearing on a larger Bible will make a greater impression on his listeners or make his story seem more truthful. But if the purpose of the Bible is to lend credence to the story, then readers are surely meant to respond by protesting mentally that biblical size should make no difference. Its sanctity, rather than its size, makes the Bible proof of the storyteller's truth. In fact, if we see the entire small episode as being *about* storytelling, truth, and size, then the request should be read as Melville's ironic, self-deprecating comment on the size of his own book. In chapter 104 ("The Fossil Whale"), too, Ishmael addresses the issue of size and artistic effect. He remarks that "it now remains to magnify him [the whale] in an archaeological, fossiliferous, and antediluvian point of view." Feeling called upon to justify his language, he notes:

> Applied to any other creature than the Leviathan—to an ant or flea—such portly terms might justly be deemed unwarrantably grandiloquent. But when Leviathan is the text, the case is altered. Fain am I to stagger to this emprise under the weightiest words in the dictionary. And here be it said, that whenever it has been convenient to consult one in the course of these dissertations, I have invariably used a huge quarto edition of Johnson, expressly purchased for that purpose; because that famous lexicographer's uncommon personal bulk more fitted him to compile a lexicon to be used by a whale author like me. (455)

Here, as in his call for an extra-large Bible, Ishmael pokes fun at the rhetoric of size. Yet in calling attention to *Moby-Dick*'s own conspicuous size, Melville shows how irresistible he himself nonetheless finds it.

In *Moby-Dick,* then, Melville participates in his culture's obsession with size, and at the same time is able to stand back and perceptively comment on its absurdity. What is most interesting, ultimately, about his complex relationship to this cultural phenomenon is the way it precipitates formal innovation. By incorporating various genres—the sermon, the tall tale, treatises on etymology and cetology—into *Moby-Dick,* he stretches the limits of the novel form. Deeply aware of the folly of aggressive territorial expansion, Melville nevertheless felt an artistic imperative to redraw the boundaries of the novel.

Chapter Seven

Geography, Pedagogy, and Race

Despite—or perhaps because of—the multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups who coexisted uneasily within the nation's constantly fluctuating borders, the ideal of a racially homogeneous nation-state—of a geopolitical unit in which a single racial identity is coincident with national identity—was a powerful presence in antebellum American culture. This ideal is readily apparent in historical phenomena such as the founding of the African Colonization Society (1817)—designed to return free blacks to Africa—and the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which deported hundreds of thousands of Indians to territory west of the Mississippi, as well as in lesser-known legislation such as an Iowa law creating territory especially for half-breeds.[1] The founding of Liberia and the creation of a circumscribed "Indian Territory" outside U.S. borders provide highly visible examples of the way race became entangled with the nationhood and geography in the nineteenth-century United States.[2] Not surprisingly, that entanglement appears also in literary texts. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), though it expresses sympathy for African-Americans, sees no place for them in the United States: all the main African-American characters either die or emigrate to Africa by the end of the novel. Similarly, works such as Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales (1823–41) sentimentalize Native Americans, creating the stereotype of the "noble savage" while at the same time taking as a fundamental premise that the coexistence of Indians and whites within the nation's expanding boundaries is out of the question.

Any discussion of the intersection of national geography and race of course begs fundamental questions. What exactly is race? More precisely, how did the antebellum Americans who debated African colonization, Indian removal, and national expansion, or who read Stowe and Cooper,

think about race? How might we begin to gain access to the lived experience of nineteenth-century Americans, whose beliefs and actions concerning race have had—and continue to have—a profound effect on the nation's history?

Antebellum artifacts of various kinds provide, of course, the only building blocks with which we can reconstruct an answer to these questions. While many printed materials, particularly novels, have been fairly thoroughly mined for information on historical attitudes toward race, geography schoolbooks have been a relatively neglected source. In this chapter, I will argue that in fact they offer unique insights into the shifting meanings of race in the first half of the nineteenth century. While building on the rather broad investigations into the zeitgeist that have been undertaken by historians and literary scholars, I want to explore how new ideas about race were transmitted on a day-to-day basis through the medium of geography schoolbooks, which were "among the ultimate bestsellers in the early republic."[3] For if we are to understand major ideological shifts fully, it is necessary to investigate not only the discourses that shaped them, but also the media through which they were transmitted.

The word *race* first appeared in English in the sixteenth century, at which point it had a variety of related meanings having to do with offspring and lines of descent (as in Shakespeare's "Have I . . . / Forborne the getting of a lawful race, / And by a gem of women . . .")[4] and the classification of plants, animals, and humans (used in the way that genus and species would come to be used in biology). The word became more problematic, however, when people began using it to establish fixed subgroups within the human species, as in "the African race" or "the European race." (It is this sense of the word that has persisted, despite the fact that contemporary scientists still disagree over whether the genetic variability between the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and Europe justifies treating race as a biological category.)[5] Although the impulse to subdivide the human species into categories based on certain physical characteristics was an eighteenth-century phenomenon, it became notably more pernicious in the early nineteenth century, when such characteristics became hierarchized in a more formal and widespread fashion, and linked both to moral qualities and intellectual and emotional capacities.[6]

It has become something of a historical commonplace that American and European attitudes about race changed in fundamental ways during the first half of the nineteenth century. While whites had encountered, described, and often exploited nonwhites for centuries, it was only then that a set of doctrines emerged that posited "the *innate* and *permanent* infe-

riority of nonwhites."[7] Scholars have attributed this shift to a variety of factors. Historian William Stanton—author *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815–59*—points to the development of pseudoscientific attempts to explain race.[8] The rise of Romantic nationalism played a crucial role as well; the idea that each nation or *Volk* possessed special, unique qualities easily lent itself to the development of racist ideology on both sides of the Atlantic. As Henry Louis Gates has pointed out, ideas like those of Johann Gottfried von Herder's gave rise, in the nineteenth century, to "the shared assumption among intellectuals that race was . . . an ineffaceable quantity, which irresistibly determined the shape and contour of thought and feeling as surely as it did determine the shape and contour of human anatomy."[9] No doubt the intensification of European empire-building played a role in the widespread acceptance of such ideas. In the United States, the desire to justify both slavery and the appropriation of Indian lands may have made pseudoscientific and Romantic nationalist ideas about race particularly appealing. As Reginald Horsman suggests, "New racial ideas which influenced the whole of Western society . . . fell on especially fertile ground in the United States."[10]

Debates about annexation and statehood in the West provide some of the most interesting examples of this nineteenth-century shift, as well as the most paradoxical examples of the ideal of racially homogeneous nationhood. Even as the United States incorporated thousands of square miles of territory inhabited by nonwhites, policymakers from all points on the political spectrum consistently assumed racial uniformity as a desideratum for the expanding nation, even though they differed sharply on how annexation and the political organization of western territory might relate to that goal and in their attitudes toward slavery. For example, in 1856, lawyer and former attorney general of Pennsylvania John Read, arguing that the terms of the Missouri Compromise should be honored and that slavery should not be made legal in Kansas, looked back at the Northwest Ordinance—the 1787 legislative blueprint for how additional territory should be incorporated into the United States—to support his case, but completely ignored the key assumption that new western states would inevitably be at the very least biracial. (Article 3 of the ordinance provides for the just treatment of Indians.) Read argued, "Its intention was to preserve the soil for a white homogeneous population, which the experience of our country has proved to be the best, the happiest, and the strongest."[11] In 1849, when debates over the admission of California and Texas to the Union were the hot-button issues, Senator John A. Dix, too, had looked to the Northwest Ordinance as a mandate for racial uniformity. Its object, in his view, was "to maintain the

purity of the system, the homogeneousness of its parts."[12] In opposing the immediate admission of California, he makes clear that *racial* homogeneity is his central concern. His primary objection to admitting California is that "[i]ts present inhabitants are, to a considerable extent, Indians or Mexicans of mixed blood." Compounding the problem, California (as a result of the Gold Rush) "is receiving adventurers from almost every quarter of the globe—from both hemispheres—from Oceanica to the European continent and islands" (5). "I wish," he adds, "to see this heterogeneous mass pass through the process of fermentation . . . and settle down into something like consistence, before we undertake to endow it with all the attributes of self-government" (5). Southerner Robert J. Walker, an outspoken advocate of admitting Texas as a slave state, though he differed radically from Dix in his views on annexation, saw racial segregation by national boundaries as a desirable goal. According to Walker, the annexation of Texas would allow slavery to die out "gradually, by diffusion" in the United States. "[O]verruling Providence . . . will open Texas as a safety valve" and an "outlet for our negro race."[13] With Texas functioning as a kind of bridge or doorway out of the South, argued Walker, freed slaves would find an ideal and accessible residence in Mexico and Latin America: "in that delicious climate, so admirably adapted to the negro race . . . the free black would find a home. . . . [A]s slaves in the lapse of time . . . are emancipated, they will disappear from time to time west of the Del Norte, and beyond the limits of the Union, among a race of their own colour; will be diffused throughout this vast region, where they will not be a degraded caste, and where, as to climate, and social and moral condition, and all the hopes and comforts of life, they can occupy, among equals, a position they can never attain in any part of this Union" (15).

While anxieties engendered by the Mexican War—and the resulting incorporation of nonwhites into the nation—explain some of this racial rhetoric, it should be noted as well that it follows on the heels of a new emphasis on race as a means of categorizing human beings that began to appear in geography schoolbooks in the 1820s and 1830s. Whereas earlier schoolbook authors had not seemed to regard race as a particularly significant element of world geography, later authors presented material in ways that strongly accentuated race as a framework for understanding the various peoples inhabiting the world. One might argue that the marked changes in the presentation of race in such books simply reflected the changing attitudes in society at large. A careful examination of these schoolbooks, however, suggests a more mutually influential relationship between American culture and schoolbook production, educational

reform, and pedagogical theory. In fact, pedagogical reform—in particular a new emphasis on the visual in children's acquisition of information—played a key role in the reification of race and racial hierarchies. Geography schoolbooks, then, provide not only a record of the fact that the category of race shifted in this era, but also clues to help reconstruct a more nuanced understanding of *why* it shifted.

Perhaps the best-known authors of characteristically eighteenth-century—or what I'll call "first wave"—geography books were Jedidiah Morse and Susanna Rowson, better known today for her wildly popular seduction novel *Charlotte Temple.*[14] Morse is best known as the author of the first geography book written by an American to be published in the United States,[15] and his goals are nationalistic—as one might expect from an author who believes that geographical knowledge and patriotic sentiment are closely linked. In *The American Geography* (1789), for example, his first objective is "to impress the minds of American Youth with an idea of the superior importance of their own country, as well as to attach them to its interests."[16] Rowson's geography books, on the other hand, are less explicitly nationalistic, lack Morse's outspoken antislavery sentiments, and are more concerned with imparting appropriate moral and religious precepts. (A central task of teachers, and of writers of pedagogical texts, in Rowson's opinion, is "to impress upon the minds of youth a love of order and a reverence for religion.")[17]

In most other respects, however—including their methods of organizing material and their attitudes toward race and ethnicity—Morse's and Rowson's books are similar and are representative of other geography books of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[18] A survey of schoolbooks from that period reveals that geography book authors of the early republic borrowed shamelessly from Morse, just as he in turn borrowed from earlier English models. Morse's borrowing from English schoolbook writer William Guthrie is particularly striking. Guthrie, for example, describes the Chinese thus: "The Chinese, in their persons, are middle-sized, their faces broad, their eyes black and small, their noses rather short."[19] As will be seen below, Morse adopts the same description word for word in *The American Geography.* Examples of early American geography books that closely resemble those of Morse both in structure and style include John Hubbard's *The Rudiments of Geography* (1803) and Elijah Parish's *A Compendious System of Universal Geography, designed for Schools* (1807). In his preface, Hubbard makes clear that Morse's success was a force to be reckoned with by his successors: "Perhaps it may seem presumptuous

in [the author] to attempt such a work when Dr. Morse's geography is so universally celebrated. He [the author himself] feels the full force of this observation, but is confident that [Morse], who has obtained so many laurels, will not envy him one small sprig."

Morse's geography books typically begin with brief sections that introduce concepts in astronomy and define geographical terms. Morse then organizes the bulk of the information in his books according to continents and countries, describing first the United States and its various constitutive states and then Europe, Asia, and Africa and the various countries within them. Rowson's first book, *An Abridgement of Universal Geography*, is organized in the same way, while her second book, *Youth's First Step in Geography*,[20] is more explicitly geared toward catechistic recitation and is entirely in question-and-answer format.

For Rowson especially, the physical characteristics of various peoples, such as skin color or hair texture, are incidental facts to be noted along with the more important question of their religious beliefs. In discussing Africa, for example, *Youth's First Step* presents the following to be memorized by the young geography student:

> *Q. What is the complexion of the Africans in general?*
>
> A. The complexion of the African is either very swarthy or jet black. On the Barbary coast, along the Mediterranean, they are Moors, of a swarthy complexion, and of the Mahometan religion. In Egypt, it is much the same. In Abyssinia their complexion is dark, and their religion a mixture of Christianity and Judaism. In all other parts of Africa, the natives are black, and in general, with curled woolly hair. Some few have lank hair, especially in the African islands; and except where there are European settlements, they are Pagans and gross idolaters.[21]

Rowson does occasionally use terms that imply some general awareness of racial categories. She writes, for example, that the residents of the Comera Isles are "negroes."[22] In general, however, race is not an operative category for her.

Morse, too, throughout most of his books treats the physical traits of any given country's inhabitants as simply one incidental fact among many, comparable to population statistics or trading customs. For example:

> It is said that China contains 158 millions of inhabitants, between 20 and 60 years of age, who pay an annual tax. The Chinese in their persons are middle sized, their faces broad, their eyes black and small, and their

> noses rather short. It is thought good policy to forbid women from all trade and commerce.[23]

In fact, in his geographical writing Morse mentions eighteenth-century theories of race only once, at the very end of *The American Geography.* There, in a two-page section called "General Remarks," which has the quality of an afterthought rather than the summation that its title perhaps suggests, Morse writes: "The varieties among the human race . . . enumerated by Linnaeus and Buffon, are six."[24] This singular reference to Linnaeus and Buffon raises two questions, which in fact are two sides of the same coin. First, what does Morse gain by making reference to the racial theories of eighteenth-century naturalists at this point? And second, why if Morse was aware of their systems for classifying people, do they not play a larger role in his work (and that of his imitators)?

One possible answer has to do with Morse's standing in the eyes of his readership. Morse's first book, *Geography Made Easy* (1784), was a simple book, written quickly while Morse was teaching school in Connecticut to satisfy a pressing need for geography texts that accurately described the new nation. Pleasantly surprised by its success, Morse resolved to write a far more ambitious text, suitable for use as a reference book for adults as well as for schoolroom use. Morse mentions Linnaeus and Buffon in this aspiring work of 1789—*The American Geography.* But he eliminates it in the later expanded version titled *The American Universal Geography,* produced after he had already attained the status of the new republic's premier geographer. This suggests that the reference may have been due at least in part to a desire to demonstrate his own erudition and scholarly authority. When in 1795 Morse again writes a geography book designed explicitly for schoolchildren, race as an operative category is entirely absent, even from a general description of the earth's inhabitants that stresses their variety:

> The human inhabitants of the earth are composed of an astonishing number of different nations, of various colours, features, languages, religions customs, and occupations; and subject to the various forms of civil and ecclesiastical government. The Russian empire alone, includes no less than 50 different nations, or tribes.[25]

Ultimately, then, it appears that the racial classes established by Linnaeus and Buffon are not particularly useful or interesting to Morse. For as Richard Moss has proposed, *The American Geography* is really "an extended and complex jeremiad" that "lamented the sins of the nation and

exalted its virtues."[26] Accordingly, when rehearsing in "General Remarks" the categories of the eighteenth-century naturalists, which contribute nothing to his moral review of the nation, Morse stops in the middle of his description of the "negroes of Africa," who constitute "the fourth striking variety in the human species," to deliver a diatribe against the slave trade, which is far more relevant to his overall project: "But how I am shocked to inform you, that this infernal commerce is carried on by the humane, the polished, the christian inhabitants of Europe; nay even by Englishmen, whose ancestors have bled in the cause of liberty, and whose breasts still glow with the same generous flame!" He then digresses still further in order to give his readers "a more striking proof of the ideas of horror, which the captive negroes entertain of the state of servitude they are to undergo." In the story that follows, a captive African woman on a slave ship attempts to commit suicide by jumping overboard, is held back, and then is used as an object lesson by the captain, who believes that the slaves do not understand "the terrors attending death." After being let down into the water with a rope tied around her, the woman is "heard to give a terrible shriek." The captain, assuming her cries to be the result of her fear of drowning, and thus thinking the lesson finished, has her pulled up, only to find that the lower half of her body has been bitten off by a shark. It is nearly impossible, after first reading this horrific story, to return one's attention to the systematizing efforts of Linnaeus and Buffon. Indeed, it would seem that Morse himself had difficulty focusing his attention on them for very long, so much more interested is he in conveying the suffering of the Africans, and the consequent evil of the slave trade, than in delineating racial differences.

In addition to Morse's own moral and nationalist agenda, generic and disciplinary conventions militate against much concern with racial categories in his books and those of his imitators. At the end of the eighteenth-century, the relatively recent impulse to create all-encompassing racial categories for the human species was the purview of naturalists rather than geographers, whose role, for the most part, was to catalog information rather than to analyze it systematically. The inductive process of developing general categories through observation and then assigning individual cases to those categories played very little part in the work of the "first wave" geographers. The format in which geographical information was traditionally conveyed reinforced this traditional division of labor. The Danish geographer Conrad Malte-Brun (1775–1826) represents a notable exception to the early geographers' reluctance to systematize: it was he who introduced the categories "savage," "half-civilized," and "civilized" in his six-volume *Pre-*

cis of Universal Geography (1810–29).[27] It was not until geographers gave up the traditional method of organizing material according to political units exclusively, however, that Malte-Brun's systematizing impulse took hold more generally.

The prototypical first-wave geography texts of the early republic were enormously successful. Morse's books, for example, reappearing in many new editions and imitated by less prominent authors, shaped the way a generation of Americans thought about the world and their place in it.[28] The educational reform movement that arose in New England during the 1820s, however, sharply criticized the methods of Morse, Rowson, and their peers. Though part of a larger network of New England reform movements, this one also owed a great deal to new ideas imported from Europe about the psychology of children. The Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi was particularly influential. He believed that the goal of education was to develop children's moral, physical, and mental faculties to their fullest potential, and in order to accomplish this goal he advocated educating rich and poor children together, abandoning punishment, and encouraging children's natural propensity to absorb knowledge through the use of their senses.

Pestalozzi's best-known American disciple was Bronson Alcott, who incorporated a number of Pestalozzian innovations into his famously experimental Temple School. But new, Romanticism-inspired ideas about childhood and the psychology of learning also influenced a set of second-wave geography educators. Morse, Rowson, and their peers had seen their own books as conduits for the transmission of geographical knowledge and, secondarily, as a means of promoting nationalist sentiment or reinforcing correct moral values or religious views. The reformers, on the other hand, saw the nature and purpose of their subject very differently. James G. Carter, for example, in a pamphlet called *An Essay on Teaching Geography,* insisted that geography could be an important tool for assisting children's intellectual development: "It offers, when studied in the manner I have described, the best discipline for several of the powers earliest developed in the infant mind."[29]

This is not to say that nationalistic or political motives disappeared from the educational scene altogether. But they did take a new form. Carter, for example, was an active member of the "common school" movement, which under the leadership of Horace Mann agitated for a public school system. As his *Essays upon Popular Education* (1824–25) make clear, Carter was motivated by concern for the nation's democratic institutions. Without accessible education for all classes of citizens, he warned, "you may pre-

serve and amuse yourselves with the name of . . . a republican government, but you will not be blessed with the reality."[30]

In their critique of older techniques of imparting geographical knowledge, however, reform-minded educators promoted two innovations that inadvertently complemented new ideas about race. The first was a new emphasis on the *visual* as a key part of the learning process. In the preface to his first book, published in 1822, William Woodbridge, the most innovative of the education reformers, was not only adamant about the advantages of visual aids such as maps, but also critical of the descriptive method that he hoped to supplant:

> It is a fact well known to all who have observed the operations of the mind, that impressions received through the medium of the eye are much stronger and more permanent than any which can be produced by description.[31]

He makes a similar statement in *A System of Universal Geography* (1824), with a characteristic invocation of contemporary theories of mind: "It is well observed by Watts in his treatise on the Improvement of the Mind, that 'The situation of the several parts of the earth is better learned by one day's conversing with a map or sea-chart, than by merely reading the description of their situation a hundred times over in books of Geography.' "[32]

Not coincidentally, this new emphasis on the visual in education occurred at the same time that new technologies of printing enabled publishers to reproduce images easily and cheaply.[33] So while Morse's and Rowson's books contain no illustrations at all and very few maps (*The American Geography* contained one foldout map of North America), those that follow Woodbridge regard illustrations as indispensable, and their publishers loudly trumpet the number included in order to persuade parents and teachers that their book offers the best, most painless system of learning geography available on the market. Augustus S. Mitchell's *An Easy Introduction to the Study of Geography,* published in 1840, is a typical example of the way that new ideas about the importance of the visual in education that had originated in the reform movement invaded the publishing world and filtered down to the general public. The number of illustrations included in Mitchell's text is regarded as so important that it is actually incorporated into the book's full title as it appears on the frontispiece: *An Easy Introduction to the Study of Geography: Designed for the Instruction of Children in Schools and Families. Illustrated by One hundred and Twenty Engravings, and Fourteen Maps.* The preface then goes on to announce that

these illustrations, "nearly all from original designs," are not "for the purpose of mere ornament." Instead, these representations of "the Landing of the Pilgrims, William Penn's Treaty with the Indians, and Pocahontas saving the life of Captain John Smith," and so on, "will probably impress the mind of the scholar more forcibly with recollections of New England, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, than any description . . . and, . . . in many cases, will produce a permanent impression." By 1840, new ideas about the role of the visual in education had become commonplace: "The utility of appropriate engravings, associated with descriptive Geography," the publisher announces, "is now generally admitted; and their importance in communicating more clear and vivid ideas, requires but little argument."[34]

In addition to emphasizing visual tools, Woodbridge, Carter, and their peers also discouraged rote memorization in favor of encouraging students to grasp underlying concepts. Carter, for example, argues against the kind of rote memorization for which Morse and Rowson's books were specifically designed by comically highlighting the potential negative results:

> The manner of teaching it [geography] by question and answer, which is the manner adopted by the books approved at present, is objectionable, although it enables the young learner *to seem* to have acquired great knowledge of the subject. . . . I apprehend that many a child, who thus delights and astonishes his parents, and gains his books and instructer [*sic*] great renown, would make as sorry a figure, on more careful examination, as the child mentioned by Miss Hamilton. After answering to all his questions, and giving an accurate account of the statistics of Turkey, on being asked, "Where is Turkey?"—a question not in the book—he replied, "*in the yard with the poults.*"[35]

William Woodbridge, too, argues against the organizational methods of older books, but grounds his arguments in psychology and science. He is particularly critical of the way "a variety of dissimilar facts relating to a single country are collected under one head, and there is no association but that of mere locality to aid the mind in its rapid transitions from one subject to another." To study in this manner, he argues, is "calculated to leave a confused assemblage of ideas in the mind . . . and to produce the habit of forming loose and indistinct associations." It is through the comparison and classification of similar objects, he concludes, "that such beauty and simplicity have been given to modern science."[36] In his second book, the prolific Woodbridge makes a similar argument and adds the following epi-

graph from *Jamiesen's Logic:* "The very essence of science consists in generalizing, and reducing to a few classes or general principles, the multitude of individual things which every branch of human knowledge embraces."[37]

As a result of these arguments, and no doubt also of the popularity of innovative texts like Woodbridge's, schoolbook writers of the 1820s and 1830s gradually moved toward adopting his methods. Geography books geared toward children were increasingly arranged not according to political units (which were "perpetually fluctuating with the waves of conquest and the tides of revolution") but according to "the universal laws of nature, or the stable principles of intellectual and political philosophy."[38]

The question that arises, of course, is what these "universal laws" or "stable principles" are. To judge by his books and those of his imitators, Woodbridge's method involves classifying information according to categories such as "Rivers," "Mountains," "Climates," and so forth, and ranking the objects within those categories. In *Modern School Geography, on the plan of comparison and classification,* for example, Woodbridge provides an illustration to give schoolchildren not simply a set of statistics regarding individual mountains, but a sense of how mountains compared to one another (see fig. 5).[39] To a certain extent, this seems reasonable. Presumably a child would indeed gain a clearer conception of the Amazon's magnitude by comparing its length to that of other rivers, rather than seeing it described in the context of South American trade goods and religious beliefs.

When we turn from facts about the length of rivers to facts about people, however, problems become more apparent. Under the old system of organizing all information according to the primary categories of nation or region, the subcategories used to describe a place's inhabitants were relatively flexible, and were less ideologically charged. Groups of people were often described, for example, in terms of "manners and customs" or national character. There is no doubt that the tone used in such descriptions is sometimes one of disgust or condescension. Elijah Parish, for example, sounds smugly superior as he describes the French as effeminate and the Arabs as "pirates, but very hospitable."[40] But such categories were by definition fluid. "Manners and customs" described what people *did,* not what they *were.* And as Morse points out in *The American Geography* while remarking on the differences between the European nations, "these . . . become gradually less discernable, as fashion, learning, and commerce prevail more universally."[41] Such national characteristics, in other words, are mutable, capable of being transformed through education and trade. The new system of organizing geographical information, on the other hand, encouraged writers to look at the categories they used to classify people as

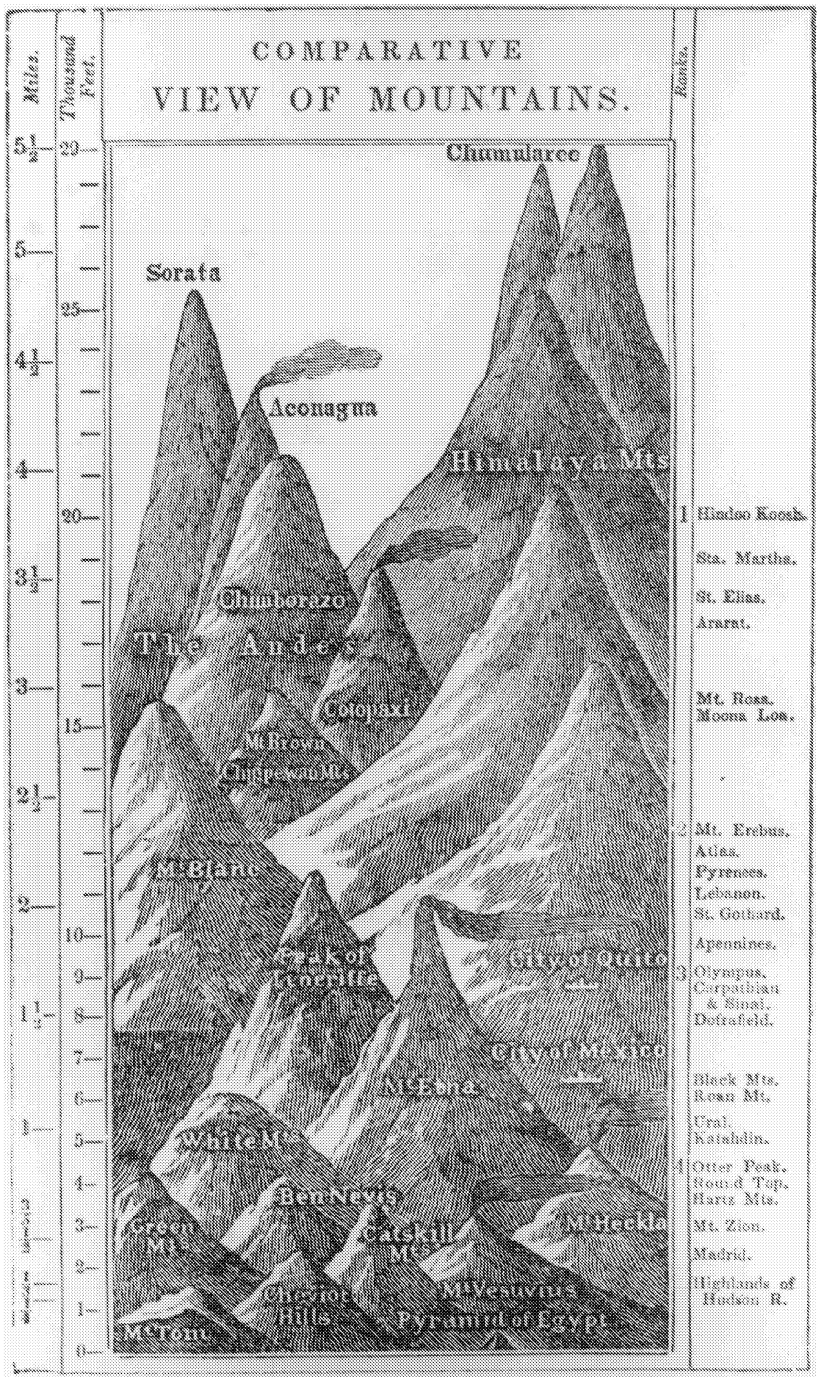

Figure 5. From William Woodbridge, *Modern School Geography* (1846). (Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.)

fixed rather than mutable. "Race" then becomes the defining factor that enables writers to break down the category "Man" into groups along the same lines as geographical features or animal species.

At the same time, the new system of describing geographical phenomena encourages more elaborate, and more problematic, hierarchies based on race. Human physical characteristics become not simply incidental facts

about countries (as in Morse's description of the Chinese), but rather manifestations of an unchanging hierarchical system in which "the European race" is superior to "the African, or black race" just as, for example, the Mississippi is longer than the Hudson. One can see the results of this movement in geography pedagogy in Mitchell's *An Easy Introduction to the Study of Geography* (1840), which states, "The European or Caucasian is the most noble of the five races of men. It excels all others in learning and the arts, and includes the most powerful nations of ancient and modern times. The most valuable institutions of society, and the most important and useful inventions, have originated with the people of this race." Mitchell refers to "the Negro race" as "ignorant and degraded."

This trend continued in schoolbooks published later in the nineteenth century. In *Warren's Common School Geography,* for example, which could serve as a model for the expression of Woodbridge's ideas in its presentation of material and its numerous, lively illustrations, lesson 17 is called "Man," and the student is informed that "mankind is divided into five varieties, or races, differing from each other by certain characteristic features." The first listed is "The Caucasian, or White race," of which it is said, "Most of the nations of Europe and America belong to this race. The Caucasian race is superior to all others in intelligence, energy, and courage."[42] Similarly, the *Primary Geography* of A. Von Steinwehr divides humans into five races and suggests conversationally, "You are familiar with two of them—the **white** and the **black.** The others are called the **red,** the **yellow,** and the **brown** races. The **white** or **Caucasian** race," adds Von Steinwehr, "is superior to all, and exceeds any other race in power."[43]

If the new method of organizing geographical information encouraged the adoption of race as a conceptual framework for thinking about people, the nearly ubiquitous presence of illustrations tended to reify the concept of race still further. The frontispiece of *A System of Geography,* by Sidney Morse (who in 1844 capitalized on his father's famous name by publishing his own geography schoolbook) reinforces the parallel between racial categories and a new emphasis on classes of geographical phenomena (see fig. 6). By juxtaposing illustrations of four racial types with a chart illustrating the comparative height of mountains and length of rivers, the frontispiece implicitly suggests that race is an underlying geographical category on par with—as real as—physical phenomena like mountains or rivers. But even more important is the way that visual illustrations by their very nature help occlude the fuzziness or arbitrariness of the relatively recently established racial categories. In almost all geography books written after the 1830s, a single figure, distinguishable from others only by his physical characteristics, stands in for the entire group referred to in the text, so that those phys-

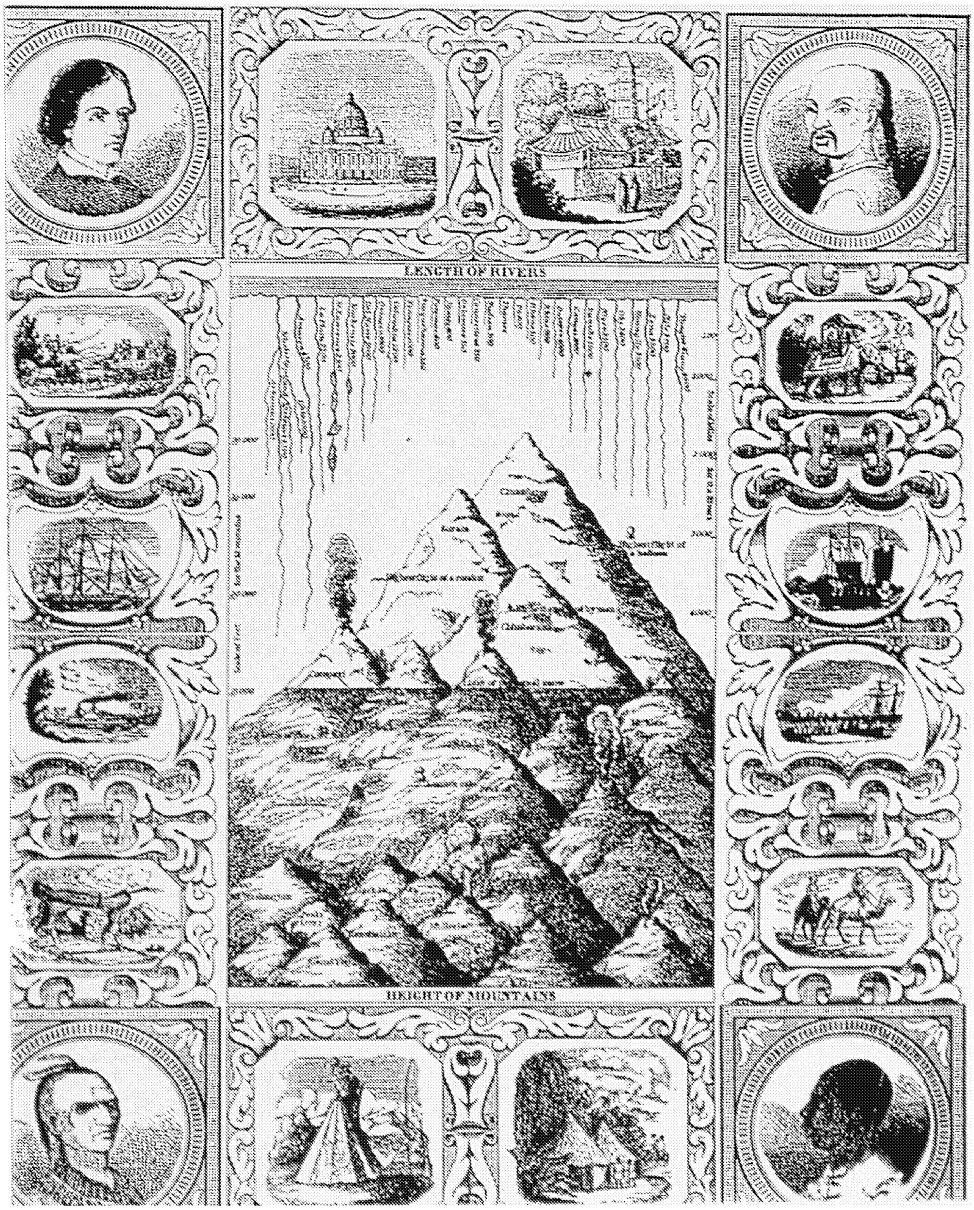

Figure 6. Frontispiece from Sidney Morse, *A System of Geography* (1844). (Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.)

ical characteristics come to define the group. Illustrations are designed to produce an archetypal figure who embodies the particular qualities being emphasized. But as the illustrations of race from Mitchell's *An Easy Introduction to the Study of Geography* and Woodbridge's *Modern School Geography* (see figs. 7 and 8) indicate, the results often verge on stereotype.

An illustration for *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners* (1845) helps to sum up the role that geography schoolbooks played in transforming nineteenth-century worldviews (fig. 9). It depicts a man and five children gath-

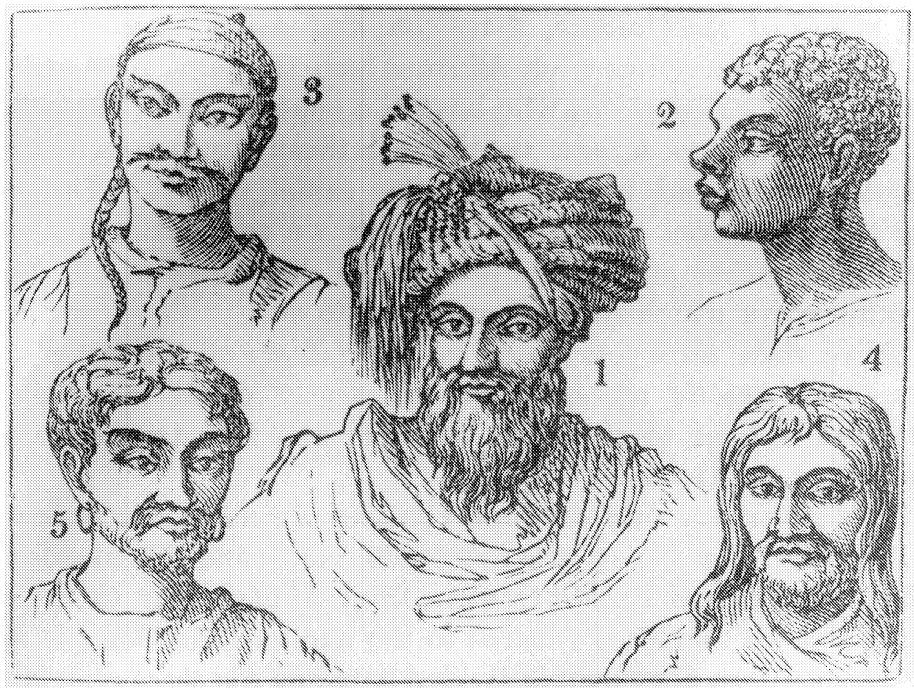

Figure 7. From Augustus Mitchell, *An Easy Introduction to the Study of Geography* (1840). (Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.)

ered around a globe, with a map in the background. Holding a book in his right hand, the man points to a location on the globe while the children look on attentively. The caption reads, "Describing the World, or Teaching Geography." That "teaching geography" means "describing the world" is a simple, even obvious, fact. But its implications can be easily overlooked. As the Peter Parley illustration reminds us, the children have no direct or unmediated access to data about the world. The man in the picture necessarily shapes that data, and may, we can speculate, be doing so by engaging in the kind of geography pedagogy discussed in this chapter.

Designed as they were to make the experience of learning geography more meaningful to children, the changes recommended by reformers such as Carter and Woodbridge seem, and indeed are, laudable. It is important to recognize, however, the extent to which the reorganization of geography schoolbooks according to their theories complemented the shift toward a more systematized, hierarchical view of race. Motivated both by pedagogical zeal and the desire to sell more schoolbooks in the expanding national market, antebellum educators encouraged their readers to conceptualize the world in new ways. In the process, they played a powerful role in predisposing them to accept new theories of race. Examining their

Figure 8. From William Woodbridge, *Modern School Geography* (1846). (Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.)

role in this process highlights the far-reaching and often unexpected results of education reform and also extends our understanding of the range of factors that contributed to a more rigid, systematized racism. To understand this shift fully, I suggest, it is necessary to look not only at its intellectual sources—romantic nationalism and pseudoscientific fads such as phrenology, for example—but also at the habits of mind, developed in the schoolroom, that made new ideas about race broadly appealing.

Understanding those habits of mind and their roots in geography pedagogy, may also, in turn, allow us to speculate in useful ways about the geography of the nation and about the policy decisions that shaped it. What finally put a damper on antebellum America's expansive energies? Why, after the Treaty of Guadalupe that ended the Mexican War in 1848, did the boundaries of the United States, so dramatically in flux for decades, remain largely fixed? While the Civil War and the internal tensions that led to it may have been the most important factor—obviously the Civil War preoccupied the nation in ways that precluded additional expansion—the anxieties expressed by men such as John A. Dix and John Read about the racial makeup of newly annexed citizens should not be overlooked. As historian Gavan Daws has pointed out, the United States had the opportunity to

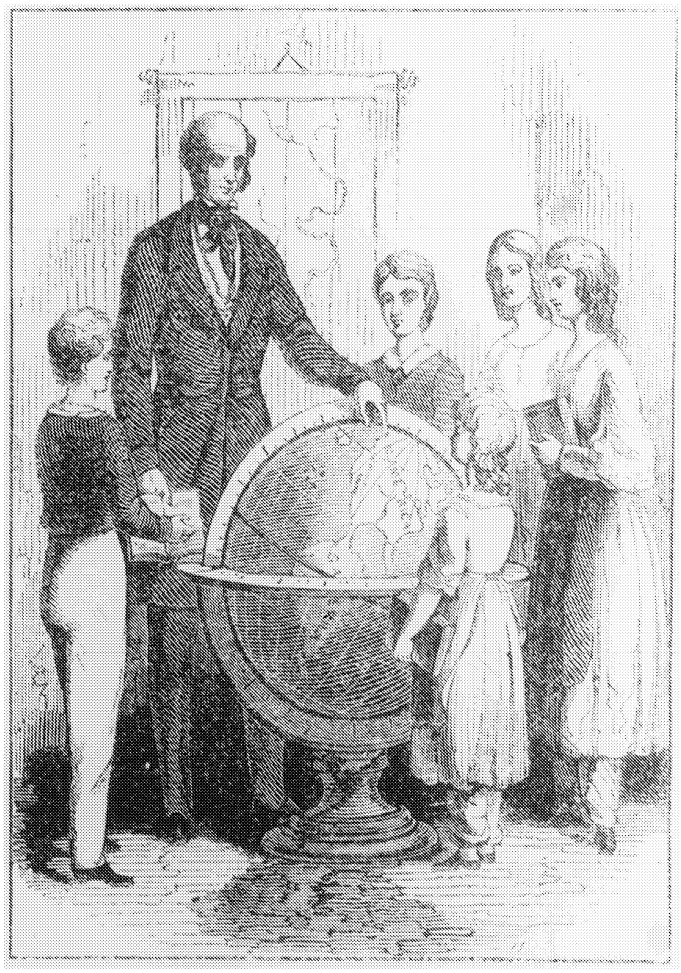

Figure 9. Frontispiece from Samuel Goodrich, *Peter Parley's Geography for Beginners* (1847). (Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.)

annex Hawaii in the 1850s, but chose not to. Americans living in Hawaii were eager to overthrow the Hawaiian monarchy in order to advance their own economic interests. But many opposed annexation because they opposed citizenship for the native Hawaiians.[44] Race may also have played a role in American policy after the Spanish-American War. Although the United States took control of various former Spanish colonies such as Puerto Rico and the Philippines, Americans chose not to incorporate them into the nation as they had New Mexico and California fifty years earlier. Like the children in the Peter Parley illustration, the Americans who made those decisions had been taught to perceive the world in particular ways. Race, to them, was a systematized component of world geography in ways that their great-grandparents—readers, perhaps, of Morse or Rowson's schoolbooks—could not have imagined, and they shaped national policy, as well as the nation itself, accordingly.[45]

Epilogue

In this book I have tried to shed new light on the "American Renaissance" by showing how writers like Melville, Thoreau, and Fuller addressed the problem of their nation's size and shape. Some of their most important insights and formal innovations emerged, as we saw, from their engagement with various cultural mechanisms for assuaging anxiety about the nation's constantly expanding borders—mechanisms that both fascinated and appalled them. We have also seen how a relatively fixed, visualizable form, represented by maps and in various other kinds of printed materials, was a crucial component of nation formation.

American texts following the Civil War, by contrast, manifest a new complacency about the nation's now seemingly fixed and unalterable form. While some of the same tropes appear in them as in antebellum writings—Frederick Jackson Turner's use of the body politic metaphor, for example—they no longer reflect anxiety about formlessness or overly rapid growth. At the same time, particular kinds of texts that emerged in tandem with Americans' obsession with national form disappeared altogether. As panoramas lost their status as stand-alone attractions and became merely one element in variety shows, the accompanying pamphlets, which trained readers to see land in particular ways, were no longer produced.

Today, of course, boundaries and geographical space are once again vexing problems in many parts of the world. Globalization has at times caused national borders to seem increasingly insignificant. Treaties like the North American and the Central American Free Trade Agreement allow businesses to operate more or less as if national boundaries within North America did not exist, even as American policy has been to restrict border crossings by individuals. The fall of the Soviet Union and the resultant

resurgence of nationalisms in eastern Europe, on the other hand, have given new importance to national boundaries, and in some cases have caused them to be redrawn. Ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world, too, have called into question the extent to which lines on official maps reflect current allegiances, self-images, and lived experiences of real human beings. Even in the United States, which has sometimes seemed immune from the violence and chaos prevalent in other parts of the world, regional tensions have emerged in a new form in the last decade. Pundits and citizens alike now see the nation as divided into "red states" and "blue states." Not since the Civil War have divisions within the body politic been so coextensive with geography.

As I wrote this book, it was impossible not to hear echoes of the 1840s and 1850s in contemporary century rhetoric. When I hear George Bush express his desire to make "our borders something more than lines on a map," I have a hard time not thinking of William Ellery Channing's fear that the boundaries of Texas and Mexico will become "little more than lines on the sand of the sea-shore."[1] The echo is, of course, incongruous. How unlikely it is that the liberal Unitarian clergyman from Boston could have imagined, in 1844, that Texas—then an independent nation—would a century and a half later produce a president of the United States, much less one with whom he would share an anxiety about the very same southern border.

What is really important about the echo, however, is that two so very different men should both have expressed concern about the potential meaninglessness of borders. Both urgently want the nation's boundaries to be something more than lines on a map. But isn't that what national boundaries are? The texts I have analyzed here remind us that the categories by means of which we make space meaningful—nation, border, latitude, parallel, meridian, and so on—are products of the human imagination. We make them rather than find them, just as we create metaphors such as the body politic. Even notions like near and far, Thoreau reminds us, are relative, dependent upon individual perceptions and assumptions. These texts also remind us, however, that human beings have a deep investment in seeing those categories as natural. Because place is such an important component of human identity, we prefer to see such categories as given, rather than made. It is a creative tension, and in the antebellum United States it led to the production of a rich array of texts, some representing the means by which space was symbolically appropriated and others questioning those means. Such texts themselves can be thought of as maps, on which we can find not just traces of our own complicated relationships to the places we inhabit, but also strategies for rethinking them.

Notes

Introduction

1. Joel Porte, *Emerson in His Journals* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 372.

2. For more on the Maine boundary dispute and the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, see Kenneth E. Shewmaker, ed., *Daniel Webster: "The Completest Man"* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990), 203–16; and Alec McEwen, introduction to *In Search of the Highlands: Mapping the Canada-Maine Boundary, 1839. The Journals of Featherstonhaugh and Mudge, August to November 1839* (Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1988), 9–13.

3. *New World,* Saturday, September 4, 1841.

4. David N. Livingstone, "Of Design and Dining Clubs: Geography in America and Britain, 1770–1860," *History of Science* 29 (June 1991): 177.

5. For an account of early controversy over expansion that argues against a narrow focus on slavery as the sole problem, see Frank Owsley, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800–1821* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

6. Lyman Beecher, *A Sermon Delivered at Litchfield, on the Day of the Anniversary Thanksgiving, December 2, 1819. Published by Request* (Hartford: Printed by Lincoln and Stone, 1820), 14.

7. *Constitution of the American Bible Society: formed by a convention of delegates, held in the city of New-York, May, 1816. : Together with their address to the people of the United States; a notice of their proceedings; and a list of their officers* (New York: Printed for the American Bible Society, by G. F. Hopkins, 72 William Street, 1816); Theodore Sedgwick, *Thoughts on the Proposed Annexation of Texas to the United States. First published in the New-York Evening Post, under the Signature of* VETO (New York: Printed by D. Fanshaw, 1844), 28.

8. Herman Melville, *Mardi and a Voyage Thither,* ed. Harrison Hayford (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1970), 9–10.

9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

10. Channing to Henry Clay, 1837, *The Works of William E. Channing* (Boston, 1848), 2:184–248.

11. Andro Linklater, *Measuring America: How the United States Was Shaped by the Greatest Land Sale in History* (New York: Plume, 2002), 73.

12. See Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Initially territories in the Old Northwest were to be managed by executive government. As soon as there were five thousand free adult males, a territorial legislature was formed and the territory became eligible to send a nonvoting member to Congress. When the population reached sixty thousand, the territory could become a state.

13. Rufus King to Elbridge Gerry, June 4, 1786, qtd. in Onuf, *Statehood and Union,* xviii–xix; John Randolph to Josiah Quincy, October 18, 1813, qtd. in Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1867), 337.

14. Sidney E. Morse, *The New States, or A Comparison of the Wealth, Strength, and Population of the Northern and Southern States; as also of their respective powers in Congress; with a view to expose the injustice of Erecting New States at the South. By Massachusetts* (Boston, 1813), 6.

15. The information on the quantity of land incorporated in the aftermath of the Mexican War comes from Malcolm J. Rohrbough, ed., *Encyclopedia of American History,* vol. 4, *Expansion and Reform, 1813–1855* (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 235; "The Territorial Question. Speech of Hon. Wm. L. Dayton, of New Jersey, in Senate of the United States, March 22, 1850," 1. [Washington, DC] Printed at the Congressional Globe Office [1850].

16. Sedgwick, *Proposed Annexation of Texas,* 28.

17. *New World,* March 23, 1844. The article was called "The Annexation of Texas," and was the first in a series of four front-page articles on the subject.

18. The National Reform Association, founded in 1845 and led by *New-York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley (close friend of both Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau), was the primary force behind the opposition to free land. Chiefly concerned with discouraging speculation, they proposed three measures designed to prevent it: *(a)* that land be sold rather than given to settlers, *(b)* that the land in question be not subject to seizure for debt, and *(c)* that individuals should be forever restricted to acquiring only one quarter-section (160 acres). Thoreau biographer Robert D. Richardson Jr. argues that the NRA's land reform agitation should be seen as a "public context" for Thoreau's "private experiment" at Walden Pond. Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 149–50.

19. Derek Howse, *Greenwich Time and the Discovery of Longitude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 120.

20. For an original and insightful discussion of homestead programs in the United States, see Dorothee E. Kocks, *Dream a Little: Land and Social Justice in Modern America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 3–29.

21. Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman: Sketches of Sport on the Northern Cattle Plains* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1885), 19.

22. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays, with a Commentary by John Mack Faragher* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 43.

23. Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 3.

24. Cather, *O Pioneers!* 51.

25. See, for example, Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956); and William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Knopf, 1966). Although neither Smith nor Miller sees himself as following in Turner's footsteps, and Smith even takes issue with a number of Turner's assumptions, both scholars accept Turner's assumption that it is the Euro-American's encounter with "wilderness" that leads to an American character distinct from its European antecedents.

26. See, for example, Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987); and Annette Kolodny, "Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions: Notes Toward a New Literary History of the American Frontiers," *American Literature* 64, no. 1 (1992): 1–18.

27. Maurice O. Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775–1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 14. A key component of the movement to globalize American studies has been the effort to examine the cultural consequences of American imperialism. See, for example, John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). Kris Fresonke is an important example of a scholar who in recent years has taken steps toward overturning Americanist dogma regarding the West. See Kris Fresonke, *West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest Destiny* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

28. Lawrence Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 289.

29. This question was posed by Ernest Renan in a seminal 1882 lecture called, appropriately enough, "What is a Nation?" trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8–22; Anderson, *Imagined Communities;* Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

30. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 94.

Chapter 1

1. Edward Everett Hale, *The Man Without a Country and Other Stories* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 16. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

2. Daniel Webster, *Congressional Globe,* March 23, 1848, 17:535.

3. I am indebted to Robert A. Ferguson's work on the popularity of "The Man Without a Country" in his forthcoming book *The Trial in American Life.*

4. Jedidiah Morse, *The American Geography; or, A View of the Present Situation of the United States of America* (Elizabethtown: Printed by Shepard Kollock, 1789), vii.

5. Emerson, January 1820, in Porte, *Emerson in His Journals,* 4.

6. John A. Dix, *Speeches and Occasional Addresses,* vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1864), 58, 54.

7. Charles Boynton, *The Russian Empire: Its Resources, Government, and Policy. By a Looker On from America* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys; New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan; Boston: Whittemore, Niles, and Hall; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1856), 389, 31, 42, 85.

8. See Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

9. Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935), 2.

10. *Letter of Mr. Walker [Robert J.], of Mississippi, Relative to the Reannexation of Texas: in Reply to The Call of the People of Carroll County, Kentucky, to Communicate His Views on that Subject* (Philadelphia: Printed by Mifflin and Parry, at the Office of the Pennsylvanian, 1844), 8–9.

11. C. J. Ingersoll, *Congressional Globe,* 28th Cong., 2nd sess., 86, qtd. in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny,* 55–56.

12. For more on race and westward expansion, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

13. Burdett Hart, *Better Things than War. A Discourse Delivered at the Congregational Church in Fair Haven on the Annual Thanksgiving of 1847* (New Haven: Peck and Stafford, 1847), 17.

14. Samuel Harris, *The Mexican War. A Sermon Delivered on the Annual Thanksgiving, at Conway, Mass., November 26, 1846. By Samuel Harris, Pastor of the Congregational Church in Conway. Published by Request* (Greenfield: Merriam and Mirick, Printers, 1847), 18.

15. For an account of the role that classical education played in nineteenth-century American culture, see Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

16. Lyman Beecher, *Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1835), 56.

17. Speech in the Senate, March 1, 1825.

18. B. F. Tefft, ed., *The Speeches of Daniel Webster and His Masterpieces* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1854), 536. Webster quotes Pope's translation of the *Iliad.*

19. Walker, *Letter of Mr. Walker,* 7; Sedgwick, *Proposed Annexation of Texas,* 29.

20. *Speech of Hon. John A. Dix, of New York, in Relation to Territories acquired from Mexico. Delivered in the Senate of the United States, February 28, 1849* (Washington, DC: Printed at the Globe Office, 1849), 6–7.

21. Joseph T. Adams, *Lecture on the Subject of Re-Annexing Texas to the United States, Delivered in New Bedford, Feb. 10, 1845* (New Bedford, MA: Published in the New Bedford Register, 1845), 8.

22. Caleb Cushing, *An Oration on the Material Growth and Territorial Progress of the United States, Delivered at Springfield, Mass. on the Fourth of July, 1839. Published by request of the Committee of Arrangements* (Springfield: Printed by Merriam, Wood, 1839), 30.

23. William Channing Woodbridge, *A System of Universal Geography, on the Princi-*

ples of Comparison and Classification; by William Channing Woodbridge, Late Instructor in the American Asylum. Illustrated with Maps and Engravings; and Accompanied by an Atlas, Exhibiting, in Connection with the outlines of countries, their Climate and Productions; the Prevailing Religions, Forms of Government, and Degrees of Civilization; and the Comparative Size of Towns, Rivers and Mountains (Hartford: Oliver D. Cooke and Sons, 1824), vii–viii. For more on Woodbridge's pedagogical methods and their cultural consequences, see chapter 7.

24. *Speech of Mr. Wood, of New-York, on the Missouri Question; Delivered in the House of Representatives of the United States; February 14, 1820* (Washington, DC: Printed by Davis and Force, Publishers of the National Calendar, 1820), 9–10 and 4–5; Beecher, *Plea for the West,* 64; Rev. C. B. Boynton, and T. B. Mason, *Journey Through Kansas; with Sketches of Nebraska: Describing the Country, Climate, Soil, Mineral, Manufacturing, and Other Resources. The Results of a Tour Made in the Autumn of 1854. With a New and Authentic Map from Official Sources* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys, 1855), 214.

25. Porte, *Emerson in His Journals,* 275. In general, Emerson had mixed feelings about national expansion that correspond, in some respects, to his mixed feelings about fate and free will. In 1844, he had bowed to what he saw as the inevitability of annexation: "It is very certain that the strong British race which have now overrun so much of this continent, must also overrun that tract [Texas], and Mexico & Oregon also, and it will in the course of ages be of small import by what particular occasions & methods it was done." He justified his own opposition to the annexation of Texas, however, by a rather Emersonian appeal to essential character: "It is quite necessary & true to our New England character that we should consider the question in its local & temporary bearings, and resist the annexation with tooth and nail. It is a measure which goes not by right nor by wisdom but by feeling" (Porte, 322–23).

26. Boynton, *The Russian Empire,* 16–17.

27. Qtd. by John A. Dix in "The War with Mexico," January 26, 1848, *Speeches and Occasional Addresses,* 233.

28. Dix, *Speeches and Occasional Addresses,* 233.

29. For more on the gendering of relations between the United States and Mexico in the antebellum period, see Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

30. Beecher, *Plea for the West,* 16.

31. *New World,* May 11, 1844, 599.

32. Andrew Jackson Downing, "Review: *Greenwood Illustrated,*" *Horticulturist,* November 1846, qtd. in Blanche Linden-Ward, "'The Fencing Mania': The Rise and Fall of Nineteenth-Century Funerary Enclosures," *Markers* 7 (1990): 48. Linden-Ward notes, "An estimated forty fences per year . . . were added to Mt. Auburn's landscape in its first decade, the 1830s. From 1842 to 1857 . . . an average of seventy-one new fences were erected each year" (42).

33. Stanley French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mt. Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery' Movement," *American Quarterly* 26 (March 1974): 51.

34. Linden-Ward, "The Fencing Mania," 47.

35. *Rural New Yorker,* 7:69 (1856), qtd. in Clarence H. Danhof, "The Fencing Problem in the Eighteen-fifties," *Agricultural History* 18 (1944), 169n.

Chapter 2

1. See, for example, Robert P. Caserio, *Plot, Story, and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 133–66.

2. Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842 in Five Volumes and an Atlas* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1845).

3. For a highly readable, recent account of the Wilkes expedition, see Nathaniel Philbrick, *Sea of Glory: America's Voyage of Discovery, the U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838–1842* (New York: Viking, 2003).

4. Daniel C. Haskell, *The United States Exploring Expedition 1838–1842 and its Publications, 1844–1874* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1942), 94–96.

5. Wilkes, *Narrative,* xxix.

6. Kathleen E. Kier, *A Melville Encyclopedia: The Novels,* part 2 (Troy, NY: Whitston, 1990), 1103. "A more thorough-going model [for Ahab] was Charles Wilkes, naval officer and author of *Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition.* . . . Both Wilkes and Ahab may be described as dangerous, eccentric, and mysterious, and both as dauntless, flawed by insolence and pride, persistent, seawise and soul-sick, and wrathful. Parallels exist in the lives of both, and their voyages were parallel at times and included similar gams." Robert L. Gale, *A Herman Melville Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 6.

7. "Queequeg's background, appearance, artifacts, character, and behavior may owe something to the detailed comments on an amiable New Zealand chief named Kotowatowa, of Kororarika, by Charles Wilkes in his *Narrative*" (Gale, *A Herman Melville Encyclopedia,* 375). "Fedallah's garb may be partly based on descriptions by Charles Wilkes in his *Narrative* . . . of natives and mestizos in Manila. . . , while Fedallah's perfidious nature may owe something to Wilkes's comments on Sulus, especially the Sultan and his son, also in the Philippines" (Gale, 136).

8. Donald Dale Jackson, "Around the World in 1,392 Days with the Navy's Wilkes—and His Scientifics," *Smithsonian* 16, no. 8 (1985): 50.

9. Secretary of the Navy James K. Paulding's instructions to Wilkes are included in Wilkes's narrative (*Narrative,* xxxi); *Prospectus with specimen pages for "The Narrative of the U.S. Exploring Expedition"* (Philadelphia, 1844), title page; Wilkes, *Narrative,* xiii. Subsequent references to the Wilkes narrative will be cited parenthetically.

10. On *Moby-Dick* as political allegory, see Alan Heimert, "Moby-Dick and American Political Symbolism," *American Quarterly* 15 (Winter 1963): 498–534; and James Duban, *Melville's Major Fiction: Politics, Theology and Imagination* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983).

11. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 28–30.

12. Other scholars suggest that measurement became more prominent after 1800. Jonathan Crary, for example, notes, "Measurement takes on a primary role in a broad range of the physical sciences between 1800 and 1850, the key date being 1840 according to Thomas Kuhn." Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity*

in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 17. He adds that "Kuhn is supported by Ian Hacking: 'After 1800 or so there is an avalanche of numbers, most notably in the social sciences. . . . Perhaps a turning point was signalled in 1832, the year that Charles Babbage, inventor of the digital computer, published his brief pamphlet urging publication of all the constant numbers known in the sciences and arts.'"

13. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped,* 54.

14. The quote is from D. Graham Burnett, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 3. See also Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of Modern India, 1765–1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). It is Edney who provides the most penetrating discussion of the way science shaped the self-image of imperial Britain.

15. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped,* 55.

16. For a discussion of the relationship between imperialism and colonial archeology, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 178–85.

17. Two readings of "A Bower in the Arsacides" that do not take into account the allusiveness of this chapter can be found in Henry Nash Smith, "The Image of Society in *Moby-Dick,*" in *Moby-Dick: Centennial Essays,* ed. Tyrus Hillway and Luther S. Mansfield (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1953); and Shawn Thomson, *The Romantic Architecture of Herman Melville's Moby-Dick* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001). Nash focuses on the loom simile as evidence that "industrialism and technology had made a deep impression on Melville" (62). Thomson does briefly note, as I do, that in the measurement episode "Ishmael's creative imagination takes ownership . . . of the skeleton" (195) His ultimate goal, however, is quite different: to link Ishmael—the novel's "center of consciousness"—to Romantic ideology.

18. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or the Whale,* ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1988), 448. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

19. In the writings of the Old Testament prophets, the temple referred to is the temple of Solomon, which was destroyed by the Babylonians when the Israelites were taken into captivity. In the New Testament book of Revelation, the temple is the "second temple," which was built to replace Solomon's temple after the Israelites regained their freedom.

20. The most complete catalog of Melville's biblical allusions remains Nathalia Wright, *Melville's Use of the Bible* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1969). Wright does discuss apocalyptic imagery, but does not address the measurement motif in the biblical apocalypses or in "A Bower in the Arsacides."

21. My definition of pastiche is borrowed from Gerard Genette, who describes it as "non-satiric imitation" in order to distinguish it from parody. Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree,* trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

22. As I discuss in chapter 3, the overland expeditions of John C. Fremont in the 1840s (the first to the Rocky Mountains, the second to northern California) were particularly important in this regard.

23. Edney, *Mapping an Empire,* 30, 40.

24. Daniel Henderson, *The Hidden Coasts* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1953), 115.

25. Wilkes, *Narrative,* 457.

26. Before publishing *Moby-Dick* in October 1851, Melville added a footnote to his account of Ahab's method, in which he informs readers that an official circular was issued in April of that year by Lt. Maury of the National Observatory. That circular, he notes, announces that a chart correlating whale sightings with ocean currents "is in the course of completion" (216).

27. M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 57–58. As in the lines from Wordsworth's *Prelude*, in which he describes his early creative powers: "An auxiliar light / Came from my mind which on the setting sun / Bestow'd new splendor" (qtd. in Abrams, 60).

Chapter 3

1. Henry David Thoreau, *Walking* (Berkeley: The Nature Company, 1993), 33. "Walking" was a lecture that Thoreau gave many times during the 1850s. It was first published in 1863, after Thoreau's death, in *The Atlantic Monthly.*

2. Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Walden; or, Life in the Woods, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod* (New York: Library of America, 1985), 295.

3. Quoted in Kent Ryden, *Landscape With Figures: Nature and Culture in New England* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 102.

4. See Winichakul, *Siam Mapped.*

5. See Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire.*

6. Winichakul, *Siam Mapped,* 18.

7. Edward Hitchcock, *Final Report on the Geology of Massachusetts: In Four Parts* (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams; Northampton: J. H. Butler, 1841), v, iv.

8. James Hall and J. D. Whitney, *Report on the Geological Survey of the State of Iowa: Embracing the Results of Investigations Made During Portions of the Years 1855, 56 & 57,* vol. 1 (Published by Authority of the Legislature of Iowa, 1858), 1–2.

9. Laura Dassow Walls, too, notes that Fremont's narrative might have "suggested some new methods of reading nature" to Thoreau. According to Walls, two characteristics of Fremont's report are of interest: "the first is Fremont's explicit insistence on accurate observation." The second is the way his "scientific journey unfolds through a day-by-day narrative combining careful annotations of weather conditions with poetic descriptions of notable plants, encounters with Indians, traders, and buffalo." She adds that Thoreau "found in Fremont's book one possible model for the heroic life of exploration, which cast the close observation of particulars and the tedium of painstaking measurement into a life of high aspiration." Laura Dassow Walls, *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 110–11.

10. John C. Fremont, *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and the Oregon and North California in the Years 1843–'44* (Washington, DC: Blair and Rives, 1845), 132. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

11. Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 190. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

12. Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden: An Expanded Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75; Walter Benn Michaels, "*Walden*'s False Bottoms" *Glyph* 1 (1977): 132–49.

13. Henry David Thoreau, *Journal I,* in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau,* ed. Bradford Torrey (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1906), 15.

14. For an insightful reading of Thoreau's measurement of Walden Pond, see Ryden, *Landscape With Figures,* 105–9. For Ryden, the episode is a crucial moment in the development of Thoreau's "philosophy of cartography."

15. Henry David Thoreau to Harrison Gray Otis Blake, Concord, February 27, 1853, in *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau,* ed. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 296. Similar feelings are strongly evident in published writings other than *Walden* as well. Of "Resistance to Civil Government," Richardson writes: "Though it was not printed until 1849, and though it has important roots in the late thirties and early forties, the essay springs immediately from events of 1845 and 1846, from the annexation of Texas, the Mexican War, the heating up of abolitionism and the night in jail of July 1846. On these issues, Thoreau was very acutely tuned to his times" (*Henry Thoreau,* 179).

16. J. Lyndon Shanley, *The Making of Walden, with the Text of the First Version* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 127.

17. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Young American," *Dial* 4 (1844): 485.

18. Sedgwick, *Proposed Annexation of Texas,* 34.

19. John L. O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 6 (November 1839): 426–30.

20. Dix, "The War With Mexico," January 26, 1848, 239–40.

21. William Ellery Channing to Henry Clay, 1837, in *Works,* qtd. in Norman A. Graebner, *Manifest Destiny* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), 47.

22. Channing to Clay, qtd. in Graebner, *Manifest Destiny,* 56.

23. See Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830–1865* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1991); and Pratt, *Imperial Eyes.*

24. Beecher, *Plea for the West,* 18.

25. Thoreau's strong preference for unmarked space distinguishes him from a number of other prominent antebellum American writers and thinkers. Thomas Jefferson, for example, thought of the American continent as a "tabula rasa," and anxiously urged Americans to build in durable brick rather than comparatively ephemeral wood (lasting only fifty years in Jefferson's estimation), so as to mark the tabula rasa permanently and avoid having "to set out anew, as in the first moment of seating it." Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia,* in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson,* ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Penguin, 1975), 205.

26. According to R. W. B. Lewis, Thoreau believes that "in the new world a fresh start was literally and immediately possible to anyone wide enough awake to attempt it." R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 26. But Thoreau's reasons for

leaving the pond suggest an underlying awareness of the limitations of the project at Walden that Lewis, among many other readers of *Walden,* does not acknowledge.

Chapter 4

1. Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (New York: Zone, 1997), 322.

2. For more on the history of the panorama, see Oettermann, *The Panorama;* as well as Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama,* rev. ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000); and Angela Miller, "The Panorama, the Cinema, and the Emergence of the Spectacular," *Wide Angle* 18, no. 2 (1996): 24–69.

3. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 12. Angela Miller makes a similar point: "Visual appropriation was a step toward the conceptual control which accompanied the extension of America's and Europe's emerging urban-industrial order over increasingly wide areas of human experience. The panorama, with its sense of an amplified geographical and political perspective, served well the needs of a public for information about new area being colonized by Europe" ("The Panorama," 47).

4. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes,* 7.

5. Joseph Sill Diaries, 1832–54, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

6. Edward Everett, letter to Roderic Murchison, September 11, 1848, qtd. entire in *Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi & Missouri Rivers at the Eyptian Hall, Piccadilly* [*sic*] (London: Printed by W. J. Golbourn, 6, Princes Street, Leicester Square, 1848).

7. John A. Dix, *Speech of Gen. John A. Dix, President of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company, At the Celebration at Iowa City, the Capital of the State of Iowa, on the Completion of the Road to the Latter Point. January 3, 1856* (New York: Wm. C. Bryant, Printers, 1856), 6.

8. Miller, "The Panorama," 38.

9. *Descriptive and Historical View of the Seven Mile Mirror of the Lakes, Niagara, St. Lawrence, and Saguenay Rivers, Embracing the Entire Range of Border Scenery, of the United States and Canadian Shores, From Lake Erie to the Atlantic* (New York: Baker, Godwin, 1854), 3. Cover title: *Perham's Pictorial Voyage.* The pamphlet suggests that over a period of eighteen months "over 200,000 people" visited the panorama as a result of Perham's "excursion system" (3).

10. *Descriptive and Historical View,* 36–37. Similarly, the pamphlet boasts that "neither the Hudson, Mississippi, nor Ohio, can boast of such charming scenery as is seen on the Ottawa."

11. Oettermann, *The Panorama,* 331.

12. Helen Matthews, "On Seeing Lewis' Panorama of the Mississippi," in Charles Gaylor, *Lewis' panorama: a Description of Lewis' Mammoth Panorama of the Mississippi River, From the Falls of St. Anthony, to the City of St. Louis: Containing an Account of the Distances, And Settlements of the Country; the Names and Population of the Various Cities, Towns and Villages on the River, with Historical Remarks, &c. Compiled From Various Authentic Sources* (Cincinnati: Printed at the Dispatch Office, 3d. St. Bt. Main and Sycamore, 1849).

13. *Description of a View of the Falls of Niagara, Now Exhibiting at The Panorama,*

Charles Street, Boston. Painted by Robert Burford, From Drawings Taken By Him In the Autumn of 1832 (Boston: Printed by Perkins and Marvin, 1837), 4.

14. *Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi & Missouri Rivers,* 42.

15. Henri Stuart, *William H. Powell's Historical Picture of the Discovery of the Mississippi by DeSoto, A.D. 1541, Painted by Order of the United States Government, for the Rotunda of the National Capitol, at Washington. With an Examination of the Origin of the Picture, A Brief Biography of Mr. Powell, Followed by a Full and Complete Description of the Composition of the Painting, With Historical References, Notices of the Press, &c. &c., Prepared by Henri L. Stuart* (New York: Baker Godwin, 1855), 2.

16. Stuart, *Powell's Historical Picture,* 15.

17. Stuart, *Powell's Historical Picture,* 2.

18. Stuart, *Powell's Historical Picture,* 7, 11.

19. *Professor Risley and Mr. J.R. Smith's Original Gigantic Moving Panorama of the Mississippi River, Extending from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico, Painted by John R.Smith, Esq., Depicting Nearly Four Thousand Miles of American Scenery, Running Through Nine States of the Union (Sixteen Degrees of Latitude, From the Wheat of the North to the Orange of the South); Being One-Third Longer than Any Other Pictorial Work in Existence: Extending Over Four Miles of Canvass* (London: John K. Chapman, 1849), 29.

20. As suggested by Alison Byerly, "Rivers, Journeys, and the Construction of Place in Nineteenth-Century English Literature," in *The Greening of Literary Scholarship,* ed. Steven Rosendale (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), 77.

21. *Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi River, with the Story of Mike Fink, the Last of the Boatmen, A Tale of River Life* (Boston: John Putnam, 1847), 32.

22. *Risley and Smith's Panorama,* 10.

23. William Burr, *Descriptive and historical view of the seven mile mirror of the Lakes, Niagara, St. Lawrence, and Saguenay Rivers: embracing the entire range of border scenery of the United States and Canadian shores from Lake Erie to the Atlantic* (New York: Baker, Godwin, 1854), 41. Cover title: Perham's pictorial voyage.

24. *Perham's Pictorial Voyage,* 41.

25. *Risley and Smith's Panorama,* vii.

26. *Risley and Smith's Panorama,* 22.

27. Byerly, "Rivers, Journeys, and the Construction of Place," 77–94.

28. Cushing, *Oration of Material Growth,* 19–20.

29. *Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi & Missouri Rivers,* 39–40.

30. John Britton, *A Brief Account of The Colosseum, in the Regent's Park, London: Comprising a Description of the Building; the Panoramic View from the Top of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Conservatory, &c.* (Printed for the Proprietors, and Sold at the Exhibition; and By All Booksellers, 1829), 7.

31. *New York Atlas,* June 18, 1848.

32. *Banvard's Geographical Panorama of the Mississippi River, with the Adventures of the Artist* (Boston: John Putnam, Printer, 1847), 9, 10.

33. *Banvard's Geographical Panorama . . . Adventures of the Artist,* 47–48.

34. John Ross Dix, *Amusing and Thrilling Adventures of a California Artist* (Boston: Geo. K. Snow, 1854), 20.

35. Dix, *Amusing and Thrilling,* 18.

36. Dix, *Amusing and Thrilling,* 45.

37. Kansas Pacific Railway Company, *Senatorial excursion party over the Union Pacific Railway* (St. Louis: S. Levison, printer, 1867), 49.

Chapter 5

1. Sherman Paul, *Emerson's Angle of Vision* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 71.

2. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature,* in *Selected Essays,* ed. Larzer Ziff (New York: Penguin, 1982), 5.

3. For more on travel writing and the language of visuality, see Pratt, *Imperial Eyes.* Shelley Streeby points out that George Lippard's novels of the Mexican War reflect new communication technologies, including the panorama, the newspaper illustration, and the popular print. As Lippard narrates, he leads the reader's gaze over the landscape in much the same way that a panorama would (*American Sensations,* 67). Carolyn Porter and Elisa New have also addressed visual moments in nineteenth-century American literature in insightful ways. See Carolyn Porter, *Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant-Observer in Emerson, James, Adams and Faulkner* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1989); and Elisa New, *The Line's Eye: Poetic Experience, American Sight* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

4. Collamer M. Abbot suggests that Melville may have been familiar with more panoramas than I mention here. I have focused on Melville's verifiable acquaintance with panoramas, while Abbot's work is far more speculative. Abbott's primary concern is with Melville's biography, while I am more interested in how Melville's awareness of panoramas as a relatively new form of cultural production might have shaped *Typee.* Collamer M. Abbott, "Melville and the Panoramas," *Melville Society Extracts* 101 (June 1995): 1–14. For an account of Melville's 1857 lecture in front of a panorama in Montreal, see Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography,* vol. 2, *1851–1891* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 368.

5. Douglas Ivison also contextualizes *Typee* within the travel narrative genre in "'I saw everything but could comprehend nothing': Melville's *Typee,* Travel Narrative, and Colonial Discourse," *ATQ* 16 (2): 115–30. In addressing Melville's engagement with travel writing, however, Ivison pays little or no attention to the highly charged visual moments that appear throughout *Typee.*

6. See for example, T. Walter Herbert Jr., *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); John Alberti, "Cultural Relativism and Melville's *Typee:* Man in the State of Culture," *ESQ* 36 (1990): 329–47; and Alex Calder, "'The Thrice Mysterious Taboo': Melville's *Typee* and the Perception of Culture," *Representations* 67 (Summer 1999): 27–40.

7. Herman Melville, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (New York: Penguin, 1972), 80. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

8. Geoffrey Sanborn notes, "On at least eighteen occasions, he [Melville] declares to us that his descriptions are drawn from memory and that his memory is perfectly exact, untainted by the colorings of imagination." Geoffrey Sanborn, *The Sign of the Cannibal: Melville and the Making of a Postcolonial Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 88.

9. Herbert, *Marquesan Encounters,* 157.

10. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

11. Emerson, *Selected Essays,* 232.

12. As discussed in the introduction, the Northwest Territory functioned as a kind of test case for how new territory would be incorporated into the United States. The South Pacific was the site of numerous political intrigues between the United States, England, and France in the mid–nineteenth century. Hawaii was the only South Pacific site seriously considered for annexation by the United States, but the importance of the region to American whalers—whale oil being the fuel that lit the nation's lamps—led to a significant national presence there.

13. *Summer on the Lakes in 1843* was Fuller's first original book. She had previously published two book-length translations of Johann Peter Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* and Bettina von Arnim's *Die Guenderode.* Margaret Fuller, trans., *Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of His Life,* by Johann Peter von Eckermann (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1839); Margaret Fuller, trans., *Guenderode,* by Bettina von Arnim (Boston: E. P. Peabody, 1842).

14. Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825–1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 8. Miller's claims about visual images build on Benedict Anderson's theory about the role of print culture in the rise of nationalism.

15. Margaret Fuller to Richard Fuller, Milwaukee, July 29, 1843, in *The Letters of Margaret Fuller,* vol. 3 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 133.

16. Margaret Fuller to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Chicago, August 17, 1843, *Letters,* 143.

17. For more on Fuller's relationship with Emerson see Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life,* vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Bell Chevigny, foreword to the revised edition, *The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings,* ed. Bell Chevigny (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994) xv–xxxviii; and Christina Zwarg, *Feminist Conversations: Fuller, Emerson, and the Play of Reading* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

18. Margaret Fuller, Manuscripts, vol. 9, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

19. Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes in 1843,* in *The Essential Margaret Fuller,* ed. Jeffrey Steele (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 154; hereafter cited parenthetically.

20. The general opinion that this digression and others like it were superfluous led Fuller's brother Arthur to remove them from the version of *Summer on the Lakes* that he included in an 1856 collection of his sister's travel writing. Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *At Home and Abroad, or Things and Thoughts in America and Europe,* ed. Arthur B. Fuller (Boston: Crosby, Nichols; London: Sampson Low, Son, 1856). Similarly dismissive attitudes toward the digressions persisted well into the twentieth century and led Perry Miller to conclude that "the effect [of *Summer on the Lakes*] on the reader is that of an intolerable monstrosity." Perry Miller, ed., *Margaret Fuller, American Romantic; A Selection from her Writings and Correspondence* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 116. Only in the last thirty-five years have complete versions of *Summer on the Lakes* become readily available. In 1970, Haskell House printed a facsimile of the second issue of the first edition. Since then, a number of new editions have been published: Susan Belasco

Smith, ed., *Summer on the Lakes in 1843* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Steele, *The Essential Margaret Fuller;* Mary Kelley, ed., *The Portable Margaret Fuller* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

21. Stephen Adams, "'That Tidiness We Always Look for in Woman': Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes* and Romantic Aesthetics," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1987): 248.

22. Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 126.

23. Fuller, who constantly filters her perceptions through her interest in gender roles, links gender and vision again when she speaks of "how men, for the sake of getting a living, forget to live. So this captain, a man of strong sense and good eyesight, rarely found time to go off the track or look about him on it" (215). In this comment Fuller implicitly argues that rigid social roles prevent people from seeing as fully as they might.

24. Emerson, *Nature,* 10.

25. Sir Charles Augustus Murray was an Englishman who spent three months living with the Pawnees in 1835 and wrote a book about his travels. The full title of his book is *Travels in North America during the Years 1834, 1835, and 1836. Including a Summer of Residence with the Pawnee Tribe of Indians, in the Remote Prairies of the Missouri* (1841).

26. Susan Belasco Smith, reading this episode in the context of competing British and American travelogues that proliferated during the first half of the nineteenth century, comments, "The insistence of 'England' on personal comfort was symbolic of Fuller's conviction that Americans had an intellectual and moral vision abandoned by the British in favor of an absorption with the mundane and the local." "*Summer on the Lakes:* Margaret Fuller and the British," *Resources for American Literary Study* 17 (1990): 195.

27. Caroline W. Healey [Dall], *Margaret and Her Friends; or, Ten Conversations with Margaret Fuller upon the Mythology of the Greeks and Its Expression in Art* (1895; Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1897), 28, qtd. in Capper, *Margaret Fuller,* 303.

28. Margaret Fuller, *"These Sad But Glorious Days": Dispatches from Europe, 1846–1850,* ed. Larry Reynolds and Susan Belasco Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 308.

29. The region through which Fuller traveled in 1843 had served as the test case for how the original thirteen states would choose to integrate additional land into the United States. As discussed in this book's introduction, the Northwest Ordinance, passed by the Continental Congress in 1787, provided for this land's organization into territories and laid out the means by which territories could become states. Ohio became a state in 1803, Indiana in 1816, Illinois in 1818, Michigan in 1837, and Wisconsin in 1848.

30. John Randolph to Josiah Quincy, October 18, 1813, qtd. in Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy,* 337.

31. Webster, *Congressional Globe,* March 23, 1848, 17:535.

32. Emerson, "The Young American," 485.

33. Angela Miller, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape," *American Literary History* 4 (Summer 1992), 213.

34. Capper, *Margaret Fuller,* 302.

35. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke,* ed. B. Suphan et al., vol. 13 (Berlin, 1877–1913), 258, qtd. in Robert R. Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 7.

36. Gary Kelly, "Walter Scott," in *British Romantic Novelists, 1789–1832,* ed. Bradford K. Mudge, *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* vol. 116 (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1992), 277.

37. While acknowledging Fuller's sympathy for the plight of the Indians, several critics writing on the relationship between race and gender in *Summer on the Lakes* have recently pointed to the limitations of Fuller's understanding and representation of the Indians. Nicole Tonkovich argues that Fuller "reinscribes the Indians in terms and hierarchies already established by . . . historians and ethnographers" and that she "seems resigned to letting nature take its course toward the extinction of 'this race.'" "Traveling in the West, Writing in the Library: Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes,*" *Legacy* 10 (1993): 83, 87. Joan Burbick claims that, for Fuller, "[t]he native women's extreme oppression . . . legitimates the inevitability of their demise." "Under the Sign of Gender: Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lakes,*" in *Women and the Journey: The Female Travel Experience,* ed. Bonnie Frederick and Susan H. McLeod (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1993), 76. Christina Zwarg concurs, arguing that Fuller's "hope for feminism mandates that she accept the progressive rhetoric that nurtured the discourse of the vanishing American." She notes, however, that Fuller accepts this rhetoric "reluctantly" (*Feminist Conversations,* 76). All three critics suggest that Fuller's encounter with Indian culture was an important moment in her developing feminism.

38. Most of the Indian tribes of the Northwest Territory had moved west of the Mississippi, or had agreed to do so, by the 1830s. The Indians that Fuller sees are defeated remnants of these tribes.

Chapter 6

1. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Prairie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 14.

2. Cooper, *The Prairie,* 14–15.

3. This passage may be, as William P. Kelly suggests, "the most quoted paragraph in [Cooper's] canon." For Kelly, as for a number of other critics, the scene prepares the reader for Natty Bumppo's role in *The Prairie* as "a kind of frontier mystic." See William P. Kelly, *Plotting America's Past: Fenimore Cooper and the Leatherstocking Tales* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 102–3. Cooper's description of the figure "drawn against the gilded background" is also typical of antebellum American writers' tendency to describe scenes as paintings or drawings. See Donald Ringe, *The Pictorial Mode* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1971).

4. Cooper, *The Prairie,* 10.

5. Cooper, *The Prairie,* 11.

6. Cooper, *The Prairie,* 13.

7. The difficulty that Thoreau and the Bush family experience in trying to determine the size of what they see on expansive space is comparable to a documented phenomenon. In Colin Turnbull's *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo,* Turnbull, an anthropologist, takes one of the pygmies he is studying on a trip to a grass-

land region of Africa. Turnbull relates that when this pygmy, Kenge, leaves the forest, with its restricted range of vision, and experiences open space for the first time, he is unable "to make an automatic allowance for distance when judging size." When he sees a herd of buffalo from a distance of several miles, he asks, "What insects are those?" Upon being told that what he sees are buffalo, he "roar[s] with laughter." Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People: A Study of the Pygmies of the Congo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), 253.

8. Zebulon Pike, *The expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, to the headwaters of the Mississippi River, through Louisiana Territory, and in New Spain, during the years 1805–6–7,* qtd. in Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire,* 51.

9. Cushing, *Oration on Material Growth,* 7.

10. Thoreau, *Walden,* 144.

11. Fuller, *Sad But Glorious Days,* 410. The quote is from her eighteenth dispatch (January 1, 1848) for the *New-York Daily Tribune.*

12. *New York Morning News,* January 5, 1846.

13. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers* (New York: Library of America, 1985), 190, 12; *The Prairie,* 19; *The Deerslayer* (New York: Library of America: 1985), 497–98.

14. Melville, *Moby-Dick,* 16, 419.

15. Herman Melville, *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press; Chicago: Newberry Library, 1982), 149.

16. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Library of America, 1992), 202.

17. See Carolyn S. Brown, *The Tall Tale in American Folklore and Literature* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

18. Qtd. in Brown, *Tall Tale,* 67.

19. David M. Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 91; *Davy Crockett's Almanac, 1837* (Nashville, 1837), qtd. in Lubin, 92. Paul Bunyan is probably the most famous example of an oversized folk-hero. Though clearly descended from tall tales of the antebellum period, Paul Bunyan was probably the creation of storytellers in Pacific Northwest logging camps at the end of the nineteenth century.

20. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 89.

21. Buffon, *Oeuvres completes,* 15:444, qtd. in Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1900* (1955), trans. Jeremy Moyle, rev. ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 5.

22. Qtd. in Gerbi, *Dispute of New World,* 6.

23. Gerbi, *Dispute of New World,* 31.

24. Qtd. in Gerbi, *Dispute of New World,* 5.

25. Qtd. in Gerbi, *Dispute of New World,* 14.

26. Qtd. in Gerbi, *Dispute of New World,* 15. Subsequent European commentators on America followed Buffon's lead in these matters, though their assertions about diminished body size in the New World focused primarily on quadrupeds. The Abbé Corneille de Pauw, author of *Recherches philosophiques sur les Americains* (1768), declared, "At the time of the discovery of America, its climate was unfavorable to most quadruped animals, which in fact are one-sixth smaller in the New World than their counterparts on the old continent. In particular, the climate was injurious to the

natives, who, to an astonishing degree, were stupefied, enervated, and vitiated in all the parts of their organism." Qtd. in Henry Steele Commager and Elmo Giordanetti, eds., *Was America a Mistake: An Eighteenth-Century Controversy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 81. And Dr. William Robertson in *The History of America* (1777) observed, "It is remarkable . . . that America, where the quadrupeds are so dwarfish and dastardly, should produce the condor, which is entitled to pre-eminence over all the flying tribe in bulk, in strength, and in courage" (qtd. in Commager and Giordanetti, 144).

27. Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia,* 86.

28. Qtd. in Shewmaker, *Daniel Webster,* 129. Webster expressed similar sentiments with similar imagery in his debate with Robert Y. Hayne when he declared that, as a senator representing New England, he was also empowered to act for the good of the entire country. "[O]ne who was not large enough, in mind and heart, to embrace the whole, was not fit to be entrusted with the interest of any part." *Speeches of the Hon. Robert Y. Hayne, and the Hon. Daniel Webster, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, Jan. 21 and 26, 1830. With a sketch of the preceding debate on the Resolution of Mr. Foot Respecting the Sale, &c. of Public Lands* (Boston: Published by Carter and Hendee, 1830).

29. Edward Said, introduction to *Moby-Dick* (New York: Library of America, 1991), xxv, xxvi.

30. Said, introduction to *Moby-Dick,* xxi.

31. It is worth noting here that, aside from the three mates and their ties to American regions (see Heimert, "American Political Symbolism"), Queequeg is the only human character in *Moby-Dick* who is described, like the whale, in terms of geographical space. After they have spent the night in the same bed Ishmael says "But who could show a cheek like Queequeg? which, barred with various tints, seemed like the Andes' western slope, to show forth in one array, contrasting climates, zone by zone" (34). The comparison links Queequeg to the whale (typical of Melville's treatment of the pagan harpooneers). But it also indicates that Queequeg represents a kind of multiplicity, which Ishmael embraces by embracing Queequeg.

32. September 1845, *New York Herald,* qtd. in Graebner, *Manifest Destiny,* xxxvi.

33. *New York Morning News,* December 27, 1845.

34. Qtd. in Graebner, *Manifest Destiny,* 105.

35. Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 113–14.

Chapter 7

1. An 1853 Resolution of the Legislature of Iowa points out that an 1824 treaty between the United States and the Sac and Fox tribe "not only conveyed certain lands to the United States, but also reserved the tract of land which lies between the Des Moines and Mississippi rivers for the use of the half-breeds of said tribe or nation." No survey of the "half-breed tract" was ever carried out, however, which has led, according to the resolution, to "the manifest injury of a large number of the citizens of said State." The resolution requests that the U.S. Congress pass an act providing for a surveyor to survey the tract and make an appropriation to pay for the survey. The resolution was approved on January 22, 1853, 32nd Cong., 2nd sess.

2. The establishment of Indian Territory is all the more striking an example of the

desire for racial purity because the Indian tribes of the Southeast provided such a clear-cut example of the ability of nonwhites to adopt Euro-American ways of life extraordinarily effectively. See, for example, Duane Champagne, *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments Among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Creek* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); and Theda Purdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

3. Martin Bruckner, "Lessons in Geography: Maps, Spellers, and other Grammars of Nationalism in the Early Republic," *American Quarterly* 51 (June 1999): 320.

4. William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra,* act 3, scene 13.

5. Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illusion of Race," in *"Race," Writing, and Difference,* ed. Henry Louis Gates (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 21.

6. For an excellent, concise discussion of the history of the word *race,* see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

7. George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), xvii; emphasis added.

8. William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots; Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815–59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

9. Henry Louis Gates, "Writing 'Race' and the Difference it Makes," in Gates, *"Race," Writing, and Difference,* 3. The foundational text of Romantic nationalism is Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784–91).

10. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny,* 99. The view that ideas about race crystallized in new forms in the first half of the nineteenth century is supported from a more literary standpoint by Toni Morrison in "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28 (1989): 1–34. Focusing on *Moby-Dick,* Morrison argues that the white whale can be seen to represent "the ideology of race" at "the moment in America when whiteness became ideology" (15).

11. *Speech of Hon. John M. Read, on the Power of Congress over the Territories, and in favor of Free Kansas, Free White Labor, and of Fremont and Dayton. Delivered on Tuesday Evening, September 30, 1856, at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Printed by C. Sherman & Son, 1856), 23.

12. Dix, *Speech in Relation to Territories Acquired from Mexico,* 5.

13. Walker, *Letter of Mr. Walker,* 15.

14. My categorization of geography books as "first wave" or "second wave" differs from William Warntz's paradigm in *Geography Now and Then* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1964). Warntz uses the terms "first cycle" and "second cycle" to describe the presence of geography as an academic discipline in American universities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its disappearance in the early nineteenth century (it was regarded, at that time, as more properly taught in secondary schools), and its reappearance as a university subject in the mid–nineteenth century (largely as a result of the influence of European geographers such as Arnold Guyot).

15. *Geography Made Easy,* first published in 1784 in New Haven.

16. Morse, *The American Geography,* 1789.

17. Susanna Rowson, *An Abridgement of Universal Geography, together with Sketches of History designed for the Use of Schools and Academies in the the United States* (Boston, 1805), iv.

18. A full bibliography of the schoolbooks examined in the process of writing this chapter is beyond the scope of a footnote. The American Antiquarian Society holds over two hundred pre–1860 geography books, and that collection has been the primary basis for my argument here. Nathaniel Dwight's *A Short but Comprehensive System of the Geography of the World,* first published in 1795 and designed for young children, resembles Rowson's *Youth's First Step in Geography* in both its catechistic format and its lack of concern with racial distinctions.

19. William Guthrie, *A New Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar: and Present State of the Several Kingdoms of the World,* new ed. (London: J. Knox, 1777), 465.

20. The complete title is *Youth's First Step in Geography, Being a Series of Exercises Making the Tour of the Habitable Globe, For the Use of Schools* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1818).

21. Rowson, *Youth's First Step,* 177.

22. Rowson, *Abridgment of Universal Geography,* 153.

23. Morse, *The American Geography,* 521.

24. Morse, *The American Geography,* 529.

25. Morse, *Elements of Geography,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Thomas & Andrews for I. Thomas, 1798), 57. For more on the biographical context of Morse's developing career as an author and geographer, as well as his hopes and fears for the new nation, see Richard J. Moss, *The Life of Jedidiah Morse: A Station of Peculiar Exposure* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995).

26. Moss, *Life of Jedidiah Morse,* 38.

27. Malte-Brun spent the last half of his life in Paris, after having been exiled from Denmark for writings that supported the French Revolution. His "States of Society"—"savage," "half-civilized," and "civilized"—were operative categories in many geography schoolbooks throughout the nineteenth century. Some schoolbook writers added the additional category "enlightened."

28. Only the Bible and Noah Webster's *American Spelling Book* were found more often in New England households. William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780–1835* (Knoxville, 1989), 64. *Geography Made Easy* "went through twenty-five printings in revised versions." Robert S. Levine, "Jedidiah Morse," in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1985), 37:235. For more on geography books in the early republic, particularly the relationship between geography texts and early nationalism, see Bruckner, "Lessons in Geography."

29. James G. Carter, *An Essay on Teaching Geography, Being an Extract from Mr. Carter's Lecture, Delivered Before the American Institute of Instruction, August 23, 1830* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, 1830), 12.

30. James G. Carter, *Essays upon Popular Education* (1824–25), qtd. in Frederick M.

Binder, *The Age of the Common School, 1830–1865* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974). For more on the history of education in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783–1876* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980). For an analysis of public education in the United States that begins with the 1830s, see Robert H. Wiebe, "The Social Functions of Public Education," *American Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1969): 147–64.

31. Woodbridge seems not to have shared Carter's political motives or his interest in public education, but he was equally adamant about the need for changes in the way children were educated. Woodbridge had visited Pestalozzi's school in Switzerland, and wrote favorable accounts of it in the *American Annals of Education,* a journal that he edited from 1831 to 1838. His interest in nontraditional teaching methods, particularly his interest in the visual, may well have originated with his work at Thomas Gallaudet's School for the Deaf in Hartford, where he began his teaching career. William Woodbridge, *Rudiments of Geography on a New Plan, Designed to Assist the Memory by Comparison and Classification; with Numerous Engravings of Manners, Customs, and Curiosities. Accompanied with an Atlas, Exhibiting the Prevailing Religions, Forms of Government, Degrees of Civilization, and the Comparative Size of Towns, Rivers, and Mountains* (Hartford: Samuel G. Goodrich, 1822), viii.

32. Woodbridge, *System of Universal Geography,* vii–viii.

33. Geoffrey Wakeman observes, "The Victorian period of book illustration was one of constant change and experiment." *Victorian Book Illustration; The Technical Revolution* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1973), 45. For more on nineteenth-century changes in book illustration in a specifically American context, see the "Introductory Sketch of the Development of Early American Book Illustration" in Sinclair Hamilton, *Early American Book Illustrators and Wood Engravers, 1670–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

34. Augustus Mitchell, *An easy introduction to the study of geography* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait, 1840). For a different perspective on the increasing use of visual material in schoolbooks of this period, see Daniel Calhoun, "Eyes for the Jacksonian World: William C. Woodbridge and Emma Willard," *Journal of the Early Republic* 4 (Spring 1984): 1–26.

35. Carter, *Essay on Teaching Geography,* 4.

36. Woodbridge, *Rudiments of Geography,* vi.

37. Woodbridge, *System of Universal Geography.*

38. Woodbridge, *System of Universal Geography* , vii–viii. Just a few of the geography books that followed Woodbridge's lead in organizing information according to general categories rather than political units were Mitchell, *Easy Introduction;* S. G. Goodrich, *A National Geography for Schools, Illustrated by 220 Engravings and 60 Maps,* improved ed. (New York: Huntington and Savage, 1850); D. M. Warren, *A System of physical geography.* (Philadelphia: H. Cowperthwait, 1856); and S. S. Cornell, *Cornell's grammar-school geography; forming a part of a systematic series of school geographies* (New York: D. Appleton, 1858).

39. Woodbridge, *Modern School geography, on the plan of comparison and classification: with an atlas, exhibiting, on a new plan, the physical and political characteristics of countries, and the comparative size of countries, towns, rivers, and mountains,* 3rd ed. (Hartford: Belknap and Hamersley, 1846).

40. Elijah Parish, *A Compendious System of Universal Geography, Designed for Schools, Compiled from the Latest and Most Distinguished European and American Travellers, Voyagers, and Geographers* (Newburyport, MA: Thomas and Whipple, 1807).

41. Morse, *The American Geography*, 531.

42. D. M. Warren, *The Common-School Geography: and Elementary Treatise on Mathematical, Physical, and Political Geography. For the Use of Schools. Illustrated . . . and Embellished by Numerous Fine Engravings* (Boston: Shepard, Clark & Brown, 1859), 13.

43. A. Von Steinwehr, *Primary Geography* (Cincinnati: Van Antwerp, Bragg, 1870), 16.

44. Gavan Daws, *The Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), 147–53. It is worth noting that some Native Hawaiians may have been suspicious of annexation on racial grounds as well. When the possibility of annexation was at its height, the Hawaiian ruler was warned by the British Consul (Britain no doubt had self-interested motives) that if they allowed themselves to be annexed they would becomes part of a nation in which slavery and racial prejudice were accepted norms (Daws, 150–51).

45. For an insightful analysis of antebellum geography schoolbooks that focuses not on race *per se* but on the representation of non-European lands and peoples and on the way that schoolbooks helped to produce normative white U.S. culture, see Bruce Harvey, *American Geographics: U.S. National Narratives and the Representation of the Non-European World, 1830–1865* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

Epilogue

1. Presidential candidate George W. Bush made this comment before a meeting with Mexico's president-elect Vicente Fox in August 2000.

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