IMPERIAL ASCENT

Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire

PETER L. BAYERS

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UNIVERSITY PRESS OF COLORADO

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Published by the University Press of Colorado
5589 Arapahoe Avenue, Suite 206C
Boulder, Colorado 80303

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Printed in the United States of America

The University Press of Colorado is a proud member of
the Association of American University Presses.

The University Press of Colorado is a cooperative publishing enterprise supported, in part, by Adams State College, Colorado State University, Fort Lewis College, Mesa State College, Metropolitan State College of Denver, University of Colorado, University of Northern Colorado, and Western State College of Colorado.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials. ANSI Z39.48-1992

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bayers, Peter L., 1966–
Imperial ascent : mountaineering, masculinity, and empire / Peter L. Bayers.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-87081-716-7 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Mountaineering—Psychological aspects. 2. Masculinity. 3. Men—Identity. I. Title.
GV200.19.P78 B39 2003
796.52'2'019—dc21

2003000591

Design by Daniel Pratt

12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Tracy

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Acknowledgments

In March 1999 I was lying on my couch two weeks after shattering a leg and breaking an arm while ice climbing. Completely miserable and full of self-pity, I pulled my copy of Frederick Cook's *To the Top of the Continent* off the shelf and began to read. Because of painkillers, the words were occasionally blurry, but out of this blur a long-overdue project slowly came into focus, the end result of which is this book. Now that the project is finally completed, however, it is time to feed the rat—the mountains are calling. Steve, George, Erik, Bob, Jim, Heather: saddle up.

Many people helped shape this book, beginning with John Leo at the University of Rhode Island, whose initial guidance was invaluable in helping to lay the groundwork of a dissertation that finally morphed into this book. The University of Rhode Island's Maury Klein was always hovering in my mind as I wrote, encouraging me to write clear, accessible prose. I hope my prose reflects this clarity. Thank you also to the University of Rhode Island's Josie Campbell, who taught me how to think and always believed in me. I would like to thank others who read all or portions of the manuscript, including Phil Auger, Craig Kleinman, Mike White, Bob Epstein, Leslie Bayers, and Elizabeth Petrino. Mike's prodding reminded me to "get the book published," and Bob encouraged me to write with confidence. My wife, Tracy,

deserves considerable thanks for taking on the unenviable task of checking the accuracy of the book's sources. Thanks to Jim Mullan for helping me gain full-time employment at Fairfield University, and thanks also to the English Department and the university for continued support these past several years, without which I would have been too busy trying to make a meager living as an adjunct to have any time to think, let alone write. To my students—you energize and inspire me and are very much a part of this book.

To my editor, Kerry Callahan, thank you for your insights and encouragement. I'm sorry we didn't get to see the book through to its completion together. Good luck. Thanks to Darrin Pratt for his suggestion that I write a chapter on Krakauer's *Into Thin Air.* Thanks also to Darrin and the editorial and production staff at the University Press of Colorado—especially Laura Furney and Dan Pratt—for their patience and guidance while seeing this book through to a timely completion. I'd like to thank the archivists—Laura J. Kissel at Ohio State University's Byrd Polar Research Center Archival Program, Justin Hobson at the Royal Geographical Society, and Sarah Hartwell at the Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth College—for tracking down and helping to secure permission to reprint photographs from their library collections. Thanks also to the University of Nebraska Press for giving permission to reprint the photo of Hudson Stuck from *10,000 Miles With a Dog Sled.* Thanks also to Audrey Salkeld for her generosity in sending me a copy of the classic photo of Mallory and Irvine aboard the RMS *California.* Thank you also to Hodder & Stoughton and The Mountaineers for permission to reprint material from John Hunt's *The Ascent of Everest.*

A version of Chapter 1 was published in *Western American Literature,* a version of Chapter 3 in *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment,* and a version of Chapter 6 in *Aethlon: The Journal of Sport Literature.* The readers for these journals were tremendously insightful and helpful, which improved these chapters as articles and, ultimately, the book itself.

Jim Carmellini, thanks for the fishing expeditions to help clear the mind. Steve Toman, Heather Smith, John Tower, Ann Hartman—thank you for your support and interest in the project. To my parents, Loretta and Al, my in-laws, Dick and Pat—no son or son-in-law could have more love and support. To my beautiful children, Benjamin, Helen, and Samuel, Daddy's sorry that even when he was home his mind was often elsewhere. I'm back. Most of all, I would like to thank my wife, Tracy, for her endless patience, support, and love.

Imperial Ascent

Introduction: Mountaineering and the Imagining of Imperial Masculinity

In the Spring 1994 issue of the mountaineering and adventure magazine *Summit,* an article by Richard Bangs salutes the first man to stand on the summit of Mount Everest, Sir Edmund Hillary. Lamenting what he sees as the end of an era, Bangs explains, "Hillary was . . . part of a historical narrative that is essentially over. He was a figure in that great story of heroic adventure that includes Marco Polo, Columbus, Lewis and Clark, Stanley and Livingstone, Peary and Scott, Amundsen, Lindbergh—all those manly men with knives in their teeth and icicles in their beards and whatnot" (49). Comparing Hillary's achievement to contemporary mountaineering, Bangs complains, "When Ed climbed . . . he belonged to a time when 'because it is there' was good enough reason to climb a mountain. But this was 1993. Man-against-nature has taken on a new meaning, I told myself" (49). Bangs's sentiment alludes to the antiseptic version of contemporary mountaineering. Climbing routes up major peaks such as Mount Everest and Denali (Mount McKinley) are so well established that the mystery of the unknown and thus the "manly" prowess formerly necessary to confront the unknown have been lost. Moreover, with enough money and time, virtually any fit person can pay a guiding service to be led up the mountain, even if—as was illustrated on Mount Everest two years after Bangs's article appeared—clients and guides might occasionally perish.[1]

Bangs may be correct in his assessment of contemporary mountaineering. But his albeit humorous romanticization of adventurous masculinity and the seemingly innocuous nature of mountain climbing—that to climb mountains was to climb them "because they're there"—obscure the ideological context of heroic masculinity and mountaineering adventure. It has, after all, become commonplace in literary, historical, and cultural criticism to regard Columbus, Lewis and Clark, Stanley and Livingstone, Peary and Scott as "manly" icons of imperial or national identity or both. As a member of this famous group of male explorers in the "great story of heroic adventure," Hillary is no exception, and the same can be said for many other heroic mountaineers. Although these mountaineers were shaped by a variety of cultural media, this book focuses primarily on how classic mountaineering adventure narratives helped to create these heroic masculine figures. At the same time, I argue that other mountaineering narratives contest received norms of heroic masculinity and its imperial and nationalist underpinnings.[2]

The first three chapters of this book concentrate on American narratives that recount expeditions to Alaska's Denali (Mount McKinley)—Frederick Cook's *To the Top of the Continent* (1908), Belmore Browne's *The Conquest of Mount McKinley* (1913), and Hudson Stuck's *The Ascent of Denali (Mount McKinley)* (1914). Chapters 4 and 5 critique British narratives about expeditions to Nepal/Tibet's Mount Everest—Sir Francis Younghusband's *The Epic of Mount Everest* (1926) and Sir John Hunt's *The Ascent of Everest* (1953), respectively. In Chapter 6 I analyze Sherpa Tenzing Norgay's autobiography *Tiger of the Snows* (1955), and in Chapter 7 I examine the American Jon Krakauer's narrative *Into Thin Air* (1997), which depicts the disastrous 1996 guided expeditions to Mount Everest.

The American and British narratives I analyze in this study are intimately tied to the literary and cultural tradition of imperial adventure. Bill Ashcroft has written that "while the *mode* of imperialism as a policy is economic, its historical *energy* is profoundly cultural" (*Post-colonial Transformation* 211);[3] and one of the more powerful means for injecting cultural energy into the United States' and England's imperial projects as these nations built their empires were fiction and nonfiction male imperial adventure narratives.[4] In their romantic portrayal of heroic masculinity, these narratives helped forge a sense of U.S. and English national purpose and identity by helping to shape, codify, and justify some of the central ideologies of imperialism.[5] Because of their supposed racial or cultural superiority or both, imperial adventurers could, it seemed, tackle any challenge that came their way—whether the rigors of the "wilderness" or the "savagery" of "natives." Their

successes, both real and imagined, energized young and old males alike—offering them an imaginative framework from which to think about the attractions of empire—and fueled their own imperial ambitions, whether in the "Wild West" of the American frontier or the far outposts of the British Empire.

Cook's, Browne's, and Stuck's narratives follow the literary and cultural adventure tradition of works such as John Filson's account of Daniel Boone's life, the journals of Lewis and Clark, Cooper's Leatherstocking novels, and Fremont's exploration narratives, to name but a few of the narratives of the frontier.[6] The creation and valorization of the white male imperial adventure hero in U.S. literature had always played an important role in the imagining of U.S. national identity and empire, and it continued to do so during the time in which the American mountaineering narratives were published. Martin Green maintains that the United States "came into existence, as fact and as idea, during the modern period, when the first adventure novels were being written, and as an idea it was the political product of the forces that found their literary expression in adventure tales" (*Seven Types of Adventure Tale* 99). As such, these tales helped to define "what it meant to be an American" (99) in their portrayal of rugged, resourceful masculine individualism—at least in the eyes of white males—and they helped to justify the westward expansion of empire. In specific historical contexts, these heroic frontier tales reminded Anglo-Saxon males of the supposed natural masculine virtues they had to mirror if U.S. masculinity were to remain healthy. During the Progressive Era, for instance, many middle- and upper-middle-class Anglo-Saxon males identified with the supposed virility of the individualistic frontier hero to combat the perceived threat of "overcivilization" that risked feminizing white American males and undermining the health of national identity.

Younghusband's and Hunt's narratives are part of the British imperial adventure literary and cultural tradition, having their roots in such works as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent,* and Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines.* In fact, Reuben Ellis has pointed out that "as mountain exploration and ascent gained a firm place alongside other activities more traditionally thought of as exploration, mountaineering narratives came to occupy a more prominent place in the journals, magazines, and publishing houses [of the twentieth century] that published the nineteenth-century exploits at lower elevations of such explorers as Henry Morton Stanley, Richard Burton, and John Speke" (24). In British literary and cultural history, the adventure hero realized himself through the "frontiers" of the British Empire.

By performing heroic acts on the empire's frontiers, these adventurous males not only reinforced and justified imperial ideologies, but—like their heroic American counterparts—they also simultaneously represented manly exemplars against which English males could measure their masculinity. If established masculine norms were under duress in the metropolis, the heroic actions within the empire helped to reassure English males of the health of their supposedly essential masculine virtues—such as bodily virility, rationality, leadership, self-sacrifice—that in turn reassured them that English national identity was healthy.[7]

Although imperial adventure could be realized in many venues, exploration in particular offered males one of the more attractive opportunities for adventure. In perhaps the most often quoted passage of British imperial literature, Joseph Conrad captures this attraction in *Heart of Darkness* when Marlow states, "Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there" (10). As Marlow's phrase "at that time" suggests, by the twentieth century the "blank spaces"—an obviously ideologically loaded rubric, effectively erasing the presence of indigenous peoples—for fulfilling the imperial desires of British male adventurers were in many respects regrettably exhausted, severely limiting the ideal proving grounds for forging imperial masculinity. The same limits were imposed upon American male adventurers because by the twentieth century the greater part of U.S. territory, particularly what was to become the "lower 48," had been explored and mapped. Two potential outlets for eager white male adventurers hungering for unexplored geography were the North and South Poles. Yet even before the North and South Poles were reached, American and British male adventurers also began to focus their ambitions on unexplored mountains. Although recent scholarship calls attention to the fact that women mountaineers also participated in this imperial endeavor, with few exceptions mountaineering was a male enterprise.[8]

Reuben Ellis states that during the modern period, "Mountains increasingly came to embody a sense of 'lateness,' representing the last places left for Western explorers to discover and traffic" (22). And although the exploration and ascents of other mountains were wrapped tightly in the ideologies of imperialism,[9] Denali and Mount Everest were particularly attractive to the imaginations of American and British adventurers. As a rule, in the

modern period nations worked feverishly to control space around the globe. David Harvey maintains that the major imperial powers—Germany, France, Britain, the United States—all recognized the political, military, and aesthetic value of space. Within a progressive version of Darwinist discourse, to control and dominate space conferred "favoured status upon" a nation and its peoples (Harvey 275). Everest and Denali offered modern nations symbolic potential far beyond just any unexplored space or mountain, something akin to the value placed on the space of the North and South Poles—which in their unique location at the "top" and "bottom" of the world were romanticized as powerful symbols for displaying imperial and national identity to the world at large. Everest, in fact, was romanticized as the "third pole" in the minds of British adventurers, and Denali was romanticized as one of the last great exploratory challenges in U.S. territory. In their distinctiveness as the highest mountain on earth and the highest mountain in North America, respectively, Everest and Denali became powerful imperial and national icons.[10]

Everest's and Denali's status as imperial and national icons was channeled through distinctly masculine discourse. As these mountaineering narratives show, Everest and Denali offered white men particularly unique symbolic spaces on which to enact their masculine fantasies, figuratively elevating their supposed masculine virtues to "new" heights given the stature of these mountains. For British males, particularly the upper class, mountaineering had long played a role in the production of masculinity. Going on holidays to the European Alps—known as the "Playground of Europe"—underscored their desire to display their masculine "virility."[11] What could be more attractive for British males than climbing the highest mountain on earth, particularly when it could be linked to proving their imperial prowess? For white American males, Denali's status as the highest mountain in North America made it particularly attractive as a challenge for proving their masculinity as well. In both British and American mountaineering narratives, the construction of masculinity might mean "elevating" the supposed virility of the imperial male body to dominate the natural environment, or the rational, masculine imperial mind that coolly and systematically manages the challenges of the natural environment or the indigenous people encountered and used on the expeditions.[12]

The North and South Poles, as Lisa Bloom has argued, offered British and American males an opportunity to construct imperial masculinity and project national identity without the "disfigurations" associated with imperialism because the poles and their proximate geography were materially

uninhabited (3). As materially uninhabited spaces, Everest and Denali allowed British and American male adventurers, respectively, the opportunity to imagine their masculinity and project national identity without the "disfigurations" of imperialism. But these mountains differed from the poles in an important respect. Everest was "conquered" discursively by the British when it was named in 1865 after being "discovered" in 1852 during the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, despite the fact that Everest is located between Nepal and Tibet and was named Chomolungma and Sagarmatha by the local Sherpas; similarly, Denali was named "McKinley" by a white prospector in 1896 despite the fact that "Denali," among other Native names, had long been established as its name by Tanana-speaking Alaska Natives. Although the mountains were not inhabited in a material sense, they represented (and still do) religious symbols for the cultures living in and around their flanks. The naming of these spaces was a powerful gesture that effectively usurped the mountains from the indigenous populations, making it easier to configure expeditions within British and American imperial discourses.[13] In turn, the geography of Everest and Denali was useful symbolically to reinforce the notion that the materially inhabited spaces of empire were, and continued to be, essentially blank spots on the map before they were imaginatively configured to serve the imperial desires of England and the United States, regardless of the actual presence and desires of indigenous peoples.

Everest and Denali had the added benefit of being closely linked to the Western cultural tradition of the sublime, a tradition several of the British and American mountaineering narratives in this study exploit both explicitly and implicitly in their celebration of imperial masculinity. As Marjorie Hope Nicolson has shown in her *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory,* from the eighteenth century onward writers have used mountain topography to represent what we have come to know as the romantic sublime.[14] Christine Oravec has pointed out that beginning with Kant, "To be 'sublime' was to display outstanding moral or religious qualities," a belief realized in both British and American conceptions of the sublime (66–67) and often reflected in mountaineering narratives. As reflected in Wordsworth's famous portrayal of Simplon Pass in "The Prelude," Shelley's "Mont Blanc," and Thoreau's "Ktaadn," the distant summits of mountains represent the mystery of a sublime, transcendent power that resides figuratively "above" the tribulations of human existence. Reuben Ellis has pointed out that the discourse of the sublime had all but vanished in mountaineering narratives of the modern period; instead they followed the convention of exploration

narratives of the period, which were descriptive and rational rather than romantic in their discourse (11–13). Although this is generally the case in mountaineering narratives of the period, in several of the narratives in this study the writers explicitly use the topography of mountains to make it *seem* as if mountaineers, by ascending mountains, are somehow *literally* able to bridge the gap between the material world and a sublime, powerful ideal, suggesting that their versions of masculinity—and by extension nationalism[15] and imperialism—are metaphysical and not historically situated constructs. In this respect these narratives follow the convention of the well-established Romantic ideology of the sublime, which a number of scholars in both American and British literature and culture have linked to the production of masculinity and imperialism.[16] And in her critique of Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* Laura Doyle argues that the "gendering of the sublime has various repercussions . . . but for my purposes it is sufficient to note that it strengthens the racial and national distinctions [Kant] goes on to make" (27), a maneuver that serves imperial ambitions (28)—in this case the ambitions of the writers of mountaineering narratives. Sir John Hunt's and Jon Krakauer's narratives are the relative exceptions to this rule, yet even Hunt's narrative contains the residues of the romantic sublime—particularly in its inclusion of a number of photos that offer recognizably sublime images of Everest draped in clouds; and on the cover of Krakauer's narrative is a photograph of Everest clearly meant to invoke the mountain sublime. In his *Ideology of the Aesthetic,* Terry Eagleton explains how in the Kantian sublime the subject, or the mountaineer in the context of specific narratives,

> is travelling to that higher location where it will find its true home, the phallic law of abstract reason which quite transcends the sensible [body]. To attain full moral stature we must be wrenched from the maternal pleasures of Nature and experience in the majesty of the sublime the sense of an infinite totality to which our feeble imaginations will never be equal. Yet in the very moment of being thus subdued, sharply recalled to our true finitude, we know a new kind of exultant power. (91)

In varying degrees, a number of these narratives reflect aspects of the Kantian sublime, particularly as it applies to the notion of the "exultant power" generated by an individual's contact with the sublime. The image of an "exultant power" is used in various narratives to serve a conception of masculinity that has supposedly experienced the sublime's regenerative power because mountaineers have climbed near or to the top of Denali or Mount Everest. In turn, the male adventurer figuratively projects his supposed transcendent

power over the world, imaginatively enveloping it within the sublimity of imperial masculinity.

All of the white writers in this study define white masculine identity over and against indigenous peoples. In regard to the role of the Orient in the self-definition of European imperial powers, Edward Said has written, "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (*Orientalism* 3), a dynamic often realized in the relationship between the British hero and the "native" in British imperial adventure tales. In these tales the "native" of the Orient is nearly always represented and stereotyped as backward and inferior compared to the "enlightened" and "superior" westerner, an image very much present in the British mountaineering narratives. Similarly, in the adventure tradition of the American frontier, the hero of the American mountaineering narratives is constructed through and against the *imagined* stereotypes of the "primitive" "Indian." Although these white males might admire and identify with specific virtues of the "native," white masculinity is always presented in a fashion that ultimately ensures that these males rise above the "primitive native" as "enlightened" westerners.[17]

Although the relationship between the westerner and the "native" in these narratives seems to comfortably bolster the superiority of the westerner, this relationship in great part reveals the porous nature of "colonial discourse." This discourse is highly ambivalent in that it simultaneously subverts and reinforces ideologies of imperialism, helping to underscore the instabilities of imperial ideologies. For instance, each of these narratives constantly repeats images of the stereotypical "native," whether a Sherpa or a Native American, which in one sense fixes the "native" as inferior to the westerner. According to Homi Bhabha, however, the repeated invoking of theses stereotypes "points to a 'lack' in the colonizer's psyche, which is further exemplified . . . by the way that stereotype requires the colonizer to identify himself in terms of what he is *not* while at the same [time] potentially undermining him insofar as his identity then depends partly upon a relationship with this potentially confrontational Other for its constitution" (Moore-Gilbert 117).[18]

This lack and its challenge to the white hero's identity are more pronounced in some narratives than others. And these instabilities are not simply the result of a deficiency in the colonizer's psyche but are a result of resistance by indigenous peoples. Scholars have argued that power did and does not simply flow in one direction from the cultural epicenter of empire to seamlessly totalize the "native," as if the peoples of empire simply rolled

over to accommodate white imperial desires without resisting or transforming them in the colonial encounter, or what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "contact zone" between cultures.[19] As Bill Ashcroft has written, "Colonized cultures have often been so resilient and transformative that they have changed the character of imperial culture itself. This 'transcultural' effect has not been seamless or unvaried, but it forces us to reassess the stereotyped view of colonized peoples' victimage and lack of agency" (*Post-colonial Transformations* 2).

This being said, I do not want to overstate the agency of the "native" and the tenuousness of imperial discourses in these narratives, for to do so would be to make the mistake of romanticizing discursive agency while wishing away what was—and arguably still is—a historical trajectory of material exploitation by the West, something I emphasize in Chapter 7. I think it is right to heed Terry Eagleton's warning in regard to imperialism, that "in denying that this constitutes a metanarrative, one should be careful as a Westerner that one is not subtly defusing it. It is curious that so much postcolonial theory should want to deny the systematic, world-historical nature of the imperial history it examines, its repetitions as well as its differences, thus in some sense letting it off the hook" (*The Illusions of Postmodernism* 111). Even when shaped by the "colonial encounter," the white writers of these narratives have the uncanny ability to elide any challenge to their identities by reinforcing their dominance over the "native." To say something has happened in the mind of a colonizer in terms of his subconscious recognition of the Other's power to shape his identity does not mean this recognition was (or is) brought to the forefront of his consciousness in a way that seriously undermined the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (Native American history, of course, has never been at a "postcolonial" stage).[20] Even today, as Louis Owens has argued, "In order to be recognized, and to thus have a voice that is heard by those in control of power, the Native [American] must step into that mask and *be* the Indian constructed by white America. Paradoxically, of course, like the mirror, the mask merely shows the Euro-American to himself, since the masked Indian arises out of the European consciousness, leaving the Native behind the mask unseen, unrecognized for himself or herself," invisible like the protagonist in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (17). Or, as he says later, "After five hundred years of war, colonial infantilization and linguistic erasure, cultural denigration, and more, how and where does the Native writer discover a voice that may be heard at the metropolitan center" (19).

The three American narratives in this study intersect historically with the deployment of frontier ideology during the U.S. Progressive Era, in which middle- and upper-middle-class Anglo-Saxon males invoked frontier ideology as a means of regenerating national vitality in response to the "official" closing of the frontier with the 1890 census. William Cronon has pointed out that in the decades following the Civil War, the notion of "wilderness"—imagined as a landscape unsullied by human contact—"came to embody the national frontier myth, standing for the wild freedom of America's past and seeming to represent a highly attractive natural alternative to the ugly artificiality of modern civilization" ("Trouble With Wilderness" 78). In recent years Cronon and other critics have pointed out that the concept of the "wilderness," as well as other notions about "nature," is hardly "natural" but reflects the cultural values of various historical contexts. Additionally, critics have challenged Frederick Jackson Turner's culturally influential essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) and its analysis of the frontier as an open space of "free land." Susan Kollin has argued that historically, ideas about the frontier "wilderness" as "pristine or untouched natural landscape devoid of any human contact" have been effectively employed by the dominant culture to ideologically erase the legitimacy of indigenous peoples (20). Rather than an "untouched" landscape, however, the frontier should be seen as a place "where cultures make contact" (Lape 5). For many Progressive-Era Anglo-Saxon males, no place embodied the importance of the culturally invented idea of the frontier wilderness more than the colony of Alaska, and mountaineering narratives reflect a tension between the fantasy of Alaska as a "pristine or untouched" landscape and the reality of its Native inhabitants.[21]

In its discursive construction as a frontier wilderness, Alaska gained mythic stature as a repository of frontier ideals in the imaginations of many of these males, a place where they could resurrect the manly virtues of the frontier hero. To Anglo-Saxon males Alaska was not just another frontier, it was the *last* frontier, and for them just how this frontier was to be defined had important ramifications for the future of national identity. The expeditions to climb Denali were not a historical footnote in the imagining of masculinity on the Alaskan frontier. Rather, I argue that expeditions to climb Denali were a central fixture in the imagining of Anglo-Saxon masculinity and national identity in Alaska because they were squarely in the lens of the Anglo-Saxon elite. The narratives both reflect the reasons for these males' keen interest in these expeditions and work to shape the desires of these males and their imperial and nationalist fantasies about Alaska as the

"last frontier." I also argue that the expeditions to Denali were not only a way of trying to reassure white males of the nation's health after the closing of the frontier but were a self-conscious means of projecting U.S. imperial masculinity on the world stage.

Although limited, the studies of literary and cultural constructions of Progressive-Era Anglo-Saxon masculinity set in Alaska (or the imagined extension of Alaskan territory in the Yukon) move little beyond analyses of Jack London's works[22] and have little to say about how conceptions of indigenous peoples relate to the national project as realized in Alaska during this era.[23] These mountaineering narratives bolster white racial superiority by defining white masculinity over and against indigenous peoples, yet the narratives also demonstrate that the historical reality of Alaska Natives posed a genuine problem for Anglo-Saxon males and their construction of white frontier masculinity, having to be "managed" both institutionally and imaginatively to preserve the moral coherence of the expansionist national narrative. Moreover, criticism on Anglo-Saxon masculinity in Alaska also makes it seem as if the "virile" white male was the only version of white frontier masculinity conceivable there. In a sense, the frontier myth—perhaps because of the critical focus on works of fiction—tends to overshadow the historical reality of Alaska during the Progressive Era. Although he is generally secure in this portrayal of frontier masculinity, Frederick Cook's *To the Top of the Continent* must respond to the pressure Alaska Natives impose on his conception of masculinity—a pressure even more pronounced in Belmore Browne's *The Conquest of Mount McKinley.* Hudson Stuck's *The Ascent of Denali* challenges the dominant white masculine ethos of the period through his portrayal of Alaska Natives.

Significantly, the British mountaineering narratives challenge the dominant scholarly assumption regarding the relevance of British imperial adventure in the modern period. Scholars writing (directly and indirectly) on the male adventure hero in modern British literature, with few exceptions, are perhaps overly preoccupied with how British writers of the modern period—Conrad, Orwell, Greene, and Forster, to name a few—undermine the heroic masculine ideals of British imperial adventure and by extension the ideals of the British imperial project.[24] Martin Green has noted that the romance of imperial adventure did not simply disappear in the modern period, but he suggests that its audience "narrowed" (*Dreams of Adventure* 321). This supposition stems from the fact that scholarship on imperial adventure of the modern period tends to concentrate on high culture, or more "literary" adventure narratives, and often neglects popular cultural forms of imperial

adventure.[25] I have no significant quarrel with scholarship on specific modern authors who are antiadventure, but the Everest expeditions suggest that the imperial adventure tradition was very much alive and well—and not just for a small audience.

Although Younghusband and Hunt unquestionably represent the aristomilitary class that had a vested interest in keeping the imperial adventure tradition alive, the Everest expeditions and these narratives about them—and in Hunt's case the public interest in his narrative—help to show that imperial adventure was not just relevant to this class of men but was a highly relevant cultural artifact to serve or expose the historical needs of the English national imagination. These mountaineering narratives, I argue, are self-assured imperial adventure narratives, openly celebrating the virtues of the British adventure hero and his imperial masculinity, as well as the ideals of the British imperial project. Their message is *anything but* cynical. Reuben Ellis has noted that "when articles began to appear about the [1920s] expeditions, even months before their departure from London, the tone was laudatory, even breathless," openly and confidently celebrating the romance of adventure in the imperial tradition (36). Younghusband's narrative taps into the wide public interest in the Everest expeditions in an effort to reinvigorate heroic British masculinity to combat the malaise of post–Great War England. Richard Phillips has argued that by the 1950s, traditional British imperial adventure stories and their heroic version of masculinity had seen their day: "The unbounded confidence and optimism of Ballantyne [in his *The Coral Island*], plausible in Victorian Britain, at least among juvenile readers, was not at all plausible in the early 1950s" because of the horrors of the war and the decline of the British economy and empire (147). But if this is the case, then John Hunt's 1953 *The Ascent of Everest* should not have been an immediate best-seller. Yes, Hunt's narrative betrays colonial ambivalence given the reality of the British Empire's decline, but he is not pessimistic and relates a nostalgic attitude about England and imperial masculinity. Hunt's narrative suggests that in the 1950s the British were finding ways to recuperate their imperial project, not as an institutional entity but as a morally justified history. In his critique of the 1953 expedition, Tenzing Norgay's narrative reveals the persistence of the British masculine imperial ethos.

In fact, Tenzing Norgay's *Tiger of the Snows* responds directly to the imperial aura of both Hunt's book and the milieu of the 1953 expedition. Not content to remain under the patronizing umbrella of imperial discourse and imperial material reality, Tenzing Norgay challenges the cultural assumptions and degradations of imperialism and heroic white masculinity. Whereas

the British eulogize the success of the expedition as an example of postimperial cooperation between the former imperial center and its former subjects, Tenzing Norgay exposes the expedition for its patronizing imperial aura. Employing the masculine rationalist discourse used to justify the imperial project, Tenzing Norgay debunks the central myths of imperialism. Tenzing Norgay makes it clear that the former peoples of empire are not racially and culturally inferior as exemplified by the myths created by Western constructions of imperial knowledge. Tenzing Norgay counters English imperial masculine prowess and its rhetoric of power and conquest by offering a version of cooperation between peoples that is explicitly anti-imperial and antinationalistic.

Similarly, Jon Krakauer's best-selling *Into Thin Air* attempts to undermine heroic, imperial masculinity, implicitly exposing it for its bankrupt history in its connection to Mount Everest. Ultimately, Krakauer tries to deflect his own complicity with imperialism by assuaging his guilt about mountaineering on Everest. Not only does his narrative illustrate that masculinity is little more than a postmodern commodity to be bought and sold to the highest bidder, but it also exposes the invidious underbelly of the history of Everest expeditions and their relationship to Sherpas, as well as the contemporary fallout on Sherpa culture from imperialism as globalization.

Today, in fact, Everest is consumed by clients—paying up to $65,000 each—who want to be guided up the mountain. Sherpas die helping these clients (as well as experienced mountaineers) reach the top of Everest. These expeditions could not succeed without Nepalese Sherpas hauling much of the equipment up the mountain. Although one can easily understand how climbing expeditions economically benefit the Sherpas and the Nepalese economy, Babu Chiri Sherpa's response to why he climbed Mount Everest seems disconcerting. Babu Chiri Sherpa had reached the summit of Everest ten times, during nine of which he was a porter and guide to Western clients. Guiding and working as a porter, he also made the summit of Shishapangma two times, Cho Oyu six times, Dhaulagiri one time, Kangchenjunga one time, and Ama Dablam three times. Any time spent on a Himalayan mountain is dangerous, making Babu Chiri's résumé all the more impressive. When interviewed by *Climbing* magazine's Dave Pagel and asked why he climbed mountains, Babu Chiri replied that he climbed to make money to take care of his family and to build schools in the Solo Khumbu of Nepal. He made a dangerous speed ascent of Everest—setting a record of climbing from base camp to the summit in just under sixteen hours—to draw attention to himself so he could make more money. When Pagel asked, "If you had enough money to take care of your family and to build the schools, would you still

climb?" Babu Chiri responded, "If I have all the money, then I would put all my effort and energy towards the school project, and I wouldn't be climbing. I wouldn't have to climb" (35). Babu Chiri died on Everest on April 29, 2001, at age thirty-five. The fact that he risked his life for Western egos to provide basic human necessities and rights for his family and community underscores the sad reality of imperialism's continuing legacy in regard to mountaineering.

The popularity of Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* points to the growing visibility of mountaineering worldwide. In addition to Krakauer's narrative, the enormously successful IMAX film *Everest* and popular films such as *K2, Cliffhanger,* and *Vertical Limit* have brought mountaineering to the wider public's consciousness. Additionally, recent republications of Younghusband's and Hunt's narratives—as well as a single-edition trilogy of Cook's, Browne's, and Stuck's narratives[26]—plainly illustrate the continuing interest these narratives hold on the imagination of contemporary readers, informing our assumptions about exploration and adventure on Everest and on the "frontier" of Alaska. My hope is that showing the context in which these narratives were written will help to shed light not only on how national identity was conceived and packaged to suit the needs of specific historical audiences but also on how and why we conceive of mountains the way we do today. For instance, one could argue that these narratives influence the way the United States, England, and other nations project their identities. It is not by accident that just as the British couched their efforts to climb Mount Everest in competitive nationalist and imperialist discourse, so too did subsequent well-publicized national expeditions to Everest by the United States, France, Russia, China, Taiwan, and a host of other countries. Even in 1996, a team from South Africa climbed Everest to symbolically validate postapartheid national identity. Countries such as Taiwan and South Africa are not, of course, imperial in the same way England and the United States have been historically, but I would argue that they have inherited much of the Western imperial tradition of mountain climbing, informing their values in regard to the reasons they climb mountains—particularly Mount Everest. I do not mean to claim that my reading applies univocally to cultural constructions of mountains and mountaineering, for mountaineering, like any cultural artifact, has a rich and varied history that also challenges the paradigms of this study.

Moreover, as a result of the legacy of climbing Denali and Everest (and many other mountains around the world), mountains have also become the sorry recipients of imperialism's patriarchal, adversarial relationship to the natural landscape. In the desire to conquer Everest and Denali, climbers

have discarded tons of trash at the base camps, and the South and North Cols of Everest (not to mention elsewhere on the mountain where tattered ropes, tents, and equipment have been left) and Denali have been polluted by human equipment and feces left behind by hordes of climbers trying to reach the summits. Moreover, mountaineers help to sustain the trekking industry—an industry that, although providing income for Nepalese, has helped lead to the deforestation of the countryside as wood is burned for fuel to support the increasing presence of tourists. Although recent noble efforts have been made to clean up this environmental degradation on both Everest and Denali and to protect the resources of the Nepalese countryside, much of the residue of an increasingly globalized consumer culture remains as evidence of the Western world's disregard for the environment in lands that belong to the Nepalese or, in the case of Denali, that have been usurped from Alaska Natives. One can only imagine the reaction in the United States, for instance, if Nepalese climbers showed up there to climb a mountain and left behind a mound of trash.

In the end, then, Richard Bangs's romantic analysis of the heroic tradition of mountaineering falls well short of describing its nature. Like any cultural phenomenon, mountaineering is produced in language, in this case the language of heroic imperial masculinity and its ideologies. In these narratives, mountaineering is an aesthetic extension, rejection, or both of imperialism and the progressivist vision of civilization. The geographic locations and topography of the mountains become contested sites of masculine desires for national identity. No, a mountain is not climbed "because it's there" but because masculine imperial or anti-imperial ideologies fuel the impetus to climb a mountain.

1 Frederick Cook, *To the Top of the Continent* (1908), the Alaskan "Wilderness," and the Regeneration of Progressive-Era Masculinity

FROM 1903 TO 1906, Dr. Frederick A. Cook made three attempts to climb the highest mountain in North America, Denali—known by whites as Mount McKinley—at 20,320 feet. Cook claimed to have reached the summit of Mount McKinley on his third attempt. As a result, "By the time Cook returned to New York in late November 1906 from his exploits on Mount McKinley, he had moved into the first rank of the world's explorers. That the [']virgin['] American territory was explored and conquered by a daring and resourceful native son . . . propelled Cook into headlines across the country, and proud countrymen showered him with praise and acclaim" (Abramson 59). From the moment of his claim to have reached the summit of McKinley until today, the verity of Cook's claim has been challenged and debated.[1] Before Cook claimed to have climbed McKinley, it was an obscure mountain in the territory of Alaska, but Cook's supposed success brought the mountain into the national consciousness as a symbol of American national identity.

Cook's narrative about his experiences, *To the Top of the Continent: Discovery, Exploration and Adventure in Sub-Arctic Alaska. The First Ascent of Mt. McKinley, 1903–1906,* frames his "success" within the discourse of frontier mythology, specifically as that discourse reflected and responded to the needs

and desires of many white middle- and upper-middle-class Progressive-Era males. Cook's narrative redresses the anxieties of those males who since the official closing of the frontier had begun to feel threatened by what they saw as the increasingly feminized version of masculinity—a threat some thought would undermine the very values that sustained national identity. As a result, many of these males sought to emulate the supposedly virile masculine heroes of yesteryear who through their daring exploits had defined the essence of manhood and the very core of national identity. Situated within the "last frontier" of Alaska, Cook's narrative is a self-consciously nationalist text replete with the masculine codes of the frontier. Cook portrays himself and his men as frontier heroes—particularly Theodore Roosevelt's version of the frontier hero—who define themselves over and against their conception of the Alaskan wilderness and its Native inhabitants in the name of national identity. Ultimately, Cook suggests that the mountain's topography literally elevates and sanctifies Progressive-Era masculinity and national identity as the virile heroes conjoin their bodies with the power of the sublime masculine ideal.

During the Progressive Era, many white middle- and upper-middle-class males believed modern civilization was suffocating the rugged, masculine virtues exemplified by the virility of the frontiersman. To their dismay, white American males no longer had the opportunity to blaze trails in hostile "Indian" territory; instead they were sitting at desks quietly performing their mundane, regimented work in what they saw as an overcivilized world. Rather than protecting innocent women and children from the ravages of marauding Indians, they were now domesticated, feminized husbands and fathers providing for their families' material comforts. For men such as Teddy Roosevelt—an emblem of male anxieties—if men did not mirror what they imagined as the virile masculinity of the frontier hero, the very future of the nation was at stake. As many critics have argued, the "inherent" values inscribed within frontier mythology were replayed in multifarious mediums—the press, the Boy Scouts, Wild West shows, sensational "real-life" adventures, and frontier literature, to name a few—to regenerate the national moral virtue of America after the closing of the frontier signaled by Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (based on the results of the 1890 census).[2] Roderick Nash writes, "Good, fat, and cocksure as the years between 1900 and 1916 were, the rosy glow could not entirely obscure a deep, almost subconscious anxiety which revealed itself in the compulsive urge to prove the national vitality and to heed the multi-faceted call of the wild" (*Call* 3–4), which was intimately

linked to definitions of white middle- and upper-middle-class masculinity.[3] In the minds of these males, the Far North of Alaska was an important extension of the frontier, for it offered an imaginative proving ground to relieve masculine anxieties concerning the closing of the frontier.

In the interest in imperial expansion dating back to the eighteenth century, Spain, Great Britain, France, and the United States had shown interest in Alaska by exploring its coast, but they all failed in their attempts to make Alaska part of their imperial projects. Only the Russians made any serious attempt to colonize Alaska, and it remained their colony until 1867, when Secretary of State William H. Seward negotiated on behalf of the United States to purchase it from Russia. In addition to promoting the value of its natural resources, Seward had lobbied for the purchase of Alaska to better establish a U.S. geographical perimeter for markets overseas. Seward also hoped the purchase would be followed by the U.S. annexation of British Columbia, thereby creating a geographically contiguous United States that would position the country to "secure continuous . . . rule throughout the [Western] hemisphere" (Kollin 7).[4] Richard Welch has pointed out that most newspapers across the United States looked favorably upon or did not oppose the purchase of Alaska, thinking it provided significant economic opportunities for the United States;[5] however, to many U.S. citizens the purchase of Alaska became known as "Seward's Folly" because many thought of Alaska as a useless, barren wasteland (Kollin 29). The annexation of British Columbia, of course, never materialized, and as a result, Alaska came to occupy an ambivalent spot in the nation's geography. Alaska was a geographically isolated territory and thus did not fit easily into the paradigm of an uninterrupted, geographically contiguous U.S. expansion.[6]

Although the Alaskan territory could not be smoothly linked to U.S. geographical expansion, it slowly became ideologically linked to frontier ideology. Its coastline was explored by and written about by the likes of John Muir and Samuel Young, both of whom helped lay the groundwork for the image of Alaska as a "last frontier."[7] Its interior, which had been sparsely explored by the Russians, remained relatively unexplored by whites; Alaska remained on the periphery of the national consciousness until the gold rush of 1898, after which it caught the attention of the Anglo-Saxon elite and began to serve the ideological purpose as the last frontier for these white middle- and upper-middle-class males. In a sense, one can argue that other nations' failure to make Alaska a permanent part of their national projects underscored its value for Progressive-Era middle- and upper-middle-class white males. Whereas the men of other nations had failed in Alaska, U.S. males

1.1 Frederick Cook. *Courtesy,* Ohio State University Archives, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection (RG 56.17), box 34, folder 29.

could prove their superiority by confronting and triumphing over the Alaskan frontier, thereby validating the nation's health. For these adventurous males, "The Far North functioned as a site of white flight, a new frontier where Anglo Saxon males could reenact conquest and reclaim their manli-

ness" (Kollin 63). According to Theodore Catton, "The Alaskan wilderness setting was mythologized as the nation's 'last frontier,' and the Alaskan prospector, or 'sourdough,' fittingly took his place at the center of this myth—just as the cowboy had captured the role of mythic hero in the Far West a generation earlier, and the hunter-pathfinder had been made into the romantic hero of the old frontier a generation before that" (89–90).

By the time Cook organized his expedition to climb McKinley, he had already established himself as an explorer of some prominence. In 1891 he joined Robert Peary on his North Greenland Expedition, earning Peary's respect for his abilities as an adventurer (Abramson 15). Cook, however, grew disenchanted with Peary, resigning from Peary's next expedition to the arctic because of their disagreement over publication rights regarding the first expedition (Abramson 17). Cook reluctantly rejoined Peary in 1901 at the behest of the Peary Arctic Club, which convinced Cook to check on Peary's health in Greenland as he led another arctic expedition.[8] This was the last time Cook joined Peary on an expedition. Cook performed well on other polar adventures, including an expedition to Greenland that he led in 1893,[9] as well as the 1897 Belgian Antarctic Expedition.[10] In 1903, after abandoning his attempt to climb McKinley, Cook made a remarkable circumnavigation of the McKinley massif after forgoing his attempt to reach its summit. As a polar explorer, Cook rubbed elbows with the Anglo-Saxon elite, and he was one of the founding members of the prestigious Explorers' Club—even serving as its second president from 1906 to 1907, elected largely, it seems, based on his claimed success on McKinley. That claimed success brought him even more tightly into the circle of the elite, and he was hailed for his achievements at the annual dinner of the National Geographic Society (NGS) in December 1906. The main event of the evening was the presentation of the first Hubbard Medal (named after the first president of the NGS) to Robert Peary for his efforts to reach the North Pole, but underscoring how the ascent of McKinley resonated with the audience, the inventor Alexander Graham Bell introduced Cook by stating:

> I have been asked to say a few words about a man who must be known by name, at least, to all of us, Dr. Frederick A. Cook, President of the Explorers' Club, New York. We have had with us, and are glad to welcome, Commander Peary, of the Arctic regions, but in Dr. Cook we have one of the few Americans, if not the only American, who has explored both extremes of the world, the Arctic and the Antarctic regions. And now he has been to the top of the American continent, and therefore to the top of the world. ("Honors to Peary" 54)

Lisa Bloom has shown that with the U.S. emergence as a world imperial power following the Spanish-American War, the National Geographic Society used the quest for the pole as a way to symbolically display the power of U.S. masculinity within the context of its global imperial ambitions.[11] Bell's sentiment that the mountain represents the "top of the world" is figuratively suggestive, as if McKinley occupies a particularly especial space in regard to world geography—even more so than the North Pole itself. If the North Pole was an important symbol of national and imperial identity to Progressive-Era white males, McKinley, at least in Bell's eyes, is an even more prominent symbol of U.S. preeminence in the world. Bell's statement suggests that Progressive-Era Alaska was not just nostalgically conceived as the last frontier by Anglo-Saxon males; Alaska also offered the opportunity for those males to imagine U.S. national identity in the larger context of U.S. worldwide expansionist ambitions. The fact that the event was attended by the chargé d'affaires of Spain and the Japanese ambassador underscores the symbolic import of Bell's imperial gesture—considering that the United States had recently acquired Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines from Spain in the Spanish-American War and was now a competitive imperial neighbor with Japan. And Theodore Roosevelt—one of the driving forces behind the belief that the United States must continue its imperial expansion for the health of the nation—followed Cook's speech with encomiums to Peary. Mirroring his belief about the importance of the frontier as a proving ground for U.S. Anglo-Saxon masculinity, Roosevelt claimed that polar exploration combats the dangers of "over-civilization," stating, "we should not forget that in the last analysis the safe basis of a successful national character must rest upon the great fighting virtues" ("Honors to Peary" 56) displayed by what Roosevelt clearly saw as a distinctly *masculine* Peary in his polar accomplishments and implicitly displayed by Cook. Given the geographic importance Bell assigned to Alaska's McKinley and Roosevelt's belief in the importance of polar exploration for rejuvenating masculinity and the "national character," Cook's narrative implicitly helps shape and conjoin the imagining of Alaska as the last frontier with U.S. global expansionist ambitions.

Mount McKinley was first seen by a white man when Vancouver explored the coast of Alaska in 1794, and the Russians first sighted it in the 1830s; but it was named "Mount McKinley" in 1896 by a prospector, "W. A. Dickey . . . on hearing that McKinley had been nominated for President" (Unsworth 223). Frederick Cook led the second expedition to attempt to climb the peak in 1903, two months after the short-lived expedition of Judge

James Wickersham. Cook made three attempts to climb Mount McKinley—two in 1903, the other in 1906. The first expedition party—Robert Dunn, Ralph Shainwald, Fred Printz, and Cook—did not fare particularly well on their initial attempt to climb the mountain, reaching only 8,300 feet. After regrouping and attempting another route, the party reached 11,000 feet, only to once again turn back when they thought the route was unclimbable. Cook abandoned this expedition and returned to McKinley in 1906 with Fred Printz, Ed Barrill, Belmore Browne, Beecher, Herschel Parker, Raconvenze, John Dokkin, and Ball. In his narrative Cook explains that because of the lateness of the season and the nonarrival of additional members of the climbing party, the 1906 expedition decided to disperse and explore different geographic areas near McKinley. Although he initially decided to make a reconnaissance of the mountain in hopes of discovering a route for a future expedition, Cook claims he could not pass up the opportunity to climb the mountain with Edward Barrill because of optimal climbing conditions. According to Cook, he and Barrill reached the summit of McKinley on September 16, 1906. Cook's claim that he had climbed the mountain brought it into the national consciousness.

The fact that Cook's heroic narrative takes place in the Alaskan "wilderness" in and of itself makes it a frontier narrative, but Cook explicitly situates his text as a frontier narrative, comparing the Alaskan scenery to the West. Reaching a "great treeless plain," he writes, "On this grassy expanse, looking over the numerous lakes of the lower plains, we saw many caribou, feeding with the contentment of cattle on our Western prairies" (43). Later he draws an analogy between the trials of his men in the Alaskan wilderness and those of frontier pioneers. Describing his pack train's attempt to cross the raging Yentna River, he explains, "The men and horses rushing over seething rapids into a land unknown made a picture of pioneer life as primitive as that of the early Western frontiersmen" (137). Similarly, in his "Introductory" Cook refers to the expedition as a "pioneer adventure" done in the "pioneer spirit of conquest" (xvi).

Cook makes it clear that this "pioneer adventure" should not be relegated to a small footnote in the grand narrative of frontier conquest; instead, his expeditions assume a role of mythically romantic proportions—seemingly worthy of measure on the scale of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, John Charles Fremont's exploration of the West, and Daniel Boone's opening of the Cumberland Gap. Cook writes,

> In the development of the project for the conquest of the mountain which this volume narrates, a series of barriers arose which seemed almost

> unsurmountable. A great mountain was rediscovered in an unexplored district and christened in honour of our late President, William McKinley. Preliminary investigation proved this mountain to be the highest peak in North America. Hidden in the heart of Alaska, far from the sea, far from all lines of travel, this newly crowned alpine rival pierced the frosty blue of the Arctic within reach of the midnight sun. (xv)

Following the frontier hero ethos, Cook defines his expedition in distinctly masculine discourse. He is a frontier hero forging his identity against the nearly "insurmountable" Alaskan wilderness and his "alpine rival." As a threatening "rival," the wilderness implicitly requires a powerful hero to subdue this threat, and the fact that the mountain is named after a U.S. president underscores the narrative's ideological significance as a national quest narrative. According to Cook, Mount McKinley—obscured from civilization in the Alaskan wilderness before it was climbed—had assumed a mysterious, almost metaphysical aura beyond the limitations of human knowledge as it pierced the sky "within reach of the midnight sun." Cook reiterates the expedition's significance as a national quest narrative by claiming that "the recognition of the pre-eminence of this peak, together with its fitting designation, framed a national mountaineering challenge" (xv). As an overtly nationalist narrative in the Introductory, the entire narrative is subsumed under the ideology of nationalism.

Underscoring the significance of the name of the mountain—and thus reinforcing the peak's import as an emblem of national identity—Cook recounts the debates regarding whether the mountain was named appropriately, stating, "A good deal has been said bearing on the wisdom of placing a modern name over a landmark that would seem to have been recognised and named for ages" (xviii–xix). Cook considers the validity of the Russian name "Bolshoy" and points out that "the Susitna Indians gave the name *To-lah-gah* to the same group. Therefore the new name Mt. McKinley finds a proper setting to a fitting monument as a token of appreciation to the memory of one of our greatest statesmen" (xix). Granted, Cook acknowledges that the indigenous peoples such as the Susitna Indians had a name for the mountain chain, but for Cook these names are easily displaced because "up to the present" there is no known "specific" name for the peak. Cook fails to acknowledge that the peak was called "Denali" by the Athabascan Indians, a well-known and large Alaska Native tribe that inhabited the geography near the mountain. Rather than recognize the legitimacy of Alaska Native claims to the land, Cook uses geography to serve the ideological interests of national possession. What exactly constitutes what is and is not known is

mediated by white culture, and the "naming or renaming of a place . . . a region . . . like all acts of primordial nomination, [is] an act of possession" (Deane 18). To Cook, logic dictates that the peak *should* be named after McKinley, given the "proper setting" of the mountain in the Alaskan wilderness. The mountain becomes, as it presumably should be, a patriotic icon of U.S. identity. The Alaskan frontier, or what *was* the frontier until Cook supposedly reached McKinley's summit, properly represents what the frontier has always been in American literary and cultural history—a landscape that foregrounds national identity.

In addition to the name of the mountain and in common with mountaineering narratives, Cook labels other geographic features, which in this case help to amplify the narrative's intimate connection to the ideologies of Progressive-Era masculinity and nationalism. Regarding a ridge on McKinley, Cook decides that "for this unique geographical feature I have placed in honour of our President the name 'Roosevelt Ridge'" (73). In a Progressive-Era frontier narrative that displays how white male explorers subdue the frontier wilderness, it is all the more appropriate that Roosevelt's name should be invoked to label the ridge. For as Gail Bederman has explained, "As [Roosevelt] saw it, history proved that manhood and race were integrally connected—almost identical—and the future of the American nation depended on both. History showed that . . . superior manhood itself had allowed the American race to prevail against the Indians, win a continent, and build a mighty nation" (183). In that the narrative is about Cook and his men's "superior manhood" that "wins" against the rigors of the mountain, their quest is implicitly conjoined with Roosevelt's version of history.

And throughout Cook's narrative, the climbers' moral attributes reflect Roosevelt's heroic masculine discourse. For instance, following Cook's pronouncement that climbing McKinley was a "national mountaineering challenge," he writes that it is one "which we took up fully realizing the strenuous task which it entailed" (xv). Cook's configuration of the expedition as a "strenuous task" echoes the phrase so famously (or infamously) coined by Roosevelt, who in his 1899 essay advocating U.S. imperialism, *The Strenuous Life,* called for the regeneration of virile masculinity if the United States were to maintain its position as a dominant world power. In fact, Roosevelt's essay saw imperial expansion as a means to rejuvenate Anglo-Saxon masculinity, and his views were endorsed by many of the Anglo-Saxon elite.[12] Just as Bell symbolically links McKinley to fantasies of U.S. world dominance by calling the mountain "the top of the world" at the annual meeting of the National Geographic Society, Cook conspicuously conjoins the importance

of frontier mythology in Alaska with the wider orbit of U.S. imperial desires. The strenuous ethic is reinforced throughout Cook's narrative.

Following the strenuous frontier ethic, Cook and his men hunt for much of their food. In Cook's chapter 4, "Through the World's Best Big Game Country," he writes, "We now entered Nimrod's [hunter's] dreamland. To the west were ten thousand square miles of unexplored territory" (35). Cook and his men symbolize the consummate frontiersmen entering the "unexplored territory" of a bountiful wilderness, untouched by civilization. Cook explains, "Caribou were sufficiently abundant to supply our larder without interrupting the long marches. . . . We saw moose. . . . We saw great bands of mountain sheep, while everywhere there were fresh signs of bear. Here, wandering with primeval freedom, were the largest of the big game animals. Surely, it is the finest game preserve in all the world" (43–44). The image of the Alaskan landscape as a timeless, fertile wilderness echoes the long-held trope of the American frontier. In this passage nature is constructed in such a way that it does not threaten the frontiersman; rather, nature seemingly beseeches the white hunter's presence. The men seem as if they are part and parcel of the primeval landscape, and thus they become primeval, "natural" men seamlessly interacting with the freedom of the wilderness.[13] In turn, U.S. possession of Alaska is naturalized as if Alaska has *always* been a U.S. possession, regardless of the presence of Alaska Natives.

But the corrupted mores of civilization threaten the primeval wilderness and by extension the "natural man." Echoing Hawkeye's lament over the pigeon slaughter in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* and squaring with the conservationist movement of the Progressive Era, Cook bemoans that the excesses of Indians and prospectors are destroying the Alaskan wilderness. As such, he argues that

> it behooves us to protect these splendid animals against the cruel slaughter which blots the history of wild life in the past decade. Game preservation is too long a subject to take up here, but my admiration for the noble creatures that run to untroubled joys along the west of this range impels a word of caution. Some game law must be framed for this undisturbed wilderness will soon be spotted with the blood of innocent creatures to satisfy the murderous lust of man's instinct to kill. The present game laws of Alaska are a farce in their effect. They favour the Indian and the prospector but permit the wholesale extermination of the big game. The only result of this law is to keep big game hunters out of that territory and to make a closed field for the Indian and the prospector to slaughter at will. (44)

Although "the spirit of the law and the generally accepted theory is to curb the outside hunter and allow the native a free hand with minor restrictions" (44), Cook argues that "this theory in Alaska is a misfit" (44). The law was supposedly designed to allow the Alaska Native and the prospector to engage in subsistence hunting. But according to Cook,

> The Indian about Cook Inlet and the Alaska Range is to-day, and always has been, a fish eater. He secures his yearly supply of salmon with such ease and dispatch that for his own use he does not seriously trouble the game. It is only since the advent of the white man with rapid-fire guns and a market for skins that he has taken to the hunt of big game. The ultimate object of this chase is easily gotten revenue, not meat. (44–45)

Although Cook takes the prospector to task—even undermining what had become his mythic role as a frontier hero—much of his ire is reserved for Alaska Natives. Unlike the white hunter, who "is a lover of animal life" and "does not seriously affect reproduction . . . the Indian and the prospector slaughter indiscriminately, females and young, and all living things" (45–46). Moreover, Cook explains that "near the head waters of the Skwentna River there are thousands of square feet covered with moose hair to the depth of three feet. Here Indians have massacred hundreds of moose in the deep snows, taking only the skins for souvenir moccasins, leaving heaps of heads and tons of meat to rot" (46).

Alaska Native cultures were unquestionably changed by the "white man with rapid-fire guns," and Cook's claim that Alaska Natives slaughtered big game in the interest of selling their skins is historically accurate (Mitchell 180). But his claim that the Alaska Natives in and around the Alaska Range ate only fish is untrue, for they had long hunted in the Alaskan interior.[14] Moreover, Cook's narrative obscures the fact that even those Natives whose main diet staple was fish had to compete with the exploitative and illegal practices of the Pacific canned salmon industry.[15] So those Alaska Natives who did turn to hunting often did so out of sheer necessity. To combat the problem of wanton slaughter, Cook wants to somehow preserve Alaska Native culture in a time capsule, much in the same way he wants to preserve the "primeval" wilderness—and rapid-fire guns in the hands of squandering Indians destroy their "natural role" in the primeval wilderness. Yet although Cook acknowledges that it was the influence of the "white man" that transformed Alaska Native culture, whites escape culpability for Alaska Native exploitation of natural resources. Yet Alaska Natives subscribe to white capitalist values of natural resource exploitation for economic profit, slaughtering

animals to feed the rapacious desires of U.S. consumers. Ironically, their ethos echoes the slaughter of the American bison on the western frontier, a slaughter perpetrated by white hunters such as Buffalo Bill.

For Cook, the solution to the problem is not for whites to restore the land to its Native inhabitants but to arbitrate the land's use with the specific goal of serving a particular type of white man—the nimrod. Cook asserts that "the nimrod's claim to consideration is at least as good as that of the Indian and prospector, and the law in my judgement should be so reconstructed" (45). Although Cook argues that the nimrod's claim "is at least as good" as that of the prospector and the Indian, he clearly implies that the nimrod's claim is *superior* to the claims of the Indian or the prospector considering their blatant misuse of innocent creatures. Cook's argument that the land surrounding McKinley should be preserved as big game country parallels the wilderness ethos championed by Roosevelt, who believed the preservation of the American wilderness was crucial to sustain American masculine identity.[16] For Roosevelt, big game hunting enabled American men to tap their supposedly innate savagery to combat the dangers of overcivilization.

Roosevelt had founded the Boone and Crockett Club in the 1880s to specifically address what he saw as the needs of white American male identity, and at the turn of the century the club lobbied Congress—several congressmen were also members of the club—to create conservation laws for Alaska. The club believed local professional hunters, including Alaska Natives, threatened the big game population in Alaska. The club lobbied Congress to maintain strict out-of-season game laws to the detriment of Alaska Natives, despite the fact that George Emmons—whom Theodore Roosevelt had appointed to investigate the problem of overhunting in regard to Alaska Natives—had recommended that Alaska Natives should be able to hunt out of season to sustain themselves (Mitchell 182). The sportsmen were able to see the passage of two game laws, the Alaskan Game Law in 1902 and a tougher law in 1908. But these laws were unenforceable; and "members of the Boone and Crockett Club agreed that stronger measures were required to protect the game, and they looked to the creation of game preserves as their most important objective in Alaska" (Catton 94). For these men, the preservation of big game was specifically linked to the frontier myth, for preservation would allow them to enact frontier masculinity ad infinitum on the Alaskan frontier. Cook's expedition, in fact, was sponsored in part by Henry Disston, an heir to a saw-manufacturing firm, and as a reward for his sponsorship he planned to have Cook "arrange a big-game hunt for him in the

foothills of the big mountain [McKinley] in the fall" (Bryce 270)—no doubt hoping to mimic the frontier hero.

Cook's narrative is part of the larger project of how writers configured the Far North of Alaska with conservationist rhetoric to serve imperial desires. In her *Nature's State,* Susan Kollin argues that in their writings about the Far North, fiction writers

> struggled to preserve frontier experiences by framing their expansionist adventures in a conservationist rhetoric. In these narratives, the desire for an untrammeled land—an Other to the settled spaces of the western United States—reconstructed heroic acts as the struggle to save the environment. As a result, in many of these texts wilderness advocacy emerged as a form of imperial adventure in its own right. (60)

Kollin focuses on how in this fiction these "heroic acts" are a way to prevent whites from exhausting the material resources of Alaska and the Yukon and on how—with relative ease—indigenous peoples are marginalized in the white imagination.[17]

But Cook's narrative foregrounds how visible and problematic Alaska Natives were to the white imagination and on the fact that the "heroic act" of conservation was also a response to the threat Alaska Natives posed to conceptions of frontier masculinity. Using the tools of the dominant culture, Alaska Natives did not just passively roll over to accommodate that culture. By hunting for the market, Alaska Natives were exerting control over the Anglo-Saxon male establishment's ability to define its masculinity, and as a result Alaska Natives had to somehow be accommodated and managed by Anglo-Saxon males to shape and preserve their cherished ideals of frontier masculinity. By condemning Alaska Natives and showing how they mismanage game resources, Cook tries to justify white institutional control of the Alaskan interior. Unlike Alaska Natives (or the prospector), in Cook's eyes the white sportsman hunter—like the "innocent" wilderness itself—figuratively embodies innocence as he harmlessly interacts with the pristine wilderness. In their supposed innocence, white hunters gain the moral high ground, thereby justifying the national expansionist narrative on the frontier of the Far North.

The irony of Cook's belief that the nimrod is better suited than Alaska Natives to manage the wilderness lies in the fact that the virtues of the white hunter of the frontier myth are modeled in part on a white, mythological stereotype of the culturally uncorrupted "Indian." In the frontier myth the frontier hero identifies with "virile" male Indians and their way of life,

learning their skills so he can survive in the wilderness. Although the frontier hero identifies with the attributes of the Indian, however, he is always conscious of his supposed racial superiority over the supposedly racially inferior Indian. In fact, because of his racial superiority, the frontier hero not only emulates the Indian but employs his skills in a fashion superior to that of the Indian, for he knows Indians better than they could possibly know themselves. As I will show, Cook and his men follow this paradigm, for they mimic the mythological, imagined Indian in that they are able to survive while in close contact with the raw wilderness.[18]

But Cook also contends with various real-life Alaska Native characters in his narrative, and they serve as fodder for the shaping of Anglo-Saxon masculinity—making it all the more easy to dismiss their hunting rights in Alaska. In the context of Cook's narrative, the Indian *might* have much that deserves admiration, but his intellect and culture are nonetheless limited because of his racial and cultural inferiority. In Cook's narrative, Alaska Natives are stereotyped in a number of ways: as a "noble savage" who, although not capable of higher reason, is nonetheless attuned to high moral virtues because of his intimate, innocent connection to nature; as the "bad" savage Indian, which for Cook's purposes means indolent, deceitful, and superstitious; or finally, and in different degrees depending on Cook's needs, as a morally bankrupt savage, or a version of what Robert Berkhofer calls the "degraded Indian," who embodies some of the worst traits of white and Indian culture because he is incapable of fully assimilating to "civilized" society.[19] In any case, the uncivilized savage becomes the Other against which Cook measures his self-definition as a racially and culturally superior being. By stereotyping Alaska Natives, Cook attempts to diminish their threat to white masculinity and its claims to Alaska.

To aid the expedition Cook employs Alaska Native guides, one of whom "helps" the white men navigate the Susitna River. In the frontier myth the Indian guide has intimate knowledge of the natural world that makes him a valuable asset for the white man. In this vein Cook explains that Stephen, the son of a local chief, "was secured. He was a trustworthy and intelligent young man who had been in our employ on our previous expedition. Stephen took the helm and guided us very well, jumping tree trunks and gravel bars as occasion demanded" (108). Initially, it seems that Stephen embodies the virtuous Indian guide, particularly because he is the son of a chief, a figure who in frontier legend embodies the wise and "trustworthy" traits of the noble savage. But as Cook explains, "The shore line was rushing past at the rate of fifteen miles an hour and after a half-hour of Indian pilotage we

decided that a better knowledge of power boating was more important than an expert knowledge of the river bottom. So Miller took the wheel" (108–109). For the safety of the crew and the preservation of the boat, Cook may have been justified in replacing Stephen at the helm. But Stephen's "pilotage" is "*Indian* pilotage." Stephen the *individual* does not abuse the power boat; rather, a supposedly inherent *Indian* characteristic mishandles the boat. As a noble savage, Stephen has an intimate knowledge of the natural world, but as an Indian feebly attempting to handle a boat, his "pilotage" is ultimately irrational—he is unable to recognize how his navigation skills endanger the boat. Put him in a "civilized" boat and he is removed from his "natural" element, for Stephen's supposed intellectual limitations inhibit his ability to master a craft produced by a technologically superior culture. Yet as a white man, Cook's superiority allows him to combine the best of both worlds—his identification with the Indian's innate knowledge of nature and his use of "civilized" technology seemingly save the boat from destruction.

Cook reinforces his depiction of "the Indian" when he describes the difficulties of navigating the tidal flats and delta of Cook Inlet (named after the eighteenth-century explorer James Cook). Stephen suggests that heading back to the Susitna River would be the best way to surmount the navigation problems. Cook writes, "We didn't like the idea of heading for ten miles of mud flats in the darkness with a howling gale behind us. So I said, 'River no good—Tyonok good.' [Stephen] replied with a grunt and some Indian mutterings which I took to be swear words for the tone in which the utterances came was not indicative of good humour" (110–111). The expedition ignored Stephen's suggestion and encountered rough seas. As a result, Cook explains that "with each rush of water the boy would grunt and let drop an ugly Indian word. After about a half-hour at the wheel Stephen said 'Me plenty sick,' and Miller and I might have said 'Me too,' but we did not confess" (111). Just as Stephen practices "*Indian* pilotage," his language constitutes "*Indian* mutterings," for Alaska Natives supposedly do not possess a language proper, only the limited and caricaturized "grunts" and "utterances" of an underdeveloped savage culture—however virtuous that culture may be. In Cook's humorous acknowledgment that he and Miller do not confess that they are seasick, he recognizes that Stephen's solution to navigating the waters might have been superior to the white man's. In this respect Cook seems to mock white cultural authority. But Cook's unsympathetic portrayal of Stephen safely resituates the dichotomy between the white man and the Indian. Although they have made a piloting error, Cook and Miller easily hide their error from Stephen. Because of his sickness, Stephen undoubtedly

feels his suggestion would have been superior to Cook and Miller's navigational decision, but Stephen supposedly is incapable of recognizing that the white men maintain a ruse to cover their error.

An Alaska Native "guide," Pete, hired for the trek inland, functions similarly to Stephen. Although he finds Pete likable, Cook explains that his "appalling laziness was a bad example for the discipline of our party" (161). Pete represents the stereotypically lazy Indian; and similar to Stephen, Pete supposedly has limited reasoning skills, for he erroneously distrusts the intentions of the expedition, "reasoning" that the expedition is a ruse to obfuscate what he sees as the party's genuine intention—a search for gold. Given the historical circumstances, it is not surprising that Pete should distrust the party's intentions. After all, at this time the great majority of whites in Alaska were prospectors, and Pete had witnessed the gold rush at the end of the nineteenth century. Any white who was not a prospector was living in Alaska boomtowns to profit off the miners. Although Cook acknowledges that "[Pete's] contact with the miners led him to the conclusion that the new invasion was for gold; there could be no other incentive to push so desperately into a land of hardships" (161), he nonetheless belittles Pete and his suspicions, for Pete is unable to understand the purpose behind various pieces of scientific equipment. Pete examined instruments with "careful scrutiny." But "when the topographer got out his plane table, theodolite, and steel tape and began to measure a base line, then Pete looked up with a sigh of relief, for according to his understanding we were measuring off claims" (165).

Similar to Stephen and the boat, Pete's limited understanding of the scientific equipment amplifies his cultural distance from it. Pete's inability to understand the equipment, however, is not configured in terms of cultural relativism—he is not inferior because of his lack of working knowledge about the equipment. Instead his inability to fathom the equipment's true purpose seems to emanate from his "Indianness." The scientific equipment represents the rationalism of Western culture, whereas Pete's inability to comprehend the equipment represents his irrational savagery. Yet the notion of whites going up a mountain and down again for no ostensible material profit *would* seem utterly incomprehensible to Pete, and Cook never explains to Pete the reasons for the expedition. Continuing his mockery of Pete, Cook writes, "At last [Pete] had discovered our real vocation. All of this strange apparatus was to locate wild animals and in some mysterious way to place the gold deposits on a map, and for several days he made himself comfortable about camp at our expense to verify his guesses at our mission. As a guide Pete was a failure, for our horsemen preferred to pick their own way. But as a

character study he made a splendid model" (165). Pete's inability to comprehend the purpose of the expedition leads him to deviate from his assigned duties, costing the expedition money. But as a "character study" Pete represents the quintessential inept Indian against which the superior white men gain their self-definition. As the omniscient white frontiersman, Cook knows the Indian better than he can know himself as Cook "studies" the Indian's innate "character."[20]

Cook continues to ridicule Pete's ability as an Indian guide, explaining that "Pete declared there were seven moose beyond the next ridge, and that ahead there were plenty of caribou. He started out to do big shooting but he returned in a few hours without meat, still asserting that there were moose and caribou beyond the next range" (164). Describing a river crossing, Cook explains that Pete, neglecting his duties as guide, fell into the river. Cook explains, "We pulled him out sputtering Indian swear-words and prepared to continue the march, but Pete insisted on building a camp-fire to warm up and dry out. We were about as cold and wet as Pete, but the pack train could not be halted on such a pretext" (163). Echoing his denigration of Stephen's "mutterings," Cook's description that Pete would partake in "big shooting" mocks Pete's inability to speak "proper" English, whereas Pete's "sputtering Indian swear-words" obviously denigrates Pete's Native language—which as "sputtering" is apparently sheer irrational nonsense. And Pete's desire to halt the expedition is little more than a "pretext" to disingenuously mask his furtive "Indian" nature and laziness.

Yet for all Cook's ridicule of Indians, all of his versions of "the" Indian are not without merit. Although the likes of Stephen and Pete safely underscore white cultural superiority, an idealized archetype of the Indian is still a useful tool for reinvigorating white masculine identity. If the white man identifies with the masculine "Noble Savage," he can regenerate his own dormant masculine virtues. For Cook the frontier wilderness serves as a means to shed the veneer of civilization by exposing white masculine virtues in their raw and primeval state, much like those of the "savage" Indian of frontier legend. For instance, Cook explains that

> in this northland, where dusk and dawn run together, men get into the real swing of nature and close to each other's hearts at the camp-fire. There is something about the crackle of the fire, the inspiration of the blaze, and the long frosty nights of twilight, which bares the breast of each camper to the scrutiny of his companions. At the club a man may be a good fellow superficially, with the veneer of a make-believe spirit of human brotherhood over a selfish centre of commonplace discord, but in

> the sub-arctic wilderness this is impossible. Naked manliness under togs that are stripped and dried at the evening round-up with the aroma of the spruce and the music of the forest wilds, is the ultimate necessity of every adept. (41)

Gathered around the fire in the raw wilderness, the white men become "natural men." Like the noble savage, their contact with raw nature reestablishes the natural, noble virtues so necessary to regenerate and sustain U.S. masculinity. The homosocial image of brotherhood underscores the way the frontier wilderness can rejuvenate not only individual men, but more important a communal image of white men around the fire symbolically reestablishes how the wilderness rejuvenates the masculine virtues of the *entire* nation of men.

In their "naked" manliness Cook suggestively creates an image of the male body exposed to the wilderness, implicitly tapping into the image of the "virile" Indian with whom the frontier hero can identify. Cook explicitly develops the need to restore Anglo-Saxon bodily virility later in his narrative.

> How different are the life-sapping conditions of modern city life. Physical exercise is prohibited by the limits of space and the ease of mechanical locomotion; mental energy is strained to cope with the maddening pace of this material age. The stomach is abused by unnatural foods, the liver and kidneys are hardened by poisonous drink, the lungs breathe a hothouse, germ-cultivated air, the muscles wither from disease, the whole splendid cellular organization is disarranged in an endeavor to fit man into an artificial environment for which animal life was never intended. The misfits result noticeably in the breaking down of some important department of biologic association, and disease follows. (185)

Cook echoes white Progressive-Era middle- and upper-middle-class males and their fears about the supposed feminization of the white male body as a result of what they perceived as "overcivilization." In their response to this perceived feminization, Michael Kimmel has explained that "thousands of [Progressive-Era] American men trooped off to gyms and athletic fields as part of a national health craze, there to acquire manly physiques, shore up flagging energy, and develop masculine hardiness as ways of countering the perceived feminization of culture. The health craze was vital to the perpetuation of a virile nation" (126). Cook is clearly preoccupied with the need to "shore up flagging energy." The fact that his narrative is a frontier narrative makes the correlation between the "national health craze" and his goal of regenerating Anglo-Saxon bodily health all the more explicit. During the Progressive Era the West was seen as a repository of frontier ideals and became an avenue for restoring male bodily health. Following the lead of lumi-

naries such as Roosevelt, Owen Wister, Frederic Remington, and Thomas Eakins, white middle- and upper-middle-class Progressive-Era men traveled to dude ranches where they supposedly renewed their bodily health and manhood by "riding the range, breathing the fresh country air, and exerting the body" (Kimmel 135). The restoration of Anglo-Saxon bodily health had, they thought, implications for their ability to maintain their privileged status as leaders of the nation. As Gail Bederman has written, "The metonymic process of turn-of-the-century manhood constructed bodily strength and social authority as identical" (8). Cook's narrative clearly reflects Progressive-Era middle- and upper-middle-class males and their obsession with the body; and he seeks to project his and his expedition members' bodily strength as a symbol of white middle- and upper-middle-class "social authority," for as he writes, "If mountaineering has no other recompense than to act as a means to arouse dormant functions and to establish a normal balance in the laboratory of human economy, it is a boon to mankind" (185). In claiming that mountaineering is a "boon to mankind," Cook extends the significance of his expedition to the entire nation. As goes the "virile" health of white male mountaineers, so goes the "virile" health of the nation.

The struggle to test this masculine virility is underscored by Cook's use of martial discourse to describe climbing McKinley. According to Cook, when climbing Mount McKinley the men are "on the battle-ground and in the firing line of clouds from the tropic and the arctic" (207); he also describes the "lines of attack" (212) up the mountain. In perhaps the narrative's most explicitly martial passage, Cook writes, "Mount McKinley is one of the severest battle-grounds of nature, and warfare is impressed with every look at its thundering immensity. The avalanches fire a thousand cannons every minute and the perpetual roar echoes and re-echoes from a hundred cliffs. The pounding of the massive blocks from ledge to ledge in their mad descent makes the whole mountain world quiver with battle spirit" (203–204). Later he claims, "The night was dark and we were restless like soldiers on the eve of a battle" (205). Violent martial discourse amplifies the climbers' virility, and for Teddy Roosevelt and the men of the Progressive Era who identified with his masculine ethos, war was the consummate proving ground for masculinity.[21] Whereas earlier in the narrative Cook identifies with a receptive, nurturing wilderness as a means to regenerate male virility, in the end, as Richard Slotkin has shown, the frontier male must regenerate himself "through violence." In frontier mythology the wilderness and the Indian must ultimately become a threat the frontier hero—and in this case heroes—must overpower and subdue if he is to realize his manhood, metonymically regen-

erating the nation as well.[22] In Cook's narrative the men dominate the mountain and are amply rewarded as exemplars of supposedly *natural* male identity.

The martial rigor of Cook and Barrill's assault on the mountain leads to bodily deprivation. The men spend sleepless, uncomfortable nights at altitude; and because of the demands imposed on the body by high-altitude climbing, Cook explains that "in picking a way among the seracs we soon found that our muscles refused to work. Though the climb was easy we could not gather enough energy to continue the ascent. The night in the ditch and the prolonged expenditure of energy along the middle slopes had pressed us to the verge of collapse" (219–220). As a result, the men decided to rest a day before heading to the top (220). Bodily deprivation, however, has its rewards.

For Cook, climbing McKinley and enduring the bodily hardships imposed by the harsh wilderness led to sublime spiritual regeneration. He explains, "The upper world of silent glory and snowy wonder was beyond human interpretation" (222). Cook's inability to interpret the "upper world" invokes the romantic discourse of the sublime and its potential threat to human consciousness, but this discourse suggests the potential reward for the male hero if he should reach the top of McKinley—contact with the *power* of sublime ideals. Cook writes, "I am bound to confess that I believe the spiritual future which we in a figurative way style heaven is very near the terrestrial surface. As we ascended into this cloud world we thought of angels in light attire with wings, and of an easy world of rare glory" (223). Cook suggests that at times the ideal *seems* illusory: "But how different was our realization. . . . We were submerged by a gloomy darkness preceded and followed by icy gusts of wind. . . . This environment of the cloud world was indeed opposed to a heavenly or even a congenial spirit. We were in desperate mood, without poetry or aesthetic appreciation" (223–224). The "desperate mood" again suggests the power of the sublime to overwhelm the heroes, rendering them impotent in their quest to prove their masculinity.

Cook and Barrill, however, endure bodily hardship to ultimately realize the power of the sublime, and without their struggle the male body would not seem innately virile. Although the night before their summit bid he and Barrill endured "a restless and exciting night," Cook claims it was "exciting, because with heaving, pulsating bodies we felt as if the end of life had come and the door of heaven was about to open" (227). And although they continue to endure misery, as "all of the pleasurable sensations had merged with the strain of the terrible task of climbing" and "all of the spirit of the joys of the pioneer ascent has been put into the slavish bent to press one foot above another to the summit," Cook and Barrill finally reached the summit and

conjoined their physical bodies with the sublime ideal: "Just below the summit we dropped over an icy shelf on the verge of collapse. . . . We edged up along a steep snowy ridge and over the heaven-scraped granite to the top. At Last! The soul-stirring task was crowned with victory; the top of the continent was under our feet" (231). Atop "heaven-scraped granite" Cook and Barrill seem to enter the realm of the transcendent ideal, in turn sanctifying masculine frontier ideology. Following Slotkin, the frontier hero seems *literally* initiated into "a higher state of being or manhood" (*Regeneration* 22). Cook's narrative follows the convention of the American masculine sublime, which is that the sublime does not ultimately represent a threatening abyss as much as it "exalt[s] the American will to power" (Wilson 11).[23] Cook and Barrill's bodily virility enables the conjunction between the material body and the sublime on the summit of McKinley, suggesting that they are able to internalize the power of the sublime, ultimately projecting this sublime virile power over and against the wilderness and Indians. The frontier hero and frontier ideologies are no longer historical artifacts threatened by modernization and overcivilization but are metaphysical, masculine ideals above and beyond these threats.

For Cook, then, McKinley is not vanquished and has not become yet another frontier lost before the march of civilization. Not only must game laws be enacted to preserve the Alaskan frontier, but in addition the mountain can serve as an enduring, living, breathing, forever renewable geography of the frontier through and against which American men can regenerate masculine virility and national identity. For as Cook writes,

> The mountain climber and the arctic explorer in their exploits run to kindred attainments. . . . Both suffer a similar train of hardships, which hardships are followed by a similar movement of mental awakening, of spiritual aspirations, and of profound and peculiar philosophy. Thus the stream of a new hope, of dreams and raptures is started, and this stream seeks a groove down the path of life for ever after. It follows that he who ventures into the polar arena or the cloud battlefield of high mountains will long to return *again and again* to the scene of his suffering and inspiration. This return habit or migratory spirit is a curious study in one of the first primitive instincts and its most potent factor is the joy of discovery and exploration. (xvii–xviii; my italics)

But Cook's claim that the mountain was a renewable resource for the sustenance of American masculinity was more problematic than he might have imagined, particularly when his claim to be the first person to stand on McKinley's summit was disputed soon after he returned to "civilization."

2 Belmore Browne's *The Conquest of Mount McKinley* (1913), Alaska Natives, and White Masculine Anxieties on the Alaskan Frontier

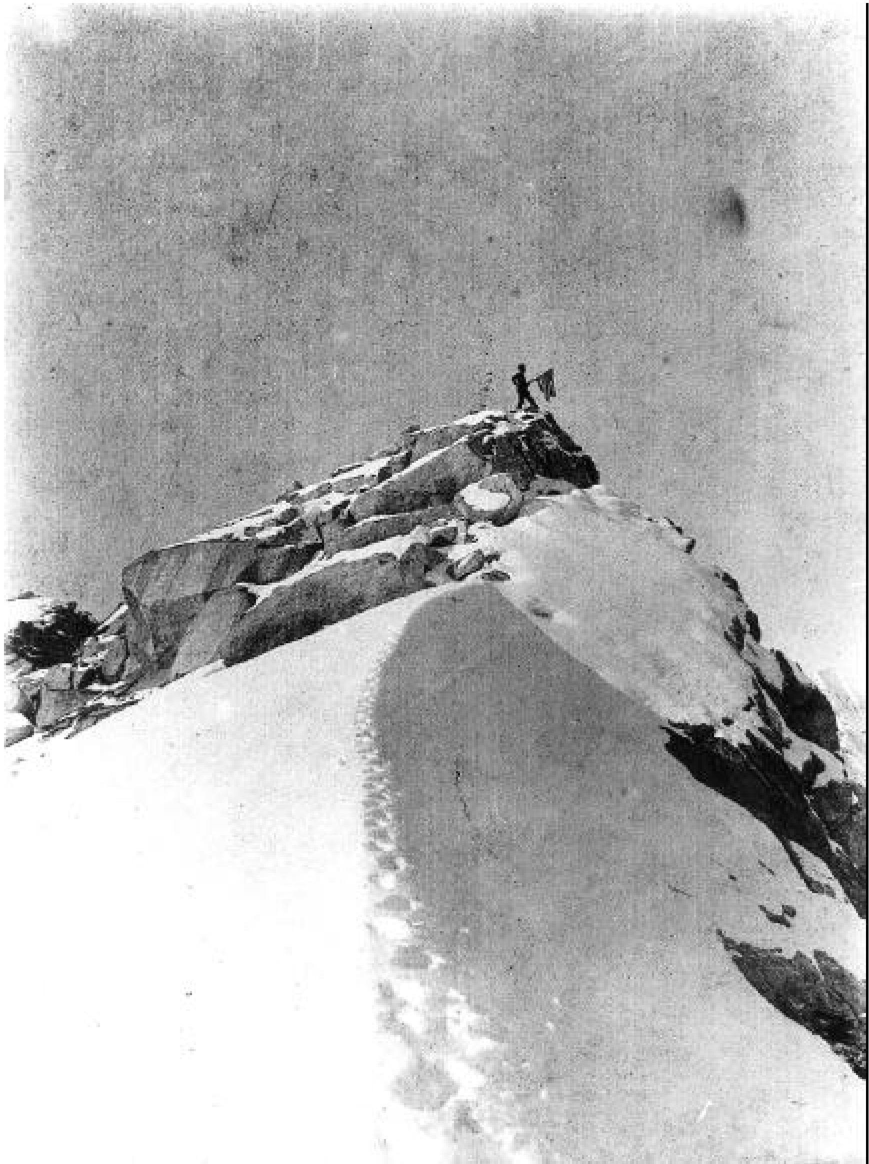
Belmore Browne was a member of the 1906 Cook expedition, and his firsthand knowledge of the geography and time needed to climb McKinley led him to doubt Cook's claim that he had reached the top of Mount McKinley. Browne's book, *The Conquest of Mount McKinley,* recounts the 1906 expedition, as well as his expeditions of 1910 and 1912—undertaken to disprove Cook's claim to have reached the summit of McKinley. Browne's narrative, moreover, is also invested in the larger orbit of exploration and the projection of national identity, for his expedition and narrative are important to resolving the North Pole controversy between Cook and Peary. In many respects, Browne's account of his expeditions mirrors Cook's account in that he portrays himself and his men as "virile" frontier heroes retreating from overcivilization, who by climbing the mountain project Anglo-Saxon masculinity over and above the "wilderness" and its inhabitants. But even more than Cook's conception of frontier masculinity, Browne's imagining of frontier masculinity and national identity is threatened by Alaska Natives. In fact, because Browne played an active role in the creation of Mount McKinley National Park, I would argue that in their threat to his masculinity, Alaska Natives played a crucial role in the conception of the park as a last bastion for the sustenance of Anglo-Saxon masculinity and of

Alaska as the "last frontier," even having implications for the imagining and projection of U.S. imperial power overseas.

The original impetus for Browne's 1910 and 1912 expeditions to McKinley was his suspicion of Cook's claim that he had reached the summit. As a member of Cook's 1906 expedition, Browne knew the character of the country surrounding McKinley, and he and others surmised that Cook could not have reached its summit.[1] In fact, Ed Barrill, who had supposedly climbed McKinley with Cook, testified against Cook; and the story was picked up and debated in the national press.[2] In the end, Browne concluded, "I knew that Dr. Cook had not climbed Mount McKinley" (71), and Browne traveled to New York to state his case to the American Geographical Society (AGS) and the Explorers' Club. After the publication of Cook's book, Browne pointed out that Cook "made countless misstatements in his description of the route he followed to the mountain, and the equipment he used" (72). Cook was not present to defend himself, and Browne relates that Cook had too many partisan friends in the AGS and Explorers' Club who refused to consider his accusation. Browne writes, "In the face of this blind public partisanship, we realised that we would need more than documentary and circumstantial evidence to convict Doctor Cook irrevocably" (72). Thus Browne organized his own expeditions to McKinley in an effort to prove the truth, and even while organizing his first expedition he points out that "Dr. Cook refused to testify" before an Explorers' Club committee organized to address Browne's accusations (73).

The 1910 expedition consisted of eight members. Starting in February, the expedition approached the mountain from the coast via river travel and pack train, and it set up base camp on May 31 to attempt a route up the southwest ridge of McKinley. After two reconnaissance attempts to find a feasible route up the mountain, the expedition was forced to abandon its attempt to climb McKinley—reaching a height of only 10,300 feet on July 19—because the choice of a route proved impossible. Although the expedition did not reach the summit, it gathered compelling evidence that Cook had not in fact reached the top of McKinley. On the expedition's trek to the mountain, the men recognized a peak similar to the peak atop which Barrill stands in a photograph in Cook's book—the photo he claimed showed Barrill at the summit of McKinley. Browne and his party ascended the peak and took a photo of the summit from an angle similar to that in Cook's photo. As a result, they were convinced that Cook's photo was taken from that same spot—*not* from the summit of McKinley (compare Cook's photo, Figure 2.2, to Browne's photo, Figure 2.3).

2.1 “I will never again (I fear) feel such a surge of savage triumph as I did when I saw that the sheep was hit.” Belmore Brown on the 1912 expedition. *Courtesy*, Dartmouth College Library, Rauner Special Collections Library (Stef. Mss-190, 5:5).



2.2 Cook's claimed summit shot of McKinley. *Courtesy,* Ohio State University Archives, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection (RG 56.17), box 34, folder 29.

2.3 Belmore Browne's reproduction of the "fake peak." *Courtesy,* Ohio State University Archives, Frederick A. Cook Society Collection (RG 56.17), box 34, folder 29.

Browne returned to attempt McKinley in 1912, this time via the Southern North-eastern Ridge. The expedition reached base camp on March 25 and began its ascent on June 4. After ferrying camps up the mountain, the men came within 300 feet of the summit on June 29, but a raging storm prevented them from reaching it. Rather than wait out the storm to again attempt the summit from their high camp at 17,000 feet, they retreated. As it turned out, this was just as well because an earthquake destroyed the summit ridge of Mount McKinley two days after they retreated. If they had waited for better weather, they might have perished. Nonetheless, Browne writes, "Although on account of climatic conditions I am unable to call this book *The First Ascent of Mount McKinley,* we are equally proud of our conquest of the great peak, for from the point where our ice steps stopped, the climbing ceased; from there onward it was a short walk to the goal we gave so much to reach" (355).

Browne's dispute of Cook's claim and his subsequent expeditions to climb McKinley underscore how McKinley became a competitive proving ground for Progressive-Era masculinity. And implicitly, if Cook's claim were to be

proved false, not only would his credibility as a mountaineer be called into question, but his version of himself as a virile masculine frontier hero would also lose credibility. Consequently, Browne's decision to disprove Cook's claim by climbing the mountain himself is about restoring the credibility of the frontier hero and, by extension, national identity and honor. Browne explains that the members of the 1910 expedition, "Professor Parker, Professor Cuntz, and the writer were fellows of the American Geographical Society and we had the official sanction of that society, and reported to them on our return. We also represented the Explorers' Club, as members" (76). It comes as no surprise that like the Explorers' Club (and the National Geographic Society), the American Geographical Society was made up of the Anglo-Saxon elite; and judging from Browne's narrative, it clearly reflected the same masculine imperial desires.

In fact, the AGS and Explorers' Club were not only interested in Browne's expedition for its role in helping to imagine Alaska as the "last frontier" and in discovering the truth about Cook's claim regarding McKinley, but they also knew Browne's expedition could help shed light on Cook's claim to have reached the North Pole on April 21, 1908, two years after his supposed ascent of McKinley. Browne's expedition was important in helping to secure the reputation of Robert Peary as the first person to reach the North Pole, which he claimed to have done on April 6, 1909. Cook, Peary, and their supporters engaged in a lengthy, highly publicized dispute over whether both Cook and Peary had fabricated their claims to have reached the North Pole. The dispute over who had attained the pole was intimately linked to the dispute over whether Cook had reached the summit of McKinley, for Peary and his supporters used the McKinley dispute to discredit Cook's claim to have reached the North Pole.[3]

Browne's expedition, and his book about his expeditions, had wider implications that had repercussions on the construction of imperial masculinity in the Progressive Era, for as I noted in Chapter 1 the quest for the pole was a way of asserting and projecting U.S. imperial masculinity to the world at large. The National Geographic Society as well as Theodore Roosevelt sided with Peary, and leaving the dispute unresolved had symbolic implications that undermined the confident display of U.S. imperial and national identity in its conquest of the pole.[4] Indeed Browne remarks, "The Polar controversy had put an entirely new light on our claims against Cook" regarding McKinley (72). Browne explains that although initially his dispute with Cook was "private and personal" and was "simply a question of mountaineering ethics," he declares that "the North Pole was an international

prize, that had claimed the heroic efforts, and lives, of the explorers of many nationalities for many years. There was no sport here—it was a question of international importance" (72–73). Browne's expedition, he knows, was *itself* of international importance because it would help expose Cook as a fraud in regard to his claim about the pole. Whereas Cook's narrative only tangentially alludes to U.S. imperialism beyond its Alaskan interests, Browne casts his narrative directly into the broader operations of U.S. imperial discourse that configured expeditions to the North Pole as a national quest narrative. Alaska, then, is again not just a last frontier but a venue on which to imagine and project the United States as a world imperial power.

Cook's expedition had unquestionably helped to engender interest in configuring the geography around McKinley as a game preserve, for as I noted in Chapter 1, he criticized existing game laws and helped codify this specific geography as an idealized big game hunting ground in the Anglo-Saxon elite's imagination. Previous to Cook, in 1902 Alfred H. Brooks had led an official geographic survey of McKinley for the United States Geological Survey, and he was the first white man to officially report the abundance of big game in the region. Belmore Browne's expeditions in 1910 and 1912, however, were crucial to helping shape the area as a future national park—both because Browne's expeditions were watched closely by the Anglo-Saxon male elite and because Browne became an active lobbyist for the creation of the park following his expeditions.[5] The park was ostensibly established in response to the failure of Alaska game laws to stem the wanton slaughter of big game in Alaska. Unlike today's national parks, the park was designed to allow hunting to take place within its confines, with the notion that the prospector would still be able to practice subsistence hunting and thus remain a quintessential living, breathing example of the frontier hero. As Theodore Catton has pointed out, "The sportsmen's idea of including frontiersmen in the national park anticipated the modern conception of Alaska wilderness. The establishment of Mount McKinley National Park cannot be understood apart from the myth of the frontier" (88). Moreover, the park, it was hoped, would provide a permanent masculine proving ground for the Anglo-Saxon male establishment as a hunter's paradise, allowing these men to enact their fantasies of frontier masculinity. The park, it was hoped, would paradoxically be managed as a permanently sustainable "frontier."[6] According to Catton, "Although Tanana Indians continued to hunt occasionally in the Mount McKinley area in the early twentieth century, their presence [was] relatively inconsequential to the creation of the national park" (88). Nonetheless, the creation of the park institutionalized the dispossession of Alaska Native

lands, and in this respect the park mirrored the way the formation of other national parks was linked to the dispossession of First Nations' claims to their lands.[7] Browne's narrative does suggest, however, that although Alaska Natives may no longer have hunted in the region, they had an important role in the creation of the park.

In Chapter 1, I argued that the Alaska Natives in part threatened Cook's ability to enact Anglo-Saxon masculinity, for their hunting practices—the result of market pressures—undermine the desires of white hunters. But according to Cook, this threat can be rectified only if the laws are properly enforced so "Indians" are not allowed to "slaughter" big game. And in his representation of Alaska Natives such as Pete, he comfortably configures the Natives with Indian stereotypes to reinforce his racial and cultural superiority. But for Browne, the threat of Alaska Natives is not so much their hunting practices; rather, it is their *lack* of hunting practices and their broader deviation from their "proper" role as Indians in the frontier myth that threaten his conception of white frontier masculinity. Browne's narrative underscores how despite the mythology that had built up around Alaska as the last frontier during the Progressive Era, white males could not unproblematically conceptualize Alaska as a geographic repository on which to enact masculine frontier ideals, not only because of the threat Alaska Natives posed to big game but also because they could not be easily imagined as "authentic" virile Indians.[8]

As it was, historically Alaska Natives and their interactions with the dominant culture differed from the history of the American "West." Although a handful of violent skirmishes occurred between the U.S. military and Alaska Natives, Alaska never had an "Indian War."[9] The history of Alaska could not even provide the Anglo-Saxon imagination with authentic historical figures such as Sitting Bull, the quintessential "noble warrior" displayed by Buffalo Bill Cody in his "Wild West" spectacle and its reenactment of the "Indian Wars."[10] Moreover, before Alaska became romanticized as the last frontier, Alaska Natives had a long-established contact with whites, which obviously led to changes in their cultures. In Browne's view, Progressive-Era Alaska Natives had been corrupted by the degradations of "civilisation," and thus regrettably they were not "pure" and "unsullied" examples of "the Indian."[11] To address this problem, Browne tries to elide the material conditions of Alaska and the legacy of imperialism to make it seem as if the national narrative, as it unfolds in Alaska, is an innocuous, innocent destiny. Although he seems marginally sympathetic to their plight, Browne primarily blames Alaska Natives for their situation in an effort to distance

the dominant culture from its culpability. Browne's configuration of his mountaineering expeditions is particularly important as an effort to escape the historical reality of Alaska and its "weak" male "Indian" population so that he and his men can perform their frontier fantasies of heroic masculinity against the romanticized, thoroughly white conception of the "virile Indian"—something the "uninhabited" geography of McKinley and its surroundings could provide.

Initially in his narrative, Browne seemingly dismisses the relevance of Alaska Natives, figuratively erasing them from the geography of Alaska. Describing the impetus for his desire to climb McKinley he writes, "There are many different sides of exploration, any one of which taken by itself is of sufficient interest to draw a man from civilisation. I know of no task more absorbing than the mapping of an unknown territory; there is nothing more stimulating to the imagination than watching the growth of rivers and mountain chains on a topographer's plane-table" (vi). Browne echoes and reinforces the infamous passage from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow recounts his childhood and his imperial fantasies about the "blank spaces" of the earth. Implicit in Browne's discourse is that Alaska Natives simply do not exist, at least not in a meaningful fashion. As inhabitants of the "unknown," Alaska Natives are part of the "wilderness," beyond definitions of knowledge. The fact that the "rivers and mountain chains" "grow" on a "topographer's plane-table" suggests that they acquire validation only as they are brought into a sphere of Western topographical knowledge. Browne's image of mapmaking is one in which mapping is an ideological discourse used to serve the interests of power.[12]

Browne does, however, recognize Alaska Native names for geographic features. Like Cook (and Hudson Stuck, as I show in Chapter 3), Browne reviews different names for the mountain, including Native names. But unlike Cook, who simply elides the cultural significance of Alaska Native names, Browne describes in some detail the cultural significance of Indian names for the mountain:

> If you can earn the confidence of the aged Indians they will tell you of days when the earth was covered with water, and how a god who was chasing his eloping sweetheart threw a rock with intent to kill, and how that rock rose above the falling water and stands to this day—the incomparable Doleika. And they tell of later days when Doleika belched flames and smoke, but unfortunately there is nothing to bear out this fable, for McKinley is not a volcano. "Doleika," or "the big mountain," the Susitnas call it, while the Aleutes speak of it as "Traleika." . . .

> . . . The mountain has always been holy ground to the natives, and to this day the surrounding country is supposed to be haunted and the abode of devils. (4–5)

Cook simply glosses over Alaska Native names for the mountain, whereas Browne ascribes cultural narratives "behind" at least one of its names; in doing so he seemingly recognizes the cultural validity of Alaska Natives. Yet the "Indian" fable is not scientifically accurate, however interesting the story might be; thus the fable is ultimately dismissed as little more than an ethnological artifact. In the end, Browne is not particularly concerned about preserving any Native name or names for the mountain but explains that he simply thinks "McKinley" was a poor choice (9). But if an Alaska Native name for the mountain were to gain acceptance, it is little more than an *archival* signifier, essentially removed from its cultural context. Preserving the name does little more than acknowledge that there once *were* Indians in Alaska, as if they exist outside of history rather than being a living, breathing people.

Browne attempts in his narrative to represent "authentic" Alaska Natives with the ease with which he imagines mapping the Alaskan geography. But they are romanticized to fit Browne's conception of "the Indian"; the "primitive" Indian's way of life is nothing short of idyllic. Regarding Alaska Natives returning from their summer camps, Browne writes: "[They] drifted past us in boats made of the green skins of moose and caribou. The primitive canoes were loaded to the gunwales with men, women, children, and dogs. . . . Your northern red man is a master of the craft of travel" (178). Browne explains that following the winter freeze that allows the Indians to dogsled to the interior of Alaska, "They hunt and trap the long winter through, and after the spring sun has sent the ice booming towards the sea, they sew up their winter skins into boats and drift with dignity to their summer homes" (178). Finally, Browne writes, "When their winter's fur catch is traded they can await the autumn salmon run in peace, and so their lives run, sliding gently from spring to winter and from winter to summer, until they take their last long journey to 'the happy hunting-ground'" (178). Browne's racialized depiction of Alaska Natives echoes depictions of "Indians" stretching back to the "discovery" of the New World. The "red men" live outside time, close to the cyclical rhythms of an abundant nature through which they meet their "primitive" needs.[13] He evokes an idealized image of the noble savage as the Indians drift "with dignity" down the river. But although for Browne this representation of the Indian is the ideal, the historical reality of Alaska Natives is radically different.

Alaska Natives, unfortunately for Browne, simply do not measure up to the romantic conception of "the Indian" necessary to the definition of the frontier hero. They are not easily relegated to the archive of history—Browne is forced to acknowledge that they are living history. Browne, for instance, recounts the deplorable living conditions of many Alaska Natives. Entering an Alaska Native village (presumably Athabascan), he writes, "Scattered cabins began to appear, and as we passed the Indian inmates came to their doors to see us. On seeing the pinched half-clad forms, the rough cabins, and the starved dogs one could not help pondering on the difference between the white and red man" (204). The white men, he explains,

> were all the products of civilisation, and everything about our sleds and equipment had been built along the lines laid down by the Indians, and yet what a difference. Our great dogs were sleek and strong and their coats rippled like martin fur over their iron muscles. Our sleds were in perfect condition, varnished against the weather and without one broken brace. We ourselves were warmly and strongly clad and we shouted for the pure joy of life as we flew along the trail. (204)

Seemingly puzzled by their predicament, Browne writes, "And yet the Indians were products of this wilderness and had taught the white man how to live. As I thought, I remembered the Indian graveyard behind the woods, and the number of fresh graves that I had seen there" (204). Browne's sentiment that the Indian had "taught the white man how to live" in the wilderness follows conventional frontier mythology, and his description of the dogs is an obvious allusion to Jack London's *The Call of the Wild,* the muscular dogs a reflection of how Browne imagines himself and the members of his expedition. In one sense the dichotomy between the healthy white men and the unhealthy Alaska Natives simply underscores the superiority of whites. Unlike the white men, who capably negotiate the border between "civilization" and "savagery," blending the best of both worlds, "civilizing" the savage has been a complete and utter failure for Alaska Natives.

But Browne's observation of this difference indicates his disappointment in, not necessarily sympathy for, these Alaska Natives. Their plight ultimately threatens *him.* Susan Kollin has argued that in Jack London's novel *Burning Daylight,* the demise of indigenous peoples is "an inevitable and unregrettable event" (69); but Browne's narrative suggests the opposite. These Indians are not representative of the hardy "virility" of the Indian of the frontier legend—they fail to live up to their proper frontier role. The graveyard is not so much a tragedy for the Athabascan Indians as it is a representation

of the potential future death of white Anglo-Saxon masculinity and the health of the nation, for no "virile" Indians will be left with whom the Anglo-Saxon elite can identify. Browne continues, "Tuberculosis was their curse when I first visited them, and I still remembered the hopelessness of their struggle" (204). When he met the chief of the tribe, Browne explains, "The day was bitter cold and as I opened the door of his cabin the thick fetid steam from the interior dimmed the air. The heat was terrific and yet he joined me in the open with a single cotton shirt covering his chest and his legs showing bare through the rents in his trousers. I did not wonder that his body was racked with coughs as I followed him. He was dead when I returned to the village" (205). The fact that the "chief" of the tribe should be "racked with coughs" and eventually die is the inverse of the noble savage chief of frontier legend, who ideally would have been the admirable virile warrior against which the white man could define his masculinity.

In part, the ostensible reason for Alaska Natives' misery, according to Browne, is that the white missionaries have misplaced priorities, for "if the missionaries who go among the Indians would talk hygiene in place of religion they could do a great work" (205). Browne, in other words, indirectly criticizes the "civilizing" process, revealing a fundamental contradiction of the Progressive Era—during "which some American reformers were busy 'civilizing' indigenous people in efforts to turn them into whites, while at the same time other Americans concerned with manhood were busy emulating, or more accurately, *simulating* Indian men in an effort to revitalize Anglo masculinity" (Clark and Nagel 116). Moreover, the missionaries, as it turns out, are a threat not only to Indians but to Browne himself, for their civilizing mission destroys the Indians' ability to remain properly virile. Browne's critique of the missionaries is severely limited, suggesting that a simple lesson in hygiene would somehow rectify the situation of Alaska Natives. His solution to their abject state obscures the reasons Alaska Natives are in this state in the first place.

Alaska Natives' cultural and physical demise was caused by a failed U.S. policy in regard to them. As the gold rushes ensued, increased white presence put pressure on Alaska Native lands. The U.S. government did not officially recognize Native tribes, "and without tribes and treaties, there were no reservations in Alaska. The question of aboriginal title to the land, then, was effectively postponed to an uncertain time in the future. As the white towns were established, the government simply appropriated the land" (Haycox, *Frigid Embrace* 51). To accommodate Alaska Natives, however, in 1906 Congress passed the Native Allotment Act, which gave individual

Natives the right to settle 160-acre plots of land as they claimed them.[14] This policy, however, was antithetical to the Alaska Natives' worldview. Like their Native American counterparts in the United States, the idea of individual ownership was essentially foreign to Alaska Natives. Their cultural identity was based on a strong communal, reciprocal connection with their fellow tribe members and not on a socioeconomic system that pits one individual against another in the pursuit of personal profit. Moreover, like many indigenous people in the lower United States, Alaska Natives were primarily hunter-gatherers, not farmers. Additionally, for the most part Alaskan geography was not suitable for agriculture. Athabascan Indians, meeting with U.S. government officials in 1915, iterated their view of their plight. Chief Evan of Crossjacket explained that the Athabascans "wish to stay perfectly free just as we are now and go about just the same as now. . . . We feel as if we had always gone as we pleased and the way [we] all feel is the same" (quoted in Naske and Slotnick 189). Through an interpreter, the Athabascan representatives summarized,

> As soon as we are made to leave our customs and wild life, we will all get sick and soon die. We have moved into cabins. There is no such thing now as the underground living and as soon as we have done this the Natives begin to catch cold. You used to never hear anything of consumption or tuberculosis. The majority of people say that whiskey brings tuberculosis to the Indians, but this is not true. It is because we have changed our mode of living and are trying to live like the white man does. (189)

Browne believes the missionaries are only partly to blame for the plight of Alaska Natives. In an unflattering portrayal of some Indians, Browne faults the Indians themselves for their deplorable situation:

> In a country where every river is a salmon stream the failure of the Indians to catch enough fish for trade was due to laziness alone. Had any of the Indians who lived along the trail laboured with even the slightest degree of energy, they could have made enough money to supply them with every luxury for the coming year. As it was they were living in want and poverty. (209)

Seemingly perplexed by the reasons for their "laziness," Browne surmises, "The needs of these natives go deeper than a lack of religion or medicine, for I have seen them eating refuse from the beach, when only three days of bidarka paddling would have taken them to mountain ranges teeming with white sheep" (209). In his stereotype of Indians as lazy, Browne attempts to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of

racial origin, in order to justify conquest" (Bhabha 70). His comment that their needs "go deeper than a lack of religion or medicine" implies that Browne finds the Alaska Natives' plight mysterious, somehow beyond an easily rationalized explanation. However "true" Browne's sentiments might be in that the Indians *could* access excellent hunting—a reality hardly straightforward given restrictive game laws—he fails to overtly link the encroachments of whites on Indian lands and culture to the demise of Alaska Natives in the first place. His inability to consciously rationalize the "deeper reasons" for their plight is arguably a subconscious recognition of the real historical reasons for their situation. In demonstrating Browne's inability to comprehend Alaska Natives, this passage illustrates the representational limits and thus the instability of his frontier discourse and its version of history.[15] His discourse is simultaneously a subconscious acknowledgment and disavowal of white responsibility for Alaska Natives' devastation. Yet Browne must remain ambivalent regarding their plight, for if he were to readily admit that the dominant culture is *directly* responsible for the plight of Alaska Natives and that their condition is not the result of something mysteriously inherent in Indian character, he would be calling into question the cultural legitimacy of the expansionist national narrative. In that Browne—as a frontier hero—represents an idealized masculine figure and a symbol of national identity to the dominant culture, he is in no position to undermine his own cultural authority.

The Alaska Native guide Susitna Pete, whom Cook mocks in his book, makes an appearance in Browne's narrative when Browne recounts his participation in the 1906 expedition. Browne contends that "as a piece of local colour he was a great success, but as a guide his services were of no value" (48). In Browne's version of Pete's suspicion that the expedition was in fact in search of gold, he recalls, "To our answers that we wanted to climb Doleika he shrugged his shoulders with an air of amused tolerance. White men always wanted gold, and Pete decided that the search for gold must be our mission. He therefore told us of creeks where we might find the precious metal, and retired in outraged dignity when we showed no enthusiasm" (55). Again, as with Cook's account, Pete's suspicion of the motives of the expedition is understandable given the typical reasons for white expeditions into the Alaskan interior. Yet Browne mocks Pete's reaction in his "outraged dignity," playing upon the image of the supposedly "noble savage" that Pete *attempts* to play but in fact does not embody. Regarding the scientific equipment used to map the country, Browne explains, "On leaving the theodolite for a minute we were amused to see Susitna Pete eagerly place his eye to the

telescope. In an instant his body stiffened with excitement—he had seen a bear; the theodolite must therefore be a new and marvelous instrument for the finding of big game" (55). In this unsympathetic portrayal, Pete represents the ignorant savage Indian incapable of understanding the technologically superior culture of the white man. He is enamored by the theodolite yet is unable to grasp its true significance because of his irrational savagery. In fact, in his "triumph" of understanding, Pete thinks he is knowledgeable about the equipment, but Browne uses this image to mock Pete as a foolhardy, egocentric Indian.

Recalling an infamous river crossing with Pete's wife, who had joined the expedition, Browne writes, "As we reached a stream on the first day that she joined us, one of the men gallantly lifted her onto one of the horses. It was a new and unexpected pleasure to her and thereafter she always expected a lift whenever we reached a stream. Instead of being gratified at his wife's comfort, Susitna Pete was envious" (58). The white man is the noble, generous, chivalric, and manly figure, whereas Pete's jealousy underscores his primitive selfishness and the fact that he is not manly enough to treat his wife properly. Describing the moment when Pete is bucked off his horse while crossing another river, Browne explains that "before she really began to buck Pete was in the water, and he came out of the ford with his Indian stoicism rudely shaken" (59). Pete is mocked for his supposed "Indian stoicism"—he is again a caricatured example of the noble savage. Browne elevates the white male expedition members figuratively above Pete's characteristics to help configure the plight of Alaska Natives as *their* plight, for Pete's ignorance and foolishness represent the reasons for the inability to rectify the historical degradation of Alaska Natives.

In one sense Browne's mockery of Pete seems a straightforward means of dispatching him, much in the way Cook configures Pete. In light of Browne's description of the decrepit Alaska Native village, however, Pete can be simultaneously understood as a threat to Browne's masculinity, for he is another example of Alaska Natives' inability to live up to their proper role in the frontier myth. If it is "the virile Indian" "who had taught the white man how to live," Pete is yet another example of how the virile Indian does not exist in Alaska. Pete is a profound disappointment to Browne's masculine desires—which in fact would be to have a mythic Indian guide, à la Chingachgook in Cooper's Leatherstocking novels, to accompany him and his men into the Alaskan wilderness. After all, the quintessential icon of the frontier, Natty Bumppo, can only be Natty if he is able to identify with Chingachgook at his side. In all his historical reality—which is not to say

that Browne does not imaginatively shape Pete—Pete, unfortunately, has presumably been degraded by his contact with "civilization," rendering him inept and completely incapable of performing his rightful role in the frontier myth. A version of the "degraded Indian," he has been unable to assimilate to the dominant culture (as illustrated, for instance, by the way he marvels over the theodolite), yet he also fails to embody any of the supposed qualities of "true Indianness" (Indian stoicism or abilities as a guide). Pete is a reminder that in Alaska the time of the frontier is all too quickly running its course, and the necessarily representative "savage" Indian has been substituted for by the likes of Pete in all his historical tangibility.

For Browne, the most ideal scenario by which to cope with history is to dispense with Alaska Natives altogether by imaginatively erasing them from the geography in and around Mount McKinley, re-creating it as a purely white Anglo-Saxon male space. He writes, "We were now in a wilderness paradise. The mountains had a wild picturesque look due to their bare rock summits, and big game was abundant. We were wild with enthusiasm over the beauty of it all, and every few minutes as we jogged along some one would gaze fondly on the surrounding mountains and ejaculate, 'This is sure a white man's country!'" (277). And at the same time this is "white" country, it is also "God's Country" (280), according to Browne. The Alaskan frontier, instead of being a symbol of Alaska Native degradation, is situated within the grand national narrative of "manifest destiny," which follows the tenet that the conquest of the frontier by the United States was, and is, divinely sanctioned and implacable.[16] Following R.W.B. Lewis, Browne and his men, in entering "paradise," are "emancipated from history" and become versions of "the American Adam," who in "his moral position was prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent. The world and history lay all before him. And he was the type of creator, the poet par excellence, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him" (5). In his insistence that he is in "white man's country," Browne emphatically attempts to distance the geography of McKinley from that of "Indian country" in Alaska, thereby freeing his conception of masculinity and nationhood from the contemporary history of Alaska Natives. The reality, of course, is that Alaska Natives had long traversed the geography surrounding McKinley, but in that they have no "civilized" and therefore permanent villages on this landscape, Browne figuratively dispenses with their right to the land. But in his *insistence* that it is "white man's country," "the ghost of the Indian as the object of genocidal violence has returned inevitably to haunt" Browne's narrative and its role in constituting "the nation and its

narratives. This haunting marks the limits of that forgetfulness out of which the nation arises" (Scheckel 3). Browne, by emphatically naming the country "white," is anxiety ridden, hoping to prevent the historical "red" Alaska Native hovering in the recesses of his imagination from resurfacing to threaten his cherished fantasy of white frontier masculinity.

To try to fully purge Alaska Natives from his and the national imagination, he reconstitutes those Natives in his psyche to fit the imagined Indian of frontier legend, relocating the Indian in a mythic past as he configures the "blank," uninhabited geography surrounding McKinley and the mountain itself.[17] Granted, before he reaches the isolated geography surrounding Mount McKinley, Browne does configure moments in his travels in the interior of Alaska in romantic frontier discourse. For instance, on the 1912 expedition he explains that the bodies of the expedition members had become "hardened" by the many weeks on the trail (189). After this description, however, he recounts the misery of Alaska Natives. In the course of his narrative, his fantasies of frontier masculinity are periodically disrupted by his memory of the presence of "real" Alaska Natives who challenge the security of Progressive-Era masculinity and its idealized image of Alaska. Following his description of Alaska Natives, he reestablishes the image of the "hardened" white frontiersman. Browne writes that life on the trail led to the beginning of the "necessary metamorphosis" in which expedition members' "soft muscles were beginning to harden" (208). Philip Deloria has written that "the dilemma of modernity . . . centered on finding ways to preserve the integrity of the boundaries that marked exterior and authentic Indians, while gaining access to organic Indian purity in order to make it one's own" (115). Alaska Natives, to Browne's dismay, challenge the boundaries between white and Indian culture because white civilization has "contaminated the authenticity of the primitive" (Deloria 115) by its very presence in Alaska, let alone helping to thoroughly transform the indigenous cultures of Alaska. To preserve the boundaries threatened by the reality of Alaska Natives and thus preserve the security of the white imagination, the "necessary metamorphosis" Browne must undergo is not simply of his body, but he must attempt to imaginatively transform Alaska Natives from their disappointing concreteness to the imagined, archetypal virile Indian—an archetype ultimately used to serve Browne's metamorphosis from a "civilized" white male to the white male hero of frontier legend.

In his descriptions of the three expeditions, Browne identifies with the romanticized "primitive" Indian as he reinscribes the benefits of white male contact with the "raw" wilderness. Recalling the passage describing the decrepit

lifestyle of the Indians living in cabins, Browne explains that he and his men have appropriated Indian technology to survive the rigors of the wilderness; they become "like" the Indian, a standard frontier trope. Similarly, recounting the 1906 expedition, Browne writes, "We were wet to the skin constantly, and dried our clothes at night, sitting more or less naked about the fire during the process. The wilderness too had set its brand on us; we were as dark as Indians" (30). When read against the description of their "dark Indian" skin, Browne's portrayal of himself and the men around the fire evokes a stereotypical scene of the primitive, "red-skinned," "naked" savage gathered around a fire.

This image is reiterated when Browne depicts camping in and along rivers: "Our camps were picturesque in the extreme. They were usually situated on a bar of the glacial rivers. The camp-fires were built in the great piles of driftwood that the river brought down during the spring freshets. The men moved half naked, like savages, in the crimson glow, while above the haze of the valley the Alaskan Range stood clear cut against the evening sky" (39). Similarly, on the 1912 expedition, Browne recounts his feeling when successfully hunting bighorn sheep: "Throwing off my snow glasses I fired again and saw the sheep turn and leave the band. I will never again (I fear) feel such a surge of savage triumph as I did when I saw that the sheep was hit" (267). His triumph reenacts Indian savagery, figuratively dominating the "virile" Indian of frontier mythology as well as the natural world. Following typical frontier discourse, the white man's regression to "savagery" allows him to tap the regenerative possibilities of contact with the virile Indian and raw wilderness.[18]

Additionally, Browne's rhetoric squares not only with Progressive-Era masculine perceptions concerning the value of big game hunting but also with the belief that eating red meat was supposedly necessary to regenerate "manly power" (Kimmel 137). Browne, however, augments this belief by explaining that after killing the sheep "our desire for fat was so intense that we tried eating the raw meat, and finding it good beyond words we ate freely of the fresh mutton. I can easily understand now why savage tribes make a practice of eating uncooked flesh" (268). It might have been one thing for Progressive-Era males to eat "red meat," but the idea that Browne and the expedition members ate *raw* meat like *savages* is an even more potent image of regenerating "manly power." Cook also implicitly emulates the archetypal "Indian" in his narrative. I would argue that in his continuous repetition of the word and discourse of *savagery,* Browne underscores his anxiety about Alaska Natives. Following Homi Bhabha, Browne's use of stereotypes repre-

sents "the desire for an originality" of the "native" that can shore up his identity as an Anglo-Saxon male; but the need to stereotype the Native simultaneously underscores the way his identity is "threatened by the differences of race, colour and culture" (75) of Alaska Natives who do not measure up to Browne's masculine fantasies. To combat this threat, Alaska Natives must be

> consigned to a mythical realm [where] they constitute no threat to the established order either figuratively (as matters of guilt and conscience) or literally (in terms of concrete opposition). That which is mythic in nature cannot be or has been murdered, expropriated and colonized in the "real world." The potential problem is solved through intellectual sleight of hand, aesthetic gimmickry and polemical discourse with specters. (Churchill 38)

Compared to Cook's narrative, Browne's description of the actual ascent of the mountain is doubly important to the construction of frontier masculinity given the reality of Alaska Natives. Both explicitly and implicitly, only by repressing the reality of Alaska Natives and "going savage" are the men readily able to confront the rigors of mountaineering and fully rejuvenate Anglo-Saxon masculinity in the Progressive Era. Their bodies have been "hardened" by life on the trail, and this "hardening" is something the rigors of the mountain only amplify. Browne writes, "We were worn down to bone and sinew as it was and needed a strong food to give us strength; while we were as hard as iron we lacked the *rebound* that a well-fed man has—in the language of the training table 'we had gone stale'" (334). But although their bodies are emaciated and pushed to their limit, it is precisely their bodies' ability to endure the hardships of mountaineering that defines their masculine virility.

And throughout the ascent of the mountain on the 1912 expedition, Browne, like Cook, employs martial discourse as the men "war" with nature. Browne's version of masculinity, too, is implicitly conjoined with the sublime power of the mountains, for he uses the discourse of the romantic sublime to characterize mountain scenery in his narrative—even describing a sunset against the backdrop of the mountains where the men "stood spellbound under the frozen cliffs and it seemed to me as if nature had for a moment drawn aside a veil and allowed us to look on one of the mysteries of the universe" (144). Depicting the scenery high up on the mountain, he also writes, "The first time that we reached the top of the col [of the Central North-eastern Ridge] our breath was taken away by the awesome grandeur of the view. The walls on the southern side were as savage a lot of ice-clad precipices as the mind could picture" (325–326).

In that the mountain emerges from the ideological construction of the "white man's country" that surrounds it, it becomes a symbolically powerful extension of that country. Figuratively, white space is elevated to sublime proportions. The fact that the actual mountain is materially uninhabited and can never be realistically inhabited by Alaska Natives helps to underscore Browne's goal of purging the surrounding landscape of the disfigurations of colonialism. The description of the mountain's walls as "savage" reinscribes a latent image of the idealized savage "Indian" who, although not literally residing on the mountain, nonetheless resides in the recesses of Browne's imagination. By projecting this savagery onto the mountain, Browne configures the mountain as the savage Other against which he defines his masculine virility. His final "conquest" of the mountain becomes not only a triumph over material space but a triumph of the frontier myth that conveniently erases the physical and cultural plight of Alaska Natives in favor of the romantic virile Indian of frontier legend.

The process of imagining and creating Mount McKinley National Park, then, was not simply an act of wilderness conservation in Alaska but was in part predicated on how Anglo-Saxon masculinity was defined in respect to the physical and cultural devastation wrought upon Alaska Natives. Moreover, because Browne's narrative is intimately connected with the polar controversy and its "international importance," as Browne himself notes, the erasure of these disfigurations serves the interests of the United States and its role as a world imperial power. To recall Lisa Bloom's argument about the North Pole, just as the North Pole was a blank spot—devoid of colonial disfigurations—used to serve the interests of projecting a supposedly innocuous U.S. imperial policy on the world stage, the same was imagined in regard to McKinley and its proximate geography. And if the blemish of Alaska Natives can be purged from the imagination of U.S. masculinity as Browne and his men explore McKinley and its environs, so, too, can any other imperial disfigurations regarding the "savage" people of the world. In other words, the construction of the seemingly blank geography of the McKinley region can be replicated ad infinitum to serve male desires for U.S. imperial expansion. But in that Browne and his men did not reach the summit of the mountain, that summit offered Hudson Stuck the opportunity to capitalize on the mountain's symbolic potential in 1913. Whereas Browne tries to escape Alaska Natives, Stuck attempts to plant them squarely in front of the lens of the Anglo-Saxon elite. Stuck, in fact, uses the plight of Alaska Natives to try to reconstruct the very foundations of frontier masculinity in Alaska and, by extension, national identity itself.

3 Save Whom From Destruction? Alaska Natives, Frontier Mythology, and the Regeneration of the White Conscience in Hudson Stuck's *The Ascent of Denali* (1914)

A MOUNTAINEERING NARRATIVE by the Episcopal archdeacon of the Yukon, Hudson Stuck, recounts the first expedition to reach the south peak and true summit of Denali in 1913. Like Cook and Browne before him, Stuck employs frontier mythology in his narrative, *The Ascent of Denali (Mount McKinley): A Narrative of the First Complete Ascent of the Highest Peak in North America* (1914), but in a rather different fashion. Through his frontier narrative Stuck, too, seeks to redeem the United States but with an eye toward rewriting the Anglo-Saxon version of westward and northern expansion that romanticized the frontier hero's ability to dominate "savage" nature or "savage" Indians. For Stuck, frontier mythology becomes a subversive tool to dismantle and potentially transform some Anglo-Saxon male views about Alaska's role in the production of national identity, with the hope that he can pave a new future for Alaska Natives. Whereas Browne tries in his narrative to escape the disfigurations of imperialism, Stuck purposefully foregrounds these disfigurations, pulling them back within the scope of the elite's consciousness—no doubt recognizing the increasing visibility of the geography around Denali as an attractive venue for enacting frontier masculinity. But Stuck's narrative is ambivalent in its scope, for he is often caught between his desire to legitimize the physical and cultural presence of Alaska

Natives and simultaneously reinforcing the ethnocentrism of the dominant culture. Although Stuck in great part rewrites the frontier ethos and national identity of the Progressive Era by reminding his readers of the material consequences of imperial expansion, he still elevates himself above Alaska Natives.

In the introduction to the chapters in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West,* Laura McCall states that one of the book's goals is to offer an alternative critical perspective of white frontier masculinity in the American West. She writes, "Men in frontier settlements often encountered situations that destabilized or rendered inoperable conventional wisdoms about prototypical manhood" (7). As a result, "The very population who represented iconic manhood occasionally threw off the mantle and embraced alternative forms of masculinity" (7). Alaska, of course, was not "the West" but the "Far North," and as I noted earlier, during the Progressive Era it functioned imaginatively as a geography for reenacting the frontier mythology of the West. In certain respects Stuck could never have represented "iconic manhood" to the Anglo-Saxon imagination of the Progressive Era, for his profession as a missionary would not have lent itself easily to conceptions of virile frontier masculinity. Stuck did not "throw off the mantle" of iconic manhood as much as he—despite his role as a missionary—resembled that manhood in its "conventional wisdoms" in his rigorous, grueling travels dogsledding throughout the Alaskan interior to meet the needs of Alaska Natives, as well as in his ascent of Denali. In his dual status as a missionary and frontiersman meeting the challenges of the Alaskan climate and wilderness, he occupies a place in Alaskan history that challenged the dominant view of Anglo-Saxon masculinity as imagined by his white male contemporaries. In addition, his challenge to this view helps to open up a critical space to rethink scholarly views about how white frontier masculinity seemingly had to be constructed in Alaska during the Progressive Era.[1]

Born in England in 1863, Stuck emigrated to the United States in 1885. After finishing his theological studies at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, Stuck became an Episcopal minister, leading his first congregation in Cuero, Texas, in 1892. In 1904 Stuck heard Bishop Peter Trimble Rowe lecture on missionary work in Alaska. Reared on British imperial adventure romances and taken with the lore of polar exploration in his boyhood, Stuck hungered for adventure, and as a result he eagerly sought the position of archdeacon of the Yukon. Stuck traveled to missions by dogsled "10,000 miles"[2] throughout Alaska, until he died in 1920. Although Stuck's duty was to minister to Alaska Natives and whites alike, he quickly focused

3.1 Hudson Stuck (from *10,000 Miles With a Dogsled* [1914]). *Courtesy,* University of Nebraska Press.

attention on the needs of Alaska Natives, particularly Athabascans who he thought were threatened by the debauchery—particularly as a result of alcohol—of white civilization.

By the standards of his day, Stuck was considered a radical. At the time, missionaries worked almost exclusively to convert Natives to Christianity, as well as to thoroughly assimilate them to white culture in the cause of "progress"; and this had been the case in Alaska under the influence of the powerful Presbyterian missionary Sheldon Jackson.[3] But Stuck was adamantly opposed to the notion that Alaska Natives could assimilate fully to the dominant culture, and he vigorously fought the Allotment Act. Stuck clearly thought it was important to "save souls" by converting Alaska Natives to Christianity, as well as believing they should be educated in schools, and he started boarding schools for Alaska Native youths. But Stuck believed the only way Alaska Natives would survive was by being allowed to maintain their hunter-gatherer culture, and thus these schools also encouraged students to learn to hunt, fish, and trap. In fact, to Stuck it was "far better . . . that an Indian youth know how to hunt than to read. Self-sufficiency was the key" (Dean 190). By creating boarding schools, Stuck essentially hoped to "replenish the Indian villages on the Yukon after the 'old diseased stock [had] died off' " (188). Historically, Alaska Natives no doubt appreciated Stuck's efforts on their behalf, but to recall Chief Evan of Crossjacket's statement in Chapter 2, they had their own ideas about their future. For many, this would have included not converting to Christianity. As Stuck's narrative helps to illustrate, as much as he fought for Alaska Natives and their traditional lifestyle, he thought he was the best-qualified arbiter of how their future would be forged in Alaska.[4]

Stuck explicitly frames his narrative against the frontier masculinities exhibited by previous expeditions. In regard to Cook, Stuck writes, "The claims that Doctor Cook made upon his return [from Denali] are well known, but it is quite impossible to follow his course from the description given in his book, 'To the Top of the Continent.' This much may be said: from the summit of the mountain, on a clear day, it seemed evident that no ascent was possible from the south side of the range at all" (164–165). For evidence, Stuck reasons,

> Doctor Cook talks about "the heaven-scraped granite of the top" and "the dazzling whiteness of the frosted granite blocks," and prints a photograph of the top showing granite slabs. There is no rock of any kind on the South (the higher) Peak above nineteen thousand feet. The last one thousand five hundred feet of the mountain is all permanent snow and ice; nor is the

> conformation of the summit in the least like the photograph printed as the "top of Mt. McKinley." (165)

Stuck goes on to "pity" Cook in regard to his claim (166). Stuck's rebuttal of Cook's claim is a search for the truth, but given Cook's narrative it is also implicitly a rebuttal of Cook's representation of himself as a virile frontier hero. Stuck is also aware and in admiration of Browne's success, and before he leaves for his expedition he has the opportunity to read Browne's narrative. In regard to the Browne expedition being kept from attaining the summit by bad weather, Stuck states, "Only those who have experienced bad weather at great heights can understand how impossible it is to proceed in the face of it. The strongest, the hardiest, the most resolute must yield" (178). Browne, despite his supposed virility, was turned back at the summit. Moreover, Stuck also recounts the famous and remarkable 1910 "sourdough" expedition, made up of miners who did not believe Cook could have reached the summit of McKinley. The sourdough expedition—with little mountaineering experience and equipment but a wealth of Alaskan wilderness experience—made it to the north peak of McKinley, mistaking it for the highest point on the mountain. As Stuck says of the expedition, it was "a most extraordinary feat, unique—the writer has no hesitation in claiming—in all the annals of mountaineering" (170). Even as the embodiment of frontier masculinity in the eyes of middle- and upper-middle-class Anglo-Saxon males, the sourdoughs, too, fail to reach the summit. The fact that no one definitively reached McKinley's summit essentially preserves its "blankness" for Stuck and his conception of the frontier hero. His success in reaching the summit implicitly suggests that the value system of his version of frontier masculinity is far superior to the dominant version.

In addition to Stuck, the expedition members consisted of the sourdough and guide Harry Karstons ("the Seventy Mile Kid"); Robert B. Tatum, a trainee cleric; and the "half-breed" Athabascan/Irish Walter Harper. Stuck explains that after poling up the Bearpaw River, Karstons cached a food supply 50 miles from the mountain one and a half years before the summit was reached. Once the expedition proper was under way in early April 1913, the party had to ferry one and a half tons of supplies to the base camp just below the tree line near the mountain. Here the party killed caribou and a mountain sheep, which were then boiled and turned into mincemeat meatballs and stew broth for additional food up on the mountain. As Stuck explains, "Why should any one haul canned pemmican hundreds of miles into the greatest game country in the world" (19). Whereas Cook and Browne

fetishize hunting as a means to rejuvenate their masculinity, Stuck conspicuously understates that the geography in and around Denali is "the greatest game country in the world." It serves as a useful, practical venue for sustenance and is not romanticized to serve his masculinity. On April 18 the expedition began the trip up the dangerous Muldrow Glacier. On May 30 they reached Parker Pass at 15,000 feet and attained access to the Grand Basin, a massive glacier leading up the mountain. They moved several camps up the glacier, reaching 17,500 feet on June 5. On June 6 they reached the summit of Denali at 20,320 feet above sea level.

Stuck does not romanticize hunting because his purpose is not to celebrate masculine virility; rather, it is to raise the national consciousness about the plight of Alaska Natives. As it was, McKinley was already an important national icon, particularly to the Anglo-Saxon elite, and Stuck was well aware that his expedition was highly visible and could continue to shed light on the North Pole controversy. Stuck had even written to Peary in support of his claim to be the true discoverer of the pole.[5] In addition, Stuck was undoubtedly aware of the discussions going on back East regarding the possible formation of a national park in and around Denali and likely knew that the idea of a national park was conceived as a big game hunting ground. Expedition member Harry Karstons had guided wealthy eastern hunter and Boone and Crockett Club member Charles Sheldon—the first sportsman hunter to visit the region—in 1906 and 1907, and it was Sheldon who first conceived the idea of creating a national park. As it turned out, Karstens, because he was so well respected in Alaska as a prospector and guide, became the park's first superintendent from 1921 to 1928. Just as Sheldon likely discussed the idea of the region as a park with Karstens in 1908 (Catton 119), Karstons would probably have talked about the possibility of a park with Stuck on their expedition in 1913. Stuck, aware of the geography's importance to the movers and shakers of the eastern male establishment, no doubt saw his expedition as a golden opportunity to advance his agenda regarding the plight of Alaska Natives. The fact that he distanced himself from romanticizing the hunter/pathfinder of frontier legend no doubt disappointed many of his male readers, but the relative absence of this discourse underscored Stuck's agenda.

Without question, Stuck genuinely abhors the degradation of Alaska Natives. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon establishment, which evinces little sympathy for laws that sustain the Natives' lifestyle, Stuck lauds progressive laws that help Alaska Natives survive culturally and materially. Regarding the law restricting the trapping of beavers, he writes,

> Since the law went into effect prohibiting their capture until 1915 they have increased and multiplied all over interior Alaska. They are still caught by the natives, but since their skins cannot be sold the Indians are wearing beaver garments again to the great advantage of health in the severe winters. One wishes very heartily that the prohibition might be made perpetual, for only so will fur become the native wear again. It is good to see the children, particularly, in beaver coats and breeches instead of the wretched cotton that otherwise is almost their only garb. Would it be altogether beyond reason to hope that a measure which was enacted to prevent the extermination of an animal might be perpetuated on behalf of the survival of an interesting and deserving race of human beings now sorely threatened? Or is it solely the conservation of commercial resources that engages the attention of government? There are few measures that would redound more to the physical benefit of the Alaskan Indian than the perpetuating of the law against the sale of beaver skins. (138–139)

Although Stuck applauds the game law, he clearly admonishes the dominant culture in his condemnation of commercial interests. The capitalist, consumerist culture that has led to the near extermination of the beaver has also contributed to the demise of Alaska Natives. By suggesting that the law might be perpetuated with the goal of preserving Alaska Natives, Stuck undermines the competitive values of capitalist culture, for in this context the Natives have no commercial value. They do not trap beavers to sell them on the market. Wearing furs in favor of cotton is practical in the Alaskan climate, but it also represents a rejection of white culture—symbolized by cotton clothes—in favor of a symbol of Alaska Native culture—furs. And Alaska Natives' ability to trap also legitimizes the cultural interests of a hunter-gatherer culture over the misguided U.S. governmental policies that encouraged a sedentary agricultural existence for those Natives. Although Stuck does not elaborate on his comment as to why Alaska Natives are "interesting" and "deserving," the fact that they *are* "interesting" and "deserving" attests at least in part to their cultural legitimacy. Unlike Browne, who finds no worth in "real" Alaska Natives, Stuck believes they have cultural value that is worth preserving solely because it is "interesting" and "deserving" and not for any quantifiable commercial reason. Moreover, challenging Cook's assumption that Alaska Natives are responsible for the wanton slaughter of game, Stuck makes it clear that the presence of whites leads to the destruction of game, not the presence of Alaska Natives. As Stuck explains, "Not only beaver, but nearly all fur and game animals have greatly increased in the Kantishna country. In the year of the [gold] stampede, when thousands of men spent the winter here, there was wholesale destruction of game and

trapping of fur. But the country, left to itself, is now restocked of game and fur" (139).

But although Stuck evinces a genuine sympathy for Alaska Natives, thus undermining the dominant culture and the masculine frontier ethos, this passage simultaneously patronizes Alaska Natives. Here Stuck mediates Alaska Natives through the lens of the detached white anthropologist. The fact that the Indians are a deserving *race* risks essentializing Indian identity, as if that identity is somehow predicated on a racial type. Stuck's failure to elaborate as to why Alaska Natives are "interesting" relegates the Natives to an opaque aesthetic object. He only notes that they wear furs, which although traditional Native wear, offers a limited image of Indians already available to the dominant culture's conception of how "Indians" presumably should appear on the American "frontier."

Stuck's ambivalent stance toward Alaska Natives is even more apparent in other passages of his narrative. At the end of the preface—writing in the third person to place himself "objectively" in a superior moral position—he explains that "he is concerned much more with men than mountains, and would say, since 'out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh,' that his especial and growing concern, these ten years past, is with the native people of Alaska, a gentle and kindly race, now threatened with a wanton and senseless extermination, and sadly in need of generous champions if that threat is to be averted" (xiii). Unlike Browne, who flees from the degradation of Alaska Natives to preserve his heroic version of frontier masculinity, Stuck restores Alaska Natives to the limelight in his narrative. But although Stuck is a "champion" of "the native people of Alaska," his discourse again overtly draws upon racial typology—this time connecting racial type to the romanticized figure of the noble savage. The fact that Alaska Natives are a "gentle and kindly race" stereotypes them as primitive, harmless, and angelic children who must clearly rely on their paternal, "civilized" white father for guidance and redemption. This paternalism is reinforced as Stuck continues his preface.

In a symbolic gesture to reestablish the presence of Alaska Natives in early-twentieth-century American consciousness, Stuck opens his preface,

> Forefront in this book, because forefront in the author's heart and desire must stand a plea for the restoration to the greatest mountain in North America of its immemorial native name. If there be any prestige or authority in such matter from the accomplishment of a first complete ascent, "if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," the author values it chiefly as it may give weight to this plea. (vii)

The mountain, as I noted in Chapter 1, had been named Mount McKinley by a white surveyor exploring the frontier "wilderness" of Alaska; and according to Stuck, because the Alaska Natives were "inarticulate," "no voice was raised in protest" (vii). Stuck will set the record straight. He finds "a certain ruthless arrogance that grows more offensive to him as the years pass by, in the temper that comes to a 'new' land and contemptuously ignores the native names of conspicuous natural objects, almost always appropriate and significant" (xi). But although he does remind his readers of the presence of Alaska Natives and condemns the arrogance of the dominant culture, Stuck's arbitration of Alaska Native presence and discourse effectively replicates the white surveyor's discursive arrogance while diminishing the cultural validity of the people for whom he claims to speak. By "inarticulate," Stuck seems to mean in part that Alaska Natives do not have the political power to defend themselves from their fate. But "inarticulate" also suggests that the language of Alaska Natives is primitive, incapable of expressing desires without Stuck's rational discourse. He is part "of [an] aesthetic doctrine [that] reserve[s] unto the literate the right to interpret history and reality at will" (Churchill 35).

Following Ward Churchill, the presumed "right to interpret" is evident when Stuck explains that another tribe calls the highest point in North America "*Traleika,* which, in their wholly different language, has the same signification" (viii). Nonetheless, the Alaska Natives who call the mountain Denali "preponderate so greatly as to leave no question which native name it should bear" (ix). Cook and Browne are essentially ambivalent about Native names, so Stuck's advocacy offers a fundamental shift in the importance of naming the mountain—a difference that for Stuck is important as a means to remind the nation that whites were not the "discoverers" of the mountain and that Alaska was peopled before they arrived. Alaska is not simply a blank space on which to enact U.S. desires, regardless of the presence of Alaska Natives. But Stuck's gesture only goes so far, for in effect Stuck silences Alaska Natives much the way the surveyor does. For Stuck, whether diverse tribes inhabit the geography surrounding Denali or not is irrelevant. A Western conception of ownership is superimposed by Western cartography. Just as a white surveyor decided to call the mountain Mount McKinley, so too does a white man determine that it will be called Denali. And Native names are "almost always appropriate" (xi); thus presumably, if a Native name is deemed inadequate, a white name would be appropriate. Stuck is also "deeply moved with the appropriateness of the simple native names; for simplicity is always a quality of true majesty" (ix). In this passage Alaska

Natives are little more than "simple" people—culturally flattened. Legitimization of Stuck's cause is ultimately arbitrated by "the learned societies of the world, the geographical societies, the ethnological societies, [which] have set their faces against this practice [of disregarding Native names] these many years past, and to them the writer confidently appeals" (xi). Ultimately, any Alaska Native name is co-opted and legitimated through the discursive practices of the geographical and ethnological institutions of the dominant white culture, for these institutions must sanction Stuck's request.

Stuck's sympathetic portrayal of the "native" climber in his party, Walter Harper, his Cooperesque "sidekick," also inadvertently undermines his purported goal to help legitimize the presence of Alaska Natives. Harper, Stuck's half-breed Athabascan/Irish companion, was raised by the Athabascan tribe. Stuck recruited Harper to be his interpreter and guide in his travels through the interior of Alaska, and he slowly acculturated Harper with a white education. Stuck exalts Harper, for "Walter, who had been in the lead all day, was the first to scramble up; a native Alaskan, he is the first human being to set foot upon the top of Alaska's great mountain, and he had well earned the lifelong distinction" (98). For Stuck, as the first person to stand on the summit of Denali, Harper is an important symbol of Alaska Native legitimacy. The fact that Stuck was not the first person to stand on the summit symbolically dispossesses white control over Alaska Native lands and prevents the frontier hero from realizing his rightful act of conquest in the interest of defining Anglo-Saxon masculinity.

In that Harper is in fact a "half-breed," Stuck's definition of him as a "native Alaskan" is somewhat problematic. As a half-breed, Harper occupies an ambivalent role, representing the fluidity of cultural identity. Melissa Meyer has explained that in U.S. Indian policy at the turn of the twentieth century, "Policymakers believed that, despite their irredeemable hybrid stock, those of mixed descent would serve as a 'civilizing' force and pave the way for the success of assimilation programs" (239). Stuck challenged the dominant viewpoint about mixed-breed peoples and their role in the future of "civilization," for he thought they could replenish the stock of decimated Alaska Native peoples with the goal of restoring their traditional nomadic culture (Dean 187–188). Although Stuck clearly believed that as a half-breed Harper would still have had racial limitations, Harper's upbringing as an Athabascan Indian and his subsequent education under Stuck illustrate that cultural identity transcends racial typology. As James Clifford has pointed out, the notion of a "pure native" identity is simply a myth. "Native" identity, as with any cultural identity, has always been a dynamic and fluid cultural pro-

cess.[6] Louis Owens has argued that in American literature the "halfbreed" Indian generally "has served as a matrix for the conflicted terrors of Euramerica, the horror of liminality that is the particular trauma of the colonial mind. . . . The mixedblood is a mirror that gives back a self-image with disturbing implications. . . . The instinct of the dominant culture, facing evidence of its own uncontained mutability, is to rewrite the stories, eradicate the witness, and break the mirror" (*Mixedblood* 25)—a maneuver reflected in Stuck's narrative. For however much Stuck might admire Harper, he must constitute him within safe and knowable Indian stereotypes to keep Harper from threatening his own role as a white missionary.

Stuck explains in the preface that

> Walter Harper [was] Indian-bred until his sixteenth year, and up to that time trained in not much else than Henry of Navarre's training, "to shoot straight, to speak the truth; to do with little food and less sleep" (though equal to an abundance of both on occasion), who joyed in the heights as a mountain-sheep or a chamois, and whose sturdy limbs and broad shoulders were never weary or unwilling—to all of these there is heartfelt affection and deep obligation. (xii)

Harper was at one time culturally "Indian," and he is not openly patronized for his Indian upbringing. Although he is white, Stuck is willing to humbly admit he is so smitten with Harper that he feels a "deep obligation" toward him. And Stuck debunks the stereotype that Indians are untrustworthy and inherently lazy given that Harper "speak[s] the truth" and was "never weary or unwilling." But Stuck substitutes one stereotype for another. However much Harper is admired, this passage is also suggestive of the stereotype of the noble savage—Harper is morally pure for he is truthful, and he is the stoic Indian, never "unwilling" in the face of physical hardship. This is similar to Stuck's brief description of two Alaska Native boys who aided the expedition, both of whom he represents as morally pure and trustworthy.[7] Harper also never speaks in the narrative; thus he has no direct voice concerning his identity. To Stuck, Harper is an extension of Stuck's—and presumably the Alaska Native—cause because he symbolically reasserts the presence of "native Alaskans." But Harper, as an Alaska Native, is in great part no more significant than the relative emptiness of the rubric "Denali." Granted, his life has a narrative, and thus at least in part Harper is individuated. Yet his identity is still configured in the tired discourse of Indian stereotypes.

The fact that Harper was "up to that time trained in *not much else*" than to hunt and "speak the truth" suggests that although his education up to his

sixteenth year is admirable in and of itself, it is still inadequate. Stuck's "deep obligation" to Harper results in Harper's becoming learned in white traditions. During the ascent of the mountain, Stuck and Harper continue Harper's schooling, "for there was always Walter's education to be prosecuted, as it had been prosecuted for three winters on the trail and three summers on the launch, in a desultory but not altogether unsuccessful manner. An hour or two spent in writing from dictation, another hour or two in reading aloud, a little geography and a little history and a little physics made the day pass busily" (44). Harper exemplifies the reality that Alaska Natives are redeemable from the limitations of their culture. Thus when Harper reaches the summit, he represents in part a symbolic triumph over the "primitive" because he has been redeemed for his own betterment and progress—for the first man to reach the top of the continent is, in many respects, an extension of white culture. His "Indianness," although clearly defined as "native Alaskan" by Stuck, is an "Indianness" conceived, packaged, and thus defined by white desires.[8]

After reaching the summit of Denali, Stuck writes, "There was no pride of conquest, no trace of that exultation of victory some enjoy upon the first ascent of a lofty peak, no gloating over good fortune that had hoisted us a few hundred feet higher than others who had struggled and been discomfited" (108). This passage illustrates an obvious conscious effort to distance the expedition from the discourse of frontier conquest Stuck believes has led to the cultural and physical destruction of Alaska Natives. And throughout the expedition Stuck downplays the image of bodily virility so important to many white males and their conception of masculinity and national identity, instead iterating his physical trauma during the climb—he has "shortness of breath" and "fits of panting," and "at such times everything would turn black before [Stuck's] eyes and he would choke and gasp and seem unable to get breath at all" (96). In his description of reaching the summit he writes that there

> was the feeling that a privileged communion with the high places of the earth had been granted; that not only had we been permitted to lift up eager eyes to these summits, secret and solitary since the world began, but to enter boldly upon them, to take place, as it were, domestically in their hitherto sealed chambers, to inhabit them, and to cast our eyes down from them, seeing all things as they spread out from the windows of heaven itself. (108–109)

The party enters an untainted, sublime "virgin" landscape that reinvokes the classic frontier theme of civilization's moral purification through con-

tact with the frontier "wilderness." Stuck's imagery recalls what Annette Kolodny contends "is probably America's oldest and most cherished fantasy: a daily reality of harmony between man and nature based on an experience of the land as essentially feminine—that is, not simply the land as mother, but the land as woman, the total female principle of gratification—enclosing the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose, and painless and integral satisfaction" (*Lay of the Land* 4). Like Cook and Browne before him, Stuck uses the topography of the mountain to suggest that his version of masculinity conjoins with the sublime ideal of the heavens. Unlike Cook and Browne, who invoke sublime discourse to supposedly regenerate the virile male body, Stuck makes no overt effort to bodily internalize the sublime and figuratively project its masculine power over the Alaskan wilderness and its inhabitants. Stuck attempts to transform the discourse of Progressive-Era Anglo-Saxon masculinity by employing a more self-effacing version of the sublime. In the image of domesticity, Stuck supplants virile masculinity with an image of refined, restrained, "civilized" masculinity—even aligning himself with women writers of the frontier who "aspired not to be freed from civic restraint but to see nature civilized" (Buell 34).[9] Moreover, Stuck's feminization of a landscape he renames as Indian—through the rubric *Denali*—metonymically feminizes Alaska Natives. This feminization undermines the dominant mythology of the virile Indian in the Anglo-Saxon male imagination, threatening that conception of frontier masculinity itself. Stuck, in other words, is in many respects the very antithesis of the iconic frontier hero, and his image would have been an anathema to the Anglo-Saxon masculine ideal. But although Stuck does shift the discourse of frontier masculinity, his image does not fully displace depiction of male power, for Stuck's aversion to the overt discourse of conquest is simultaneously reinscribed by a discourse of rape. The imagery of the phallus as the male figures "boldly" penetrate the secrets of nature, erotically "unsealing" and violating its virgin chambers, illustrates that Stuck's narrative cannot quite escape the discourse of power against which he inveighs.

Through Stuck's feminization of Alaska Natives, however, they become passive people who seemingly beseech U.S. "civilization's" subjugation. In one respect this subjugation is represented by Robert Tatum's raising the U.S. flag on the summit of Denali. This subjugation is also enacted by Stuck through Christian conversion, which even when well intended by whites was one of the central means used to eradicate Native cultures and pacify Native peoples.[10] Stuck, as the "archdeacon of the Yukon," is a powerful institutional symbol of the Christian mission to redeem the savages from

their pagan ways, however much he might admire aspects of their culture. In addition to his status as a clergyman that informs the narrative's "mission," the Christian mission is reiterated upon reaching the top of the mountain. At the summit, the climbing party recites various prayers including the "Te Deum" (106). Figuratively, Harper's success as an Indian is sanctified through Christian ideology. Like his redemption through education, Harper is redeemed from his pagan roots as an Alaska Native. And the mountain itself, although Stuck restores its "pagan" name, is saved. Metonymically, what the name represents—the Athabascan Indian of Alaska—is redeemed by the "civilizing" presence of Christianity. And white "civilization" is sanctified because it fulfills its moral obligation to redeem pagans.

If many white Progressive-Era males hoped to regenerate the virtues of heroic masculinity by identifying with and then dominating the wilderness and the archetypal "virile" Indian, Stuck hopes to transform the frontier male's regeneration from one that celebrates masculine prowess over the wilderness and its inhabitants to one that venerates masculine sensitivity and compassion for Alaska Natives. Ultimately, he hopes his plea for Alaska Natives will transform the United States from an aggressive, masculine nation into a more benign imperial power in Alaska. Following the classic lines laid down by the frontier myth, Stuck "regresses" to a state of primitivism.[11] Referring to Alaska Natives, Stuck explains that "savages they are, if the reader please, since 'savage' means simply a forest dweller, and the author is glad himself to be a savage a great part of the year" (x). Employing Rousseau's classic image of the noble savage, Alaska Natives represent moral purity, for according to Stuck, the return of McKinley to its Native name—Denali—will "show that there once dwelt in the land a simple, hardy race who braved successfully the rigors of its climate and the inhospitality of their environment and flourished" (188). Comparing "savagery" and "civilization," Stuck writes, "After all, these terms—'savage,' 'heathen,' 'pagan'—mean, alike, simply 'country people,' and point to some old-time superciliousness of the city-bred, now confined, one hopes, to such localities as White-chapel and the Bowery" (x–xi). By identifying with the supposed noble savagery of Alaska Natives "who braved successfully the rigors of [Alaska's] climate," Stuck symbolically "purges" civilization of its "unnatural," sordid elements represented by "White-chapel and the Bowery." The people of the nation figuratively become "like" the moral purity of the noble savage, and in turn Stuck hopes they will utilize this new knowledge to advance the cause of Alaska Natives. Stuck appeals to the white conscience by suggesting that it has a vested interest in preserving the moral purity of Alaska Natives, for to do so

will offer a permanent resource against which to measure and maintain the moral character of white civilization itself.

For Browne, the reason for the demise of Alaska Natives is inscrutable, but in his narrative's closing sentiments Stuck makes it clear that a corrupt civilization is *directly* responsible for the Natives' physical and cultural demise. He writes, "It may be that the Alaskan Indians are doomed; it may be that the liquor and disease which to-day are working havoc amongst them will destroy them off the face of the earth. . . . When the inhabited wilderness has become an uninhabited wilderness, when the only people who will ever make their homes in it are exterminated," it can only be attributed to "the septic contact of a superior race [that] put corruption into their blood" (187–188). Stuck's image hearkens back to the age-old stereotype of the "doomed Indian" entrenched in the white imagination and reflected in literary works such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans.* Whereas Browne tries to imaginatively erase Alaska Natives from Alaska through the creation of Mount McKinley National Park, Stuck makes it clear that tragically, in the near future no imaginative leap will be necessary, and Alaska will be left to the devices of whites. Although Stuck clearly equates Alaska Natives with the wilderness—implicitly constructing them as "wild"—and he racially types them as inferior to whites, when he says the wilderness is *inhabited* he reminds his readers that they are mistaken in their conception of Alaska as the last bastion of the frontier; it is not simply an empty, "virgin" wilderness waiting patiently for the fulfillment of their desires.

In the end, although Stuck challenges the dominant ethos of Progressive-Era white frontier masculinity, he still invokes an image of the dominant culture's racial and cultural superiority. Although Stuck finishes his narrative by lambasting civilization and eulogizing the Indians, he aesthetically redeems himself and white civilization—albeit a kinder and gentler version of masculinity and white civilization: "Those who are fighting for the natives with all their hearts and souls do not believe it, cannot believe it, cannot believe that this will be the end of all their efforts, that any such blot will foul the escutcheon of the United States. But if it be so, let at least the memorial of their names remain" (187). Although Stuck's sentiments are noble enough—he desperately attempts to publicize the destruction of Alaska Natives—in renaming the mountain he seems more interested in regenerating the "escutcheon of the United States." The memorial will stand not only as a reminder of the destruction of Alaska Natives but also as a marker to absolve the United States of its sins should his plea for Alaska Natives go unheeded. And as it turned out, even with Stuck's efforts, his desire to sym-

bolically reestablish Alaska Native rights in Alaska by renaming the peak was ignored. For as I pointed out in Chapter 2, when Denali and its surrounding geography became “Mount McKinley National Park,” the park was created to serve the interests of whites and not those of Alaska Natives.

4 Resurrecting Heroes: Sir Francis Younghusband's *The Epic of Mount Everest* (1926) and Post–Great War Britain

Whereas Alaska's Denali served the ideological interests of U.S. national identity, Mount Everest became a backdrop against which British writers defined English national identity. Following the Great War, the British organized a series of expeditions to climb Mount Everest, located on the border between Tibet and Nepal. In his *The Epic of Mount Everest* (1926), the famed imperial soldier, administrator, explorer, and mystic Sir Francis Younghusband recounts these expeditions with the purpose of creating national heroes to combat the cultural malaise of postwar England.[1] As an epic adventure, Younghusband's narrative is "the most prestigious species of the adventure genus" (Green, *Adventurous Male* 151). Martin Green explains that whereas "the true hero of [a nation's] history . . . [are its] People . . . in [epic] narratives [the people focus] their feelings on individuals they [call] Representative Men" (151). The upper class in particular believed England no longer had "representative men" after the Great War because the country had lost its best sons in the trenches of Europe. As Joanna Bourke has argued, after the war the image of the muddied and maimed male body became a symbol of England's emasculation. Traditionally, the warrior's physical courage—signaled by his willingness to put his body in mortal danger—had symbolized his "innate" heroic masculine

virility, courage, leadership, and self-sacrifice; but the war had drained the body of this symbolic import. No longer a site of virile physical health and well-being, the warrior's body instead represented the feebleness of the human body against the effacing and overwhelming power of modern technological warfare.[2]

But in Younghusband's portrayal of the expedition members, he reminds his readers that these masculine virtues can be rejuvenated if Englishmen such as these mountaineers have the opportunity and the proper venue to regenerate virile masculinity. As an *imperial* adventure narrative, Younghusband's male heroes gain their virile self-definition—and by extension national definition—against the imperial landscape and its peoples. Whereas Younghusband's contemporaries in high culture, such as Greene and Forster, might have been pessimistic about the validity of imperial adventure in the modern period, his narrative and the popularity of the Everest expeditions of the 1920s suggest that in many respects the imperial adventure tradition was very much alive. By exhorting English males to identify with the climbers' bodies and their arduous task of climbing Everest, Younghusband attempts to rejuvenate virile masculinity while simultaneously lauding what he believes are the natural imperial masculine ideals of virility, courage, leadership, and self-sacrifice. Drawing from his mystical religious beliefs and romantic discourse, Younghusband underscores the symbol of the male body by figuratively redeeming and sanctifying the bodies of George Mallory and Andrew Irvine, who died high on the slopes of Everest in 1924. In their deaths, Mallory's and Irvine's bodies—and by extension the collective English male body—are symbolically conjoined with the sublime power of the masculine heroic ideal.

According to lore, for Younghusband the idea of climbing Everest began as far back as the 1890s, when he and Charles Granville Bruce—the political officer of Chitral, India, and a captain in the 5th Gurka Rifles—supposedly conceived the idea of an expedition to the mountain. At the time, however, neither Younghusband nor Bruce was in a position to realistically organize such an expedition, and Nepal and Tibet were officially closed to foreigners. An attempt to organize an expedition to Everest was made in 1907 at the suggestion of Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India. The expedition never materialized, however, because John Morley, secretary of state for India, would not grant permission to enter Tibet (Unsworth 244). Before the war, Cecil Rawling, a surveyor for the government in India, and Lieutenant John Noel of the East Yorkshire Regiment, stationed in India, had begun to organize an expedition to Everest with the support of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS). The war, however, ended any serious discussion regarding Everest. Only after

World War I did the project of climbing Everest become formally organized under the auspices of Younghusband, who in 1919 was appointed president of the Royal Geographical Society. Once he became president, Younghusband made organizing an expedition a priority for the RGS, and to further his ends he helped combine the RGS with Britain's Alpine Club to form the Mount Everest Committee. From its inception the RGS was integral to the production of imperial geography, and "geography was essentially the material underpinning for knowledge about the Orient" (Said, *Orientalism* 216) and by extension for control over the Orient. As Reuben Ellis has pointed out, historically the RGS was *the* prestigious sponsor for publishing imperial exploration narratives.[3]

Although Mount Everest is located between Nepal and Tibet and was never officially part of the British Empire, mapping its contours in detail—one of the purported goals of the expeditions to Everest—was an aesthetic extension of imperial power. Younghusband viewed the physical conquest of Everest as a necessary stepping-stone for the exploration and mapping of other "unknown" territories.[4] As I will show, by putting an Englishman on the summit of Everest, the English would symbolically assert their dominance over the geography of the Orient. During the 1920s, Younghusband helped organize three expeditions to attempt to climb Mount Everest. The first expedition in 1921 was primarily a reconnaissance of the mountain in hopes of finding a feasible route to its summit. The second and third expeditions, in 1922 and 1924, respectively, were serious attempts to reach the summit. Although none of the expeditions put a man on the summit of Everest, in 1924 George Mallory and Andrew Irvine did reach a height of at least 28,000 feet before disappearing in the clouds, never to be seen again.[5] Throughout the 1920s, British newspapers covered the expeditions closely, and to raise money for the expeditions the mountaineers toured the country, lecturing to the public. Gauging from the public outpouring of grief following the tragic deaths of Mallory and Irvine, the British public was deeply attuned to the desires and ultimate failure of the expeditions.[6] For Younghusband, the public outpouring of grief following the tragedy was not an isolated historical event but was inextricably linked to the anxieties of the English public still reeling from the devastation of the Great War.

In his classic *The Great War and Modern Memory,* Paul Fussell explains that "out of the world of summer, 1914, marched a unique [British] generation. It believed in Progress and Art and in no way doubted the benignity even of technology. The word *machine* was not yet invariably coupled with the word *gun*" (24). Up to the war, progress had been viewed as

4.1 Sir Francis Younghusband (1903). Photographer unknown. *Courtesy,* Royal Geographical Society, London.

> taking place within a seamless, purposeful "history" involving a coherent stream of time running from past through present to future. The shrewd recruiting poster depicting a worried father of the future being asked by his children, "Daddy, what did *you* do in the Great War?" assumes a future whose moral and social pressures are identical with those of the past. . . . But the Great War took place in what was, compared with ours, a static world, where values appeared stable and where the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable. Everyone knew what Glory was, and what Honor meant. (21)

Following the war, the ideology of progress, stable values, and self-sacrifice in the interests of Britain's glory and honor were faltering ideals.[7] Additionally, in the wake of the war, "the national outlook reflected more the [class] divisions of a land torn by defeat than a unity born of sacrifice to a great ideal" (Havighurst 152). Although the threat of social revolution never fully materialized in Britain following the war, the British government continu-

ally faced the prospect and reality of civil and labor unrest. For instance, the British government was concerned about social unrest as disillusioned and unemployed soldiers returned home from the war.[8] The government also placated civilians who had formerly worked for the war effort by offering them an unemployment insurance policy (Graves and Hodge 27). And "in February 1919 Lloyd George summoned a National Industrial Conference, and appealed to it for assistance in preserving national unity" (Graves and Hodge 29). Yet even in 1920 the Labor Party declared that

> we of the Labour Party . . . recognize, in the present world catastrophe, if not the death, in Europe, of civilization itself, at any rate the culmination and collapse of a distinctive industrial civilization, which the workers will not seek to reconstruct. . . . The industrialist system of capitalist production . . . with the monstrous inequality of circumstances which it produces and the degradation and brutalization, both moral and spiritual, resulting therefrom, may, we hope, indeed have received a death-blow. (Graves and Hodge 151)

Although this doomsday rhetoric never galvanized workers to the point of revolution, the threat of labor unrest—amplified by "red scares" in the wake of the Russian Revolution—continued throughout the 1920s, culminating with the General Strike of 1926, which led to the near shutdown of public services throughout England.[9]

This unrest could occur in the first place because—according to a powerful 1920s myth—England had lost its best men in the war. According to Correlli Barnett, Britain's economic and political power had been in decline since before World War I. After the war, however, Britain's geopolitical decline and domestic turmoil were attributed to the loss of the best and brightest Englishmen in the trenches of Europe. To the British, the loss of human life in the war resulted in a "lost generation," for the war had literally "bled [the British] of their ancient vigour" (426). To make matters worse, not only was the loss of male life attributed to Britain's "decline," but no heroes emerged to help unify the nation and restore Britain's greatness. A disproportionate number of men from the upper class had lost their lives, "and they were exactly the type of men to appeal to the romanticism of the upper-class, public-school mind; perfectly cast as the noble heroes of a tragic legend" (Barnett 427).[10] England needed heroes who could restore the "essential qualities" of English national identity.

As reflected in the poetry of Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, and Siegfried Sassoon, the discourse of romantic heroism no longer seemed adequate to represent modern war. Younghusband, however, attempts to restore national

unity and purpose by rehabilitating the romanticized discourse of war. For according to Graham Dawson, although scholarship makes it seem as if "the heroic idiom of military adventure proved utterly inadequate to cope with the hitherto unimaginable experience of trench warfare, and gave way to irony in which war was no longer seen as heroic opportunity, but rather as the very figure of dystopian hell on earth" (*Soldier Heroes* 171), "evidence suggests serious misjudgment by writers who have denied the continuing centrality of war adventure stories and their versions of heroic masculinity beyond the First World War and into the later twentieth century" (*Soldier Heroes* 172). Younghusband's *Epic* underscores the importance of the discourse of war adventure after World War I.

For one, Younghusband alludes to the Great War at several points in the narrative. Moreover, many of the climbers had a military rank and had served in the Great War. On the first expedition in 1921, expedition members included its leader, Lieutenant Colonel Charles K. Howard-Bury; Major Henry T. Morshead; and Major Edward O. Wheeler. On the second expedition in 1922, the leader was Brigadier General Charles G. Bruce, and the deputy leader was Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lisle Strutt. Other expedition members included Captain C. Geoffrey Bruce, Major Morshead once again, Major Edward F. Norton, and Captain John B.L. Noel. The third expedition in 1924 also included Brigadier General Bruce and Captain Bruce, Lieutenant Colonel Norton, and Captain Noel, with the addition of Major R.W.G. Hingston. And George Mallory—who disappeared below the summit of Mount Everest in 1924—was a veteran of the Great War, in which he served as a lieutenant.

Moreover, Younghusband employs the discourse of war intermittently throughout *The Epic of Everest.* Because the mountain had to be studied before a serious attempt to climb it could be made, Younghusband explains that a "reconnaissance [was] the object of the first Expedition" (26). Chapter 11 is entitled "The Attack" and chapter 23 "The Assault," terms he uses repeatedly throughout the narrative. And the logistics involved in an attempt to climb the mountain are similar to those of fighting a war. An immense amount of food and other material supplies needed to be moved from the expedition's origin in India, transported to Tibet, and finally ferried up the mountain so the mountain could finally, in Younghusband's words, be "conquered." The mountain, then, is an adversary—the altitude and elements representing the enemy against which the climbers exhibit their warriorlike attributes of heroic courage, leadership, and self-sacrifice. Certainly this discourse, as noted in Chapters 1 and 2, is not unique to Younghusband's

narrative and is in fact a standard discourse in scores of mountaineering narratives; but in the context of postwar England, martial discourse assumes an important role in the rehabilitation of English heroic masculinity. The fact that Younghusband's narrative is an epic implicitly connects it to many of the tropes of epic narrative tradition, specifically in respect to that tradition's warrior ethos—which in this case is the ethos specifically engaged in the narration of national identity. As *Sir* Younghusband, Younghusband is a knight himself, and although he is not an active climber participant, his status helps legitimize knightly physical courage and the chivalric warrior code that can represent "loyalty and service, respect for hierarchy, and shared community" as the knight battles his adversary (Miller, *Epic Hero* 13).[11] Younghusband has the moral authority to impart these attributes to the climbers who, in their quest to reach the "holy grail" of the summit of Everest, make themselves worthy of knighthood in the English national tradition.

By itself, Younghusband's use of war discourse to narrate the attempts to climb Mount Everest might be inadequate to his goal of restoring English faith in romantic heroism. But *where* his narrative drama unfolds is particularly crucial to its symbolic import. If Everest were located in Europe, climbing it might have been an impressive feat of heroism, but the fact that Everest is located in the Orient—specifically in Tibet—is particularly significant to Younghusband's narrative. As a narrative of empire, *The Epic of Everest* employs an imperial trope that reflects an English belief that their empire provided resources for a "structure of attitude and reference" in respect to English national identity (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 62). As Edward Said has explained, imperial ideology provided a framework to support the belief that "the more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment *and* generosity necessary for true vision" (*Orientalism* 259). Similarly, Hugh Ridley has argued that in colonial fiction, "Writers were led automatically into commenting on the drawbacks and problems of European life to which imperial experience was able to provide an answer" (103). Although ostensibly nonfiction, the action of Younghusband's narrative—like colonial fiction—takes place within an imperial context. Each of these expeditions had its origins in the imperial metropolis; was reorganized in Darjeeling, India; and was trekked overland to Tibet. In Younghusband's version of the expeditions, they import imperial ideologies into Tibet. And although it was never institutionalized as a part of the British Empire, Tibet became an integral *aesthetic* extension of that empire.

Certainly, Younghusband's own 1903 expedition to Tibet, which resulted in the death or wounding of over 700 Tibetans as "punishment" to Tibet for its possible political alliance (never proven) with the Russians, underscores British perceptions of Tibet as a frontier of the British Empire. Moreover, as Thomas Richards has pointed out, Tibet played a particularly crucial role in the formation of English national identity. Richards explains that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the English, however illusory the task they set before themselves, believed they could create an archive of total knowledge: "This archive was not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire" (11). Richards explains that

> in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the prevalent model for the archival confinement of total knowledge under the purview of the state was Tibet, an imagined community that united archival institutions and persons in one hieratic archive-state. In Western mythology Tibet was a sanitarium for the recuperation of an exhaustive knowledge that was always in danger of entropy, loss, or destruction. . . . It was a magic mountain where the knowledgeable rested and where knowledge itself was recuperated, a place where the order of things reasserted itself in a curious vision of hallucinatory clarity. Tibet was the place where, in the 1870s, British theosophists like H. P. Blavatsky located the spiritual masters of the universe. And ultimately it was Shangri-La, the unmapped library where a complete knowledge lies in a state of suspended animation awaiting the day when it can again be brought back to life to reanimate state control over knowledge amidst a world in ruins. (11–12)

Younghusband's narrative reflects the utopian discourse of the Tibetan archive, for it too responds to a "world of ruins" by symbolically returning to the ultimate archive of timeless knowledge—Tibet. As an epic war narrative, *The Epic* has much in common with the way many British citizens attempted to cope with the devastation of the Great War. Following J. M. Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning,* the British looked backward in time to tap traditions that could reunify what they saw as a socially, politically, and morally fragmented British national identity. By recuperating the Tibetan spiritual archive, Younghusband's *The Epic of Mount Everest* offers "the salvational perspective of romance to a reexpression of Utopian longings, a renewed meditation on the Utopian community, a reconquest . . . of some feeling for a salvational future" (Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 105). In this

respect, *The Epic* is a "Utopian fantasy which aims at the transfiguration of the world of everyday life in such a way as to restore the conditions of some lost Eden, [and it anticipates] a future realm from which the old mortality and imperfections [of postwar Britain] will have been effaced" (Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 110). Younghusband hopes his "utopian fantasy" will restore England's national unity and purpose.

Well before the Everest expeditions, Younghusband had been in search of a utopian spiritual truth. In 1904 Younghusband experienced a mystical revelation, and, unsurprisingly, it occurred in the Tibetan Himalayas. As a result of his experience, he "was convinced past all refutation that men were good at heart, that the evil in them was superficial . . . in short, that men at heart are divine" (quoted in French 252). Prior to the Great War, Younghusband believed the people of England needed "both stability and direction" (Seaver 274). In an article that appeared in the *National Review* in 1910, Younghusband wrote,

> Behind all political effort and all social endeavour must be the impulse which religion alone could give. It was for the renewal and revitalizing of our religion that the English people really craved. . . . We virile races of the North required a religion of *our own*, evolved from our midst and fitted to our character—a religion based on the eternal verities, in touch with reality, and human with the humanity of the home and the streets. (quoted in Seaver 274–275)

At their core, "Younghusband's religious ambitions during this period were closely allied to early-twentieth-century ideas about eugenics, colonialism, and racial superiority" (French 268). Younghusband's conviction that the English people needed "stability and direction" from a new religion would only have been more pronounced following the Great War. Younghusband's hope for a new religion for the "virile races of the North" went through a series of variations, oftentimes bizarre. Both before and after he published *The Epic of Mount Everest,* Younghusband wrote a number of books that dealt with mysticism, and he formulated theories of cosmic humanism in which he imagined telepathy with "higher beings" on other planets. In the pantheistic *Mother World* (1924), he espoused the belief that the natural world was in essence a nurturing, feminine deity who would give birth to a Christlike figure who would redeem humanity. Younghusband believed in what he called in different contexts a "Universal" or "World Spirit" that could guide humanity.[12]

In the context of post–Great War England, Younghusband was not alone in his spiritual quest, and *The Epic of Everest* taps into the wider public

interest in spiritualism. As Joanna Bourke has explained, following the devastation of the Great War, "many bereaved men and women [of] disparate religious beliefs could be assembled together by spiritualism. This was not merely a phenomenon of the war, but the experience of war heightened the appeal of spiritual practices" (233). As reflected in *The Epic of Everest,* "Mountains, and the Himalayas in particular, were to form an essential dimension in Younghusband's spiritual theories: his ideas combined the Romantic tradition of Wordsworth and Coleridge with Hindu and Buddhist faith in sacred mountains" (French 24). The influence of Younghusband's spiritual theories and romantic ideas and tropes is evident throughout *The Epic of Everest.*

Younghusband's portrayal of Tibet's Rongbuk monastery and its worshipers represents a symbol of the Tibetan archive as a reservoir of mystical truth. The monastery is one of the last human habitations expeditions to Everest encounter before they reach Everest's base camp. In his reflections on the significance of the monastery, Younghusband concludes,

> Religion is a very real and live and potent factor in Tibet. The chief lamas in the monasteries are often truly venerable men. . . . They have devoted their whole lives to the service of religion—and be it noted to religiously inspired art as well. On the intellectual side they are not highly developed: they have not that taste for religious philosophy that Hindus have. But they have a delicate spiritual sense. They are kindly and courteous, and are deeply venerated. And these objects of veneration satisfy a great need in the Tibetan people and perhaps account for their being so generally contented as they are. Man needs some one to worship. And here right in among the Tibetans are living beings upon which they can pour forth their adoration. (59)

Although supposedly intellectually primitive, the Tibetans' religion provides an ideal resource that "contents" the Tibetan people, for they share a moral center that structures their existence and unites them as a people. The Sherpas, high-altitude "native" porters, also illustrate the way spiritual faith restores moral and social order. Younghusband explains that the Sherpas

> are light-hearted and irresponsible as children, and when drink is accessible they take very kindly to it. So in reinforcement of [the expedition leader's] stern warnings he got their priests to warn them too. And before they left both Brahmins and Buddhist priests gave them their blessing—a thing on which they set much store. Possibly their religion is not very refined; but, like all men who live in close and constant touch with nature, they have a sense of dependence on some mighty and mysterious Power

> behind things; they have great reverence for priests and holy men who in some vague way represent that Power to them; and they feel reinforced and happy if they have the goodwill of this representative. (102)

Against the malaise of the modern literary landscape, represented by the war poets, Younghusband alludes to his mystical religious beliefs of a "world-spirit" and mines the British Romantic tradition for literary tropes. In their innocence, the Sherpas echo the literary representations of children in English Romantic poetry. Much like the speaker's conception of his childhood in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," the Sherpas are deeply connected to the natural world, uncorrupted by the mores of "civilization." The Sherpas' inability to articulate just how the lamas "represent power to them" underscores their purity and intuitive connection to their "natural" faith. Like the "subject mountains" in Shelley's "Mont Blanc," the Sherpas remain willingly subjected to the lamas because of their intimate connection to a "mysterious power" that resembles the romantic sublime.

These images are integral to Younghusband's conception of British heroic masculinity, for his descriptions of the British expedition and its inherent virtues echo those of the Sherpas, figuratively inscribing the romantic depiction of the Sherpas "upon" the expedition members. Although the British climbers are supposedly more historically and culturally advanced than the Tibetans, climbing Everest offers the British male heroes the opportunity to regain an elemental relationship with the natural world and by extension with the pure and sublime mystical truths necessary to rejuvenate English masculinity and an orderly and submissive society. Younghusband hopes the virile heroes who attempted to climb Mount Everest will function for the English citizenry—regardless of class—much like the lamas function for the Sherpas. Although Younghusband does not wholly believe the English masses are "primitive" and "childlike" like the Sherpas, his rhetoric underscores that the British can and must regenerate "primitive" virtues if British civilization is to move beyond the moral devastation of the Great War. Just as their "natural" faith unites the unruly Sherpas, so too can the class divisions of the English populace be reunited by worshiping the elemental, natural virtues of the masculine British climber/heroes.

For instance, Younghusband's critique of the use of artificial oxygen underscores the relationship between the Tibetan archive and the way the British climbers—and by extension the English nation—can identify with a "natural" moral certitude. Although some organizers and members of the expeditions to Everest advocated the use of an artificial breathing apparatus to aid the climbers in their attempt to climb the mountain, Younghusband

advocates a "pure," oxygenless ascent. He explains that if oxygen tanks were used, "We should have remained ignorant of the extent to which man by exercising his capacities can enlarge them. And we might have become increasingly dependent upon external stimulants instead of upon our own native energies for climbing high mountains. We might never have learned what it is in us to do. A branch of science might have won a success. But man would have lost a chance of knowing himself" (168–169). Younghusband employs naturalist rhetoric earlier in the narrative as well:

> The truth is we have not yet sufficiently appreciated that as a race we men are still very young—not more than half a million years old. We are yet in the stage of testing and proving our capacities. . . . We find it difficult, at present, to clamber up on to the top of Mount Everest, and we tumble back at first try. But we don't yet know of what we are capable and should take heart from the young of animals and birds as they daringly find their wings or their legs.
>
> If one thing stands out more than another in importance among the results of this—and the next—Expedition, it is that man's capacities are still growing, and that if he exercises them they expand. There are plenty of grounds for having more faith in ourselves. (162)

Not simply about the climbers and *their* use or nonuse of artificial oxygen, the expeditions symbolize the need for the English people to regain faith in themselves—a faith undermined by the cultural malaise and social unrest in the years following the Great War—just as the Sherpas have "natural" faith in their lamas. If the technological destruction of the war had undermined the Victorian belief in progress, Younghusband tries to reroute progressive ideology, steering its definition away from traditionally modern notions of progress—exemplified by technological innovations—toward the naturalist rhetoric of Social Darwinism to suggest that the English can continue to progress racially.

Just as the Sherpas' "primitive" faith signifies a timeless truth of the Tibetan archive, their masculinity also represents a component of that archive. Describing the Sherpas, Younghusband contends:

> To deal with, both individually and *en masse,* they were, says [Edward] Norton, singularly like a childish edition of the British soldier, many of whose virtues they shared. They had the same high spirit for a tough and dangerous job. . . . And, as with the British soldier, the rough character who is a perpetual nuisance when drink and the attractions of civilization tempt him astray often came out strongest when "up against it" in circumstances where the milder man failed. (197)

The Sherpas embody what Younghusband believes are essential and "natural" masculine virtues—courage, virility, prowess—virtues English males must emulate to "naturally" rejuvenate national identity. The analogy between the Sherpas and British soldiers unmistakably exalts the soldiers, who, just as they did in the trenches of the war, are still capable of coming "out strongest when 'up against it' in circumstances where the milder man failed." The Sherpas also represent the British working class, who in the war had composed the great majority of British soldiers. Their loss contributed to class tensions in England after the war, and for Younghusband, the expeditions to Mount Everest symbolically unify the British populace. By suggesting that the Sherpas resemble "a childish edition of the British soldier," Younghusband figuratively inscribes the Sherpas' "nature" on the British soldier, who like the Sherpas can regenerate "natural" masculine virtues; in turn, these virtues are relayed to postwar England.

The British climbers fully realize these archival masculine warrior virtues. At one point in the third attempt to climb Everest, Younghusband explains that they encountered "the really dangerous part of the climb. . . . It represented a greater danger. The whole surface snow might peel off and carry the climbers into the abyss below" (228). But exhibiting the physical and moral courage necessary to confront seemingly insurmountable obstacles, "Mallory's nerves responded as usual to the call on them and he again insisted on taking the lead" (228). To "lead" when climbing is to ascend via rope ahead of the rest of the climbing party. Quite literally, the lead climber confronts more danger than other climbers because he or she must negotiate unknown terrain without the benefit of someone securely holding a rope above him or her. He or she must make choices that will not only ensure his or her own safety but that will secure the safety of others. To Younghusband, just as Mallory heroically rises to the challenge of the climb, no doubt Mallory—or other Englishmen—can rise to any other challenges facing the English nation-state. The impetus to confront these dangers, according to Younghusband, stems from naturally competitive, masculine desires. Younghusband claims that as males "we must match ourselves against [the mountain] and show that we *can* get to the top—show ourselves and show our neighbours. We like to show ourselves off—display our prowess" (12). And Mallory's willingness to confront dangers is not solely for his personal glory. In a passage that explicitly connects the expeditions to national identity, Younghusband claims that if Mallory were able to gain Everest's summit, he would have thought of "the credit it would bring to England" with "interest all over the world" (277). Younghusband emphasizes that self-sacrifice

in the interests of others—and ultimately national identity—is highlighted in other passages of the narrative as well. In a description of another climber, Major Edward F. Norton, Younghusband explains that his actions are of

> the same quality that expresses itself in such phrases as "Country first," "Ship before self," and which in the present case might be rendered as "Summit first." Norton might have argued on the same lines as a great Polar explorer—not an Englishman—reasoned with himself; he might have said: "The main burden and responsibility of the Expedition is on me. To me therefore is due the honour, and I am entitled to ask the others to sacrifice themselves in order that I should have the better chance of reaching the summit." . . . But Norton took the view that the attainment of the summit was the main consideration and that who attained it and had the honour was of secondary account. He was prepared to be a member of the climbing party. . . . This public-spirited action gave great encouragement to the Expedition. (190–191)

As if admonishing his countrymen, Younghusband's reference to "a great polar explorer—not an Englishman" signifies the dire need to rejuvenate the selfless virtues of British masculinity lest other countries should usurp English national greatness. Younghusband suggestively reminds his readers of their nationalist history regarding polar exploration. Although they did not reach the South Pole before Roald Amundsen, Robert Falcon Scott and his men became national heroes for their heroic effort to reach the pole. Younghusband reminds his readers of this nationalist tradition of exploration while subtly chiding them, reminding them that although Scott and his men were heroes, they were of a qualified sort. Perhaps, he suggests, the British had ultimately "lost" the South Pole to Amundsen because the men of Scott's expedition did not adequately adhere to these masculine ideals.[13]

Younghusband also emphasizes these masculine heroes' ability to selflessly rise to any challenge by recounting how they rescued Tibetan porters from disaster. At one point in the third expedition, four porters were isolated high on the mountain and subjected to dangerous climbing conditions, so their return to safety in lower camps seemed impossible. As a result, Younghusband explains that they may have had to be left to perish. But "what should be done, Norton does not seem to have doubted for a moment. Some men might have hesitated. Some might have thought the position irretrievable. Not so Norton. . . . If he sent out a rescue expedition they also might lose their lives" (237). But this situation called for heroic action, and Norton "instinctively acted. . . . There was only one thing to do and that was

to rescue them" (237). Ready to sacrifice themselves for human life, two of the "very best climbers" were recruited to save the porters even though they were exhausted from climbing. In this situation

> fellowship told. And this sense of fellowship must have been deeply ingrained in the very texture of Norton, [Howard] Somervell and Mallory, for in their present condition of cold, in misery and illness, when life was flickering but faintly within them, it would be only the deepest promptings that would survive. All the superficial would have vanished long before. Unless this sense of fellowship was a root disposition with them, unless they could feel their fellows at home expecting of them that they should behave as men, nothing would have been seen of it now. (238)

By confronting the rigorous natural dangers of Mount Everest—which again is located in the utopian archive of Tibet—the British expedition members exemplify the very best of English masculinity. The climbers shed the superficiality of civilization and "root" themselves in the "natural" Tibetan archive. Younghusband's suggestion that the climbers "could feel their fellows at home" explicitly connects their endeavor to the masculinity of the English nation. Not only do the climbers act as a heroic unit on the mountain, but by extension their virtues are internalized throughout the masculine bodies of England, and vice versa. And implicitly alluding to class tension, Younghusband writes that although the porters are "of a different race and of a different religion and of only a lowly position in life . . . they were fellow-men. More, they were fellow-men in a common adventure. They were ever ready to risk their lives for their leaders. Their leaders must now risk their lives for them" (238). By suggesting that the Sherpas are "fellow men," Younghusband identifies (much like the British soldier) the British expedition members with the Sherpas and their archival role as "natural men." But although they are "fellow men," the Sherpas remain subordinate to the masculine sahib. Implicitly, the Sherpas' reverence for the authority of the lamas because of their connection to a sublime power is relayed to the expedition members; and as England's heroic "representative men," the British climbers stand as sublime archival exemplars that the British nation—like the Sherpas—can revere. Like the image of Norton, the Sherpas and British climbers' willingness to sacrifice their lives in the interest of unity suggests that the same "natural" virtue must be realized in the people of England.

Not only do these passages symbolically unify class divisions by illustrating the fellowship of porters and white climbers, but they underscore another effective means of uniting the English people under a common purpose—the noble cause of empire, a cause symbolized by the British climbers'

obligations to their porters. Younghusband reminds his English audience of its moral obligations to the rest of the world, particularly the peoples of the Orient. A central justification for imperialism was that the people of the empire "*require* and beseech domination" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 9)[14] from the Western nation, specifically as the nation is represented by the masculine sahib. In imperial ideology the sahib is supposedly not a despot but a paternal figure who selflessly aids the modernization of the backward people of empire. Although the Tibetan porters are not subjects of the British crown because Tibet was never part of the British Empire, the dynamics between the white climbers and the Tibetan porters aesthetically reinscribe imperial ideology. The selfless teamwork of English sahibs invokes the imperial ideals considered necessary for efficient "handling" of the native races: "To staff the administration of the colonies, [the Colonial Office] looked for like-minded men 'from stock that has proved its worth, generation by generation, in the professions or in public service . . . reared in the faith that duty and chivalry are of more account than ambition and self-seeking' " (Barnett, *Collapse of British Power* 127). The Colonial Office sought "men of 'vision, high ideals of service, fearless devotion to duty born of a sense of responsibility, tolerance, and above all, the team spirit' " (127). And supposedly the British innocuously colonized the Orient, simply cajoling Orientals to wholeheartedly support the cause of empire—thus helping them realize their potential to enter modernity. In this vein Norton must coax the Tibetan porters to ferry loads up the mountain.

> This depended not so much upon will power as upon imagination. And here again Norton showed wisdom. . . . There was no holding a pistol to their heads; no physical force; no threats; nor even bribing by money. He simply painted for the porters a picture of themselves covered with honour and glory and receiving praises from every one; and he told them how their names would be inscribed in letters of gold in the book which would be written to describe their achievement if only they would carry loads to 27,000 feet. It was a master-stroke. The appeal was made straight to their manhood. "Show yourselves men and you will be honoured by men," was in effect what Norton said. (254–255)

And Norton and Somervell have the authority to shame the porters into action because in sahiblike fashion, "They had shown themselves men and good comrades by the way in which they had gone back at great risk to their lives, their health, and the success of the whole Expedition, to rescue those four porters marooned on the North Col. To their everlasting honour the porters now responded" (255). Symbolically, Norton's and Somervell's

actions illustrate that the empire was and is a great ideal—a selfless sacrifice the British *nation* made for the "good" of the peoples of empire. The porters' willingness to put aside their fears and carry loads to 27,000 feet reaffirms their belief in the white masculine leaders. Figuratively, sacrificing porters' lives for the great white sahib is a worthy cause if it means their names will be immortalized in imperial history—a history that will eventually see their male peers achieve their supposedly ultimate goal of being as modern and "manly" as Norton and Somervell. In fact, on the 1921 expedition one porter died, and in the 1922 expedition seven Sherpa porters were swept to their deaths by an avalanche. In 1924 two non-Sherpa porters died. For England to abandon its role as a leader to these inferior peoples would reflect ignominiously on English national identity. Younghusband reinforces the supposed necessity of nurturing the "natives" by including a photo of the porters with the caption "Porters Who Went Highest."

But it is the deaths of Mallory and Irvine and the subsequent honor bestowed on them that sanctify British masculinity, particularly through the symbolism of their dead bodies forever lying high on the slopes of Everest. In her analysis of the British male body in postwar England, Joanna Bourke has shown how the rituals of death became increasingly important to the British public following the Great War. Bourke explains that initially "the Great War prompted a revulsion from the celebratory nature of burial" because the muddied male corpse of the trenches had come to symbolize Britain's devastation and emasculation (228). But in the years following the war, the British public increasingly sought to redeem the body of the dead British soldier by symbolically purifying and sanctifying the body through ritualized public mourning. In 1920, for instance, a corpse representing "the Unknown Warrior was taken to Westminster Abbey," its casket a spectacle for the mourning public (Bourke 243). And the famous Kitchener hoax in 1926 further underscored the public's craving to reconstitute the virile heroism of the dead male soldier. Although Kitchener's body was lost when his ship was sunk by a German mine in World War I, a journalist named Frank Power claimed to have discovered Kitchener's remains, and Kitchener's casket was put on display in Westminster Abbey. The public flocked to see his casket, for "the idea that Britain's last national hero—the defender of the empire, the 'Lion of the Seas,' the man who was trusted when he cried, 'Your Country Needs YOU'—was going to rise again, if not in living flesh then symbolically through his ashes, was enticing. . . . [Kitchener] was synonymous with devotion to king and country; he personified British military prowess; he was 'the greatest Liberal statesman'; 'a giant among men'" (Bourke 243). As

Bourke writes, the Kitchener hoax illustrated that "to honour, glorify and hush memories scarred by international or civil war was as alive in 1926 as it had been in 1920" (245). Bourke concludes that "both the [bodies of the] Unknown Warrior and Kitchener epitomized manly valour in a world seen to be desperately in need of heroism" (247). Through his portrayal of Mallory's and Irvine's deaths, Younghusband's 1926 narrative capitalizes on the public sentiment toward the now idealized body of the dead male soldier. Their warrior bodies lying high on the slopes of Everest represent the physical courage of their lived actions—actions that allow them to elevate their masculine virtues to a sublime status.

As their natural adversary, the mountain is a landscape against which the body of the male warrior can properly enact its supposedly natural and sublime masculine qualities. To recall Younghusband's argument against the use of supplemental oxygen, he writes that if it were used, "man should have remained ignorant of the extent to which man by exercising his capacities can enlarge them. And we might have become increasingly dependent upon external stimulants instead of upon our own native energies for climbing high mountains" (168). Younghusband also argues that "man's capacities are still growing, and if he exercises them they expand" (162). By rejecting the argument that the "external stimulant" of artificial oxygen is needed to help climb Mount Everest, Younghusband seeks to "exercise" and thus "expand" the body's capacity to endure hardship at high altitude. Younghusband notes that at one time in geological history Mount Everest lay beneath the seas, but the fact that it is now the highest point on earth illustrates "the mighty energy it embodies" (284). The fact that the men are able to climb so near the summit of Everest amplifies the "mighty energy" of their bodily prowess. In the rigors of climbing Everest, "The mountain will extract from [the male climber] the last grain of energy and the last flicker of courage ere she yields to his persistence. She will compel his greatness out of man, and make him put forth more and more of himself. But for that very reason he is enchanted by her: she has made him be his best" (292). The feminization of Everest—reflecting Younghusband's notions about a "World-mother"—symbolically underscores the masculine power of the English mountaineers.

Younghusband complains that many scientists doubted the ability of the human body to endure the rigors of high-altitude climbing, for they were "paying small attention to man himself, and [to] man as a whole—and when they studied man at all it was mostly his body they paid attention to, and to his body when it was ill. They dealt with tiny abstractions of man and abstractions of the world. They did not deal with wholes" (157–158). As

Younghusband explains, as the heroes ascend Everest "we may note that this acclimatization is of the mind as well as of the body. The body, without the mind being aware of it, goes through some obscure process of adapting itself to the altered conditions. The number of blood corpuscles is increased and no doubt other changes take place. But the mind also adapts itself" (159–160). As a result, Younghusband explains, "Their minds had risen in the scale of achievement and been acclimatized like their bodies to the higher heights" (160).

This last "grain of energy" puts the climbers within reach of a sublime truth; and this, according to Younghusband, will eventually bridge the gap among the body, mind, and spirit. Younghusband suggests that the body and mind are capable of performing and evolving—quite literally—to a new height, the height of a transcendental equivalent of masculine heroism. In other words, the spiritual ideals of heroism are anchored to the ability of the natural body and mind to endure and adapt to the extreme rigors of altitude, the dichotomies among body, mind, and spirit dissolving more and more the further up the mountain the men climb. He explains, "The climbing of Everest without oxygen would be of incomparably higher value than performing the same feat using oxygen. To scientific men it would be a demonstration of the capacity and adaptability of the human body. And the ordinary man would have his soul satisfied in a way that an oxygen climb never could satisfy it" (166–167).

Imagining Noel Odell's experience high on the mountain, Younghusband employs the standard Romantic trope in which the summits of mountains represent the realm of the sublime. Through his portrayal of Odell, Younghusband suggests that mountaineers are in the unique position of literally entering this sublime region. He writes, "He was in the very midst of the most awe-inspiring region on this earth. He was in the near presence of God. Revealed to him now were the might and majesty, and the purity, the calm, and the sublimity of the Great World-Spirit" (282). Later Younghusband explains, "The mountain is like much else in this world. One of the great mysteries of existence is that what is most awful and most terrible does not deter man but draws him to it—to his temporary disaster, perhaps, but in the end to an intensity of joy which without the risk he could never have experienced" (292). Similarly, in his introduction Younghusband explains,

> Indeed, the struggle with Everest is all part and parcel of the perpetual struggle of spirit to establish its supremacy over matter. Man, the spiritual, means to make himself supreme over even the mightiest of what is material.

> . . . The mountain may be high. But he will show that his spirit is higher. And he will not be content until he has it in subjection under his feet. . . . And in proving his powers man would find that joy which their exercise ever gives. (19)

The phallic implications of man's "joy" as he exercises his power over matter are unmistakably masculine and invoke an image of the hero who, much like the poet in the Romantic tradition who does not succumb to the terror of the sublime, identifies with and bodily incorporates the pleasure and imperial power of the sublime—in turn regenerating British imperial masculinity. For Younghusband imagines that if one of the climbers were able to stand on the summit of Everest,

> he would have seen all round; his view of things would verily have been a god's. Everest itself would have been humbled beneath his feet. Man's dominion over the mountain would have been finally established. Mite as man is he would have shown that he was greater than the mountain. And far and wide he would have surveyed his domain—far over the plains of India as well as over the plains of Tibet, and east and west right along the vast array of earth's mightiest peaks, all now beneath him. (267)

The climber's bodily prowess allows the male to assume his rightful and *natural* and godlike sublime imperial gaze over his dominion. In turn, this virile symbol of sublime imperial masculinity can be projected to the collective male body of the English nation, for according to Younghusband "the sight of him there in his hard-won glory on the pinnacle of the world would, he might be sure, give new heart to many another and heighten endeavor in every field" (267).

On the final attempt to reach the summit from their high camp on the 1924 expedition, Mallory and Irvine were lost forever. Although their deaths might mean the loss of their bodies, for Younghusband the deaths do not represent the loss of what they represent as ideal English males: "Where and when they died we know not. But there in the arms of Mount Everest they lie for ever—lie 10,000 feet above where any man has lain in death before. Everest indeed conquered their bodies. But their spirit is undying" (300). The union between their bodies and the sublime is eulogized as a symbolic spectacle for the British populace in St. Paul's Cathedral. In his chapter entitled "Honour," Younghusband explains that "news of the tragedy spread at once all over the world and everywhere sympathy was evoked," and he makes it clear that the king was very much interested in the tragedy (301). He continues, "A National Memorial Service was held in St. Paul's Cathedral when the Expedition had returned home. At this Service the King,

Queen Alexandra, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, Prince Arthur of Connaught were all represented. . . . There was also a large congregation of the general public. The Dean of St. Paul's himself read the lessons" (302). In that royalty and the "general public" join together to identify with Mallory and Irvine reinforces an image of national unity and the cohesiveness of the class structure. Younghusband's transcription of the Bishop of Chester's words (the bishop of Mallory's diocese) underscores how the deaths of Mallory and Irvine symbolically rejuvenate the English male body. The bishop stated: "For the lovers of the heights are a brotherhood more intimate, more closely united, more affectionately disposed to one another than almost any other group of men" (303). Like Younghusband, the bishop also employs the topography of the mountain to underscore the sublimity of their deaths:

> With the love of the mountains was the ascent of spiritual altitudes, splendid peaks of courage and unselfishness and cheerfulness, such as are reached not necessarily by the sure-footed and clear-headed, but always by the compassionate, the brotherly, and the pure in heart.
>
> For indeed the record of Mount Everest may well help men, if not to feel the mystery of the mountain, yet surely to enter more deeply, more reverently, into the spirit of the mountaineer. . . . Whatsoever things are true and honourable, just and pure, lovely and of good report, if there be any manly virtue, if there be any praise, you have helped us to think on these things. (305–306)

This manly virtue, realized through the performance of the male body at high altitude, elevates Mallory and Irvine to the sublime and sanctified status of the Unknown Warrior and Kitchener. Warriors in their own right, Mallory and Irvine exemplify English imperial manliness, their "natural" bodily prowess relayed to the bodies of men nationwide as their bodies are also elevated to the "spirit of the mountaineer." Just as the Sherpas "naturally" revere a power greater than themselves, the British public can also regain its elemental relationship to the natural world and sublime, masculine ideals. Consequently, the class consciousness of postwar England supposedly disappears, and social order is restored—the public united in faith to worship the ideals represented by Mallory's and Irvine's "purified" sublime bodies.

From the king to the working class, the British people are united by the common cause of conquest, for the expeditions to Everest provide "representative men." Espousing the virtues of imperial masculinity, these men literally rise above the milieu of postwar England, projecting their imperial desires over and above the landscape and peoples of the Orient. Combining imperial geography, mountain topography, and images of the body and the sublime,

4.2 George Mallory (*left*) and Andrew Irvine (*right*) aboard the HMS *California* on their way to Mount Everest (1924). *Courtesy,* Audrey Salkeld Collection.

Younghusband figuratively regenerates the virtues so necessary to the sustenance of British national identity. Specifically, the Tibetan archive regenerates the sublime masculine ideals necessary for uniting the British nation. Twenty-eight years later, however, Everest still stood unvanquished, and Younghusband's dream of a British mountaineer overlooking his imperial landscape remained an unfulfilled imperial fantasy. But in 1953 his dream was realized, and as I will show, Everest once again played a role in rejuvenating British national identity—this time against the backdrop of the fading British Empire.

5 Sir John Hunt's *The Ascent of Everest* (1953) and Nostalgia for the British Empire

"What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency."

—MARLOW, JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

FOLLOWING THE FAILED EXPEDITION OF 1924, the English formally attempted to climb Mount Everest in 1933, 1935, 1936, and 1938, but these expeditions were unsuccessful.[1] Because of World War II, the English did not attempt to climb Everest again until 1953. This time the English-organized expedition was successful when Sir Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay of Nepal finally reached the summit of Everest on May 29, 1953. Sir John Hunt's best-selling *The Ascent of Everest* (1953)—the official account of the climb—set against the context of the British Empire's demise, is a distinctly imperial account of the expedition. India had been granted independence in 1947, and according to Richard Holt, this development, along with the "uncertain" atmosphere surrounding English colonial possessions in Africa, left Britain "'searching for a role.' British morale, especially its elite English element, badly needed a lift" (278). Holt, and I quote at length, has written:

> This was the setting for the conquest of Everest by a British-led expedition in 1953. The fact that it was a New Zealander and a Nepalese who actually reached the summit did not prevent the ascent being hailed as a great British triumph by the press. On the contrary, it showed how a new post-imperial co-operation could overcome the greatest of obstacles. This

> theme was echoed in the Queen's Speech of 1953 which spoke of the Commonwealth bearing "no resemblance to the empires of the past . . . it is an entirely new conception, built on the highest qualities of men . . . moving steadily towards greater harmony between its many creeds, colours and races." The climbing of Everest coincided with the crowning of the new queen and there was much talk of a "second Elizabethan Age." *The Times* compared the conquest of Everest with Drake's circumnavigation of the globe. It was the manner of this triumph as much as anything else that pleased the British. There was a charming amateurism and eccentricity about the expedition. Umbrellas had been carried up to 13,000 feet. Sir John Hunt played the part of the cultured, competent, phlegmatic Englishman reading the *Oxford Book of Greek Verse* while organizing supplies and technical support with a minimum of fuss. There was still hope for Britain if the old qualities of stoicism and the knack of handling "native" races could be combined with the scientific and management skills needed in the modern world. (278–279)

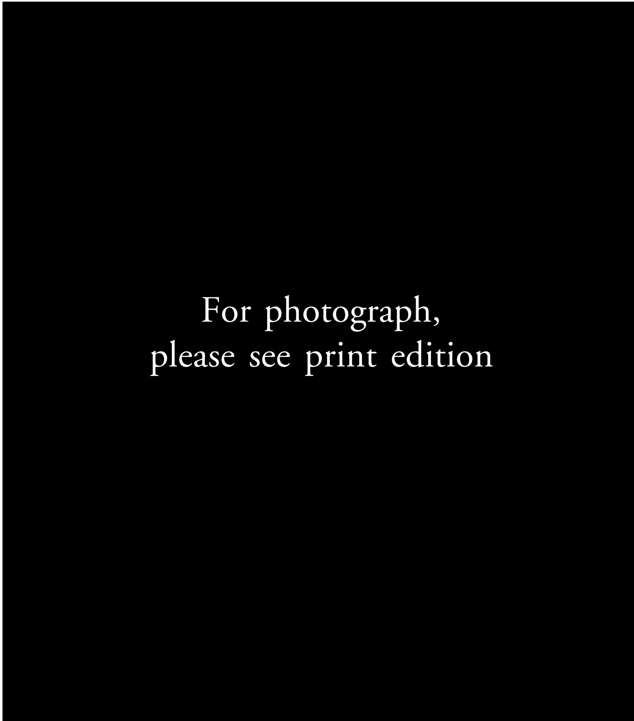
Like Holt's account of the expedition, Hunt's *Ascent* reflects the British "stoicism and knack of handling 'native' races." Written in the narrative tradition of British imperial adventure, Hunt's *Ascent* nostalgically attempts to idealize the masculine heroic myth of imperialism and illustrates the continued hold these myths had on the English imagination. As such, Hunt's narrative reflects the way the British and their domination of the "natives" were not presumably predicated on a desire for power or material exploitation but constituted a moral necessity for the good of the "primitive" and "inferior natives." Although Hunt's narrative does betray a fundamental ambivalence in its inflection of imperial ideology since Hunt is caught between his desires to legitimize Britain's imperial tradition while also trying to distance the expedition from the pejorative connotations of imperialism, in the end the narrative celebrates the masculine imperial ethos of the adventure tradition.

Led by Sir John Hunt, the expedition party included Edmund Hillary, Tenzing Norgay, Charles Evans, George Lowe, Wilfred Noyce, George Band, Alfred Gregory, Tom Bourdillon, Charlie Wylie, Michael Westmacott, Michael Ward (expedition doctor), Griffith Pugh (physiologist), and Tom Stobart (cameraman). The expedition members, along with Sherpas, set up seven successive camps as they methodically moved supplies up the mountain. From Camp IX at 7,900 meters, Hillary and Tenzing reached the summit of Everest on May 29, 1953, nearly two months after the expedition had set up base camp on April 9. Their success was an international event, with news of their triumph dominating the media around the world. Like many human

triumphs in exploration it was remarkable in its own right, an adventure into terra incognita, so dangerous that if Hillary or Tenzing—roped together—had slipped on the treacherous knife-edge summit ridge, they would have plunged over a mile to their deaths. But the expedition's success, like the attempts to climb Everest in the 1920s, was as much an ideological success as it was a "human" success—particularly because Hunt configures it as a British national triumph.

Hunt's narrative both overtly and subtly squares with the tradition of the imperial adventure narrative, for as Hunt admits, the expedition "may have been [an adventure], if it is accepted that there is a need for adventure in the world we live in and provided, too, that [because of the climb] it is realized that adventure can be found in many spheres" (231). Moreover, he explains that "organizing a major expedition, whether it be to the Himalaya, the polar regions or darkest Africa, is a formidable business" (21). As I have indicated in the Introduction and preceding chapters, British polar exploration was undertaken to promote and fulfill imperial desires. Hunt's stock description of Africa as the "dark" continent figures his adventure narrative within the framework of imperial ideology. By exploring the presumably "dark" and mysterious regions of the earth, the white adventurer supposedly makes these regions known, situating and rationalizing them within the discursive framework of "enlightened" imperial geography. By extension, Himalayan exploration—in this case the exploration of Mount Everest—is located within this same discursive formation.

Indeed, *Ascent* reflects the codes of masculine adventure in the British imperial tradition. In a broad sense it embodies the masculine virtues associated with adventure: "leadership, cunning, endurance, courage" (Green, *Adventurous Male* 4). For instance, as the leader of the expedition, Hunt is a master at organizing the complexities of ascending Everest;[2] the men are cunning as they negotiate the hazards of the mountain—avalanches, crevasses, steep slopes, how to climb with the aid of "artificial" oxygen. And climbing Everest manifests the ultimate test of endurance, given the extreme rigors of climbing at high altitude. In typically heroic fashion, the expedition members must constantly maintain the courage to overcome obstacles, regardless of the ever-present danger of death. Moreover, the military-like efficiency of the expedition reflected "the tradition of imperialist military adventure . . . [enabling] the imagining[s] of a secure, powerful and indeed virtually omnipotent English-British masculinity" (Dawson, "Blond Bedouin" 120). Hunt's description of the expedition's efficiency has led Steven Marcus to complain that *The Ascent of Everest*[3]



5.1 Sir John Hunt (1953). Photographer, Alfred Gregory. *Courtesy*, Royal Geographical Society, London.

> Is more of an engineer's report than a book about climbing a mountain. Almost the entire text is given to detailed accounts of how so many tons of supplies were moved from one camp to another in so many hours at the expense of so many foot-pounds of energy. . . . This is like reading a report of one of those famous Productivity Teams the English used always to be sending [to the United States] to discover why American industry is so efficient. (78)

In its rational efficiency, the expedition "delineated the relationship between Britain and the Orient in terms of possession, in terms of a large geographical space wholly owned by an efficient colonial master" (Said, *Orientalism* 213).

Hunt's management of the climber's body and mountain topography underscores this imperial efficiency. Like Younghusband's narrative, Hunt's

narrative reflects the way climbing at high altitude physically taxes the body. For instance, he explains that after returning to a camp on the mountain,

> We were pathetically feeble, far too weak to compete against [a] fiendish gale. . . . We staggered about, getting in each other's way, anoxic and hopelessly inadequate to cope with the conditions. Tom kept his oxygen set on for a short time and at first could not understand the antics of Charles and myself as we rolled around like drunkards. Once I tripped over a boulder and lay on my face for five minutes or so, before I could summon the strength to get up. (177–178)

Describing the rigors of ascending the mountain, Hunt writes, "Our progress grew slower, more exhausting. Each step was a labour, requiring an effort of will to make. After several steps at a funeral pace, a pause was necessary to regain enough strength to continue. I was already beginning to gasp and fight for breath" (185). But unlike Younghusband, Hunt makes no effort to figure the body within a romanticized naturalist discourse; rather, the problem of the body's performance is something to be solved through the rational and systematic organization of the body.

To climb Everest or any high-altitude mountain, the human body must acclimatize to the dearth of oxygen. If a climber rushes up a mountain without returning to lower altitudes to rest, he or she can die of cerebral or pulmonary edema. But by methodically moving camps up the mountain and returning to lower camps to rest, the body can slowly adjust to the altitude. Moreover, once above 25,000 feet the body literally starts to "eat" itself to cope with the physical demands of altitude, for a climber cannot eat or drink enough to refuel the body's physical needs. Through the use of artificial oxygen, this process can at least be delayed. And artificial oxygen can also help to alleviate—with no guarantees—the problem of edema. Hunt illustrates how the detached, imperial mind can solve this "natural" problem. And just as Hunt makes no effort to romanticize the body, he does not overtly invoke the romantic sublime to describe the topography of the Himalayas. The most he can muster in a 300-page narrative, in fact, is that the scenery is "breathtaking" (72). But in the photographs accompanying the narrative, numerous pictures are clearly part of the romantic tradition that depicts mountains as sublime artifacts (see Figure 5.2). Hunt's narrative further underscores the triumph of the secure, imperial mind, for the white male mind is never overwhelmed by the sublimity of the mountains. Climbers do not strive for a sublime ideal, for this ideal is presupposed—already validated by the enlightened triumph of the British imperial project and the reality that the summit of the mountain had finally been reached.

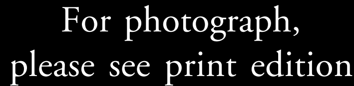
The triumph of British imperialism, at least initially, is reflected in Hunt's nationalist discourse. For instance, helping to validate the national significance of the expedition, the book's foreword was written by "His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G.," undersigned as "Patron, British Everest Expedition 1953" (vii). Further underscoring the national significance of the expedition, Hunt writes,

> One of the last and most thrilling events just before leaving was a visit to Buckingham Palace by myself in company with R. W. Lloyd of the Joint Committee.[4] We were commanded to give an account of the expedition's plans and prospects to H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh, who had graciously consented to become our Patron. It was vastly encouraging that we should be watched with interest by one who places such value on the spirit of enterprise and high endeavor. (53)

The expedition is sanctioned by the national icon of the royal family, and its nationalist import is reinforced by the national icon of Buckingham Palace. The fact that the expedition is nationally sanctioned before leaving for Mount Everest subsumes all events that follow the expedition's departure from England as part of a national quest narrative. In his description of the expedition as a "high endeavor," Hunt implicitly joins the physical triumph of the expedition—literally putting a man on the top of Everest—with the "high ideal" of elevating British national identity.

Yet perhaps the most poignant symbol of the expedition's import as a national quest narrative is Hunt's reflection on Hillary and Tenzing's success on reaching the top of Everest within a day of Elizabeth II's coronation. According to Hunt, the expedition members were initially disappointed that the news of their success would not reach England in time for the coronation. Hunt had hoped for "the faint but glorious possibility of getting the headlines home in time for the Coronation of Her Majesty the Queen" (215). To their surprise and delight, the climbers learned by radio that news of their success did reach home in time for the coronation. Hunt writes,

> With growing excitement and amazement we listened further. The Queen and the Prime Minister had sent telegrams of congratulation to us via the British Ambassador in Kathmandu; the news had been announced over the loudspeakers along the Coronation route; the crowds had cheered; and so on. It all sounded like a fairy tale. Although we were still far from grasping the full significance of the event, we already knew quite as much as was good for us in one evening. . . . We drank a loyal toast to Her Majesty the Queen. (218)



5.2 The South Col, Everest in the background. Photographer, Alfred Gregory. *Courtesy,* Royal Geographical Society, London.

Hunt's enthusiastic description of the news—"glorious," "amazing excitement," "a fairy tale"—underscores the expedition's national significance and connects the mountain's subjugation to Elizabeth's coronation. If the expedition does not represent an institutional, imperial domination of Mount Everest, it does represent an "aesthetic" one (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 190). The image of the men huddled around the radio, with many of them still high on the mountain and thus still in peril, suggests that "a 'real man' would . . . be defined as one who was prepared to fight (and, if necessary, to sacrifice his life) for Queen, Country and Empire" (Dawson, "Blond Bedouin" 119).

Yet for all the narrative's national and imperial discourse, Hunt must nonetheless negotiate the perilous and slippery terrain of that discourse in that it is set against the political realities of the postwar world. Thus al-

though Hunt inevitably connects the expedition to national identity, at other points in the narrative he attempts to elide nationalist discourse, figuring the climb as a cumulative international effort. He explains that

> the mission we undertook was not, in our eyes, in the nature of some competition on a giant scale in which we vied to outdo the efforts of previous expeditions, dramatic and popular as such a concept might be. Indeed, prolonged attempts to climb a difficult mountain are, or should be, essentially different from those of a competitive sport. A possible analogy, however, might be that of a relay race, in which each member of a team of runners hands the baton to the next at the end of his allotted span, until the race is finally run. The Swiss [in 1952] received that baton of knowledge from the latest in the long chain of British climbers and they in turn, after running a brilliant lap, passed it on to us. We chanced to be the last runners in this particular race, but we might well not have succeeded in finishing, in which case we would have handed on our knowledge to our French comrades who were preparing to take up the challenge. (6)

Imperial masculinity—signified by competitive discourse—gives way to a more benign, selfless masculinity in the interest of an international ideal. And later Hunt adds that "there was much to be said in favour of an international party, especially as the competitive aspect of the struggle for Everest was being played upon outside climbing circles" (26). Whereas the international community might have sought to configure the climb as a distinctly national quest, the climbing expeditions themselves represent a nobler ideal.

But as enticing as an international expedition might be, Hunt explains that he and the Everest Committee decided that members of the Commonwealth were better suited for the task, citing the potential conflict between individuals that might hinder team unity. In this context, he explains, "Although it was never our view that Everest was the subject of invidious comparison between climbers of different nations, we were aware that many people thought otherwise and this, despite ourselves, might have added to these stresses" (26). Hunt also makes reference to the Swiss team that made both spring and fall attempts to climb Everest in 1952 (these seasons offer the most favorable climbing conditions). Recalling English preparations to climb Everest while the Swiss expeditions were under way, he refers to a feeling of "suspense and anxiety" about their "gallant" efforts. But he is sure to clarify, "Our worry was not so much lest they should climb the mountain, although it was natural to hope that, now we were so far ahead in our preparations, the prospect would not be removed from before our eyes. Our real concern was the deadline for ordering the equipment and stores" (47).

Yet for all Hunt's attempts to avoid the specter of English nationalism, his narrative despite itself continually reverts to nationalist and imperialist rhetoric. For instance, he claims that "[the British] have a very proper sense of pride that no less than nine of the eleven expeditions to Everest have been British sponsored" (6). And in a gesture that alludes nostalgically to England's former status as an imperial power, he writes:

> But it must be remembered too that we then enjoyed a privileged position in India which gave us a certain advantage in obtaining permission to visit Everest between the wars, and we also have to thank climbers of other nations who, in that vast arena of the Himalaya, recognized in the continuing struggle our precious stake in that mountain. It was as if an agreement existed in those years, by which it was tacitly understood that certain of the big peaks were the special concern of climbers of a particular nation. (6)

The fact that the English "enjoyed a privileged position in India" suggests that the English subjugation of India was somehow an innocuous honor for the British and that the Indian people perfectly accepted English rule. Hunt attempts to reconcile national differences by suggesting that all international efforts to climb the mountain inevitably seemed to literally and figuratively re-elevate the British Empire's role—past, present, and future—as an innocuous purveyor of "civilized" values. The blanket of British imperial ideology envelops other Western countries, for they have all—in one way or another—contributed to the British success. In another nod to nationalist ideology, Hunt adds, "In any case, here was an adventure in which British climbers had a long-standing and intimate interest; there was much to be said for the view that a British team should take up the challenge" (26). Thus, although Hunt attempts to undermine the discourse of competitive masculinity, his narrative nonetheless invokes competitive discourse, for he believes the British somehow deserved to be the *first* to climb Everest. Differing radically from the triumphant imperial discourse in Younghusband's narrative, Hunt's imperialist and nationalist discourse reflects both the postimperial reality of India and, following the fascist ideologies that led to World War II, the precarious state of nationalist discourse in the wake of the war. At its core, Hunt's wavering ideology exposes itself as just that—an ideology—illustrating that ideology is always under *production.*

But even if he were able to negotiate the boundaries of Western national and international identity, Hunt's competitive discourse centers on possessive *Western* ambitions to climb a mountain in Nepal, with nary a mention of the Nepalese. The tenor of his rationalization regarding just which Western

nation should have the right to climb Everest somewhat resembles the Western parceling up of Africa at the 1884 Berlin conference. The topography of Everest is simply a blank space on which the British male heroes, impeded only by other Western countries, can enact their masculine desires. The Nepalese, although a part of the expedition, remain—at least initially in Hunt's narrative—surrogate to British imperial ambitions as Hunt "manages" the Nepalese to transport gear to base camp and to help ascend the mountain.

The British climb up Everest depends greatly on the "coolies," who transported the expedition's gear to the Everest base camp, and on the Nepalese Sherpas, who helped ferry climbing gear up the mountain. Similar to Younghusband's portrayal of the British hero, Hunt's heroes display their superiority over the dependent and "primitive" Other of the native people, thus reinforcing and confirming white masculine identity. This unequal relationship offers the masculine hero the opportunity to exhibit imperial masculine "traits" of rational, self-sacrificing leadership—not presumably for his own fulfillment but to aid the native in his desire to model himself after his culturally superior "sahib." For instance, Hunt explains his image of the Sherpas and their relationship to the British climbers:

> An arrangement which seems to give mutual pleasure in Himalayan travel is that each man is cared for by a faithful follower, who brings him his tea in the morning, lays out his sleeping-bag at night, helps to carry his personal belongings and generally spoils his Sahib. (This Hindi word, denoting superior status, was used between us on the expedition, when necessary, simply to distinguish between members of the party and the Sherpas.) (70)

Regarding the use of the term *Sahib* in this passage, Steven Marcus has pointed out, "This, one recalls, is written by a colonel in the British Army who spent years of service in India before the last war—it is enough to make the mind boggle" (79–80). As "faithful followers," the Sherpas are clearly inscribed as inferior beings who obsequiously attend the "superior" white man. *If* one were to somehow overlook the ethnocentrism of the term, the unequal relationship might seem to make sense, since the assumption might be that the British climber has the practical know-how to climb the mountain—thus the Sherpa has no choice but to "follow" him.

But although Hunt makes a beleaguered attempt to explain away the term's invidious connotation, its ideological resonance is nonetheless clearly imperial in nature because the trappings of imperialism are inevitably reflected in the way Hunt describes this relationship. The fact that "mutual pleasure" exists between the sahib and his "faithful follower" tacitly suggests

that this unequal relationship not only exists but is somehow *desired* by the Sherpas, recalling the well-worn ideology that was used to justify the British Empire—namely, that the "natives" "*require* and beseech domination" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 9). And the point is not necessarily whether the Sherpas enjoy serving "their" sahib—they may very well take pleasure in it; rather, it is that Hunt's discourse makes it seem as if the Sherpas somehow *naturally* belong in this inferior position.

Hunt reinforces the imperial image of the sahib's "dependent native" at several other points in his narrative. Recounting the recruitment of Sherpas in Darjeeling and their trek to Everest, Hunt writes that they were "cheerful, loyal and courageous, possessed of exceptional hardihood, a few of them have now reached a good standard of proficiency as snow and ice climbers, and this has been recognized by the award of a 'Tiger' badge by the Himalayan Club [a British climbing organization]. They are wonderful companions on a mountain" (60). The Himalayan Club awarding the Sherpas the Tiger badge validates their "loyalty" in the vein of a loyal Boy Scout receiving a merit badge; the English climbers, however, do not need the Tiger badge to signify their climbing prowess. And in Hunt's recollection of the news of the queen's coronation, Hunt claims that "the Sherpas naturally shared in the revelry" (218). Although the Sherpas may have shared in the celebration, Hunt's use of the term *natural* makes it seem as if the Sherpas are somehow inherently attracted to celebrating an image of British royalty because they recognize their "natural" need for Western authority. In another incident Hunt figures the "primitive" Sherpas against modern technology, represented by walkie-talkies. He explains that at one point on the mountain,

> Tenzing was anxious to give Da Namgyal an important message and he was persuaded to use the Walkie-phone set for this purpose. An unwilling Da Namgyal was handed another instrument at Camp III. Neither had tried these gadgets before and both, for some unaccountable reason, got stage fright. The conversation went something like this: "Oh—Da Namgyal"—"Oh—Tenzing"—"Oh—Da Namgyal"—"Oh—Tenzing." It never got any further and two very discomfited Sherpas had to abandon the attempt. (146)

Unfamiliar as the Sherpas are with Western technology, one wonders why they should understand how to communicate over the radio. By parodying the Sherpas' conversation—their language is reduced to senseless utterances—and "marveling" at their "unaccountable" ineptitude, Hunt reinscribes their subordinate position to the technological mastery of the West and the rational, masculine hero.

Yet perhaps the most powerful symbol that reinforces an image of native dependence on the white masculine sahib is the first photograph that appears in Hunt's text—an image of a climber, ice ax raised, with the Union Jack flapping from the shaft of the ax (see *Imperial Ascent* cover photo). Beneath the photo the caption reads "Tenzing on the Summit of Everest, 29th May, 1953." Photographs, like words, are not ideologically neutral. What they represent, the image "in" the photograph as well as that photo's context—and context here means both a photo's position within a discursive framework such as Hunt's narrative and its circulation in the public sphere—is a sign, negotiated as a point of exchange. Appearing opposite the title plate, at first glance the photograph of Tenzing Norgay might seem to distance the expedition from any imperial underpinnings. Although both Sir Edmund Hillary—a white New Zealander and a member of the Commonwealth—and Tenzing Norgay reach the summit, Hillary is not the climber in the photograph. Yet Hillary purportedly was the first to reach the summit. Granted, no photograph of Hillary was taken at the summit—in Hillary's description of the time spent there, the only photographs he took were one of Tenzing and one of the north ridge of Everest (205–206)—so it is appropriate that *some* photograph should prove that a man stood on the summit. Because the photo shows Tenzing on the summit, it reinforces that a Nepalese stands on the summit, not the triumphant white Englishman or white—of English descent—Commonwealth member.

To underscore the ideological impact of this photo of Tenzing, it is helpful to look at Roland Barthes's description of a photo of a "Negro" Algerian soldier that appeared on the cover of *Paris-Match* magazine. Barthes writes,

> On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour [the French flag]. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. (116)

Just as the "Negro" serves the French imperial project, Tenzing represents the triumph of the British imperial project. Granted, the fact that Tenzing's picture leads the narrative proper might seem like an appropriate gesture to recognize that the mountain is climbed from its Nepalese side, signifying that the Nepalese were generous enough to allow the English to organize an expedition to climb the mountain. In the context of the narra-

tive as a whole and the wider political context of the British Empire, however, the photograph draws upon the well-worn ideology of empire—namely, that the English "believed in a vague way that they had moral responsibility for the 'progress' i.e. westernization of the congeries of religions and races entrusted to their rule" (Blake 323). Thus in Hunt's narrative, as in "literally hundreds" of other narratives of empire, "we discern a new narrative progression and triumphalism. . . . [*The Ascent* is] based on the exhilaration and interest of adventure in the colonial world, [which] far from casting doubt on the imperial undertaking, serve to confirm and celebrate its success. Explorers find what they are looking for, adventurers return home safe and wealthier, and even [native figures are] drafted into the Great Game" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 187–188). Tenzing Norgay follows a lineage of stock imperial "native" figures such as Kipling's Gunga Din, who obsequiously serve the interests of the British Empire. Hunt and the British climbers return home with the patriotic cachet of conquering Everest and secure the purposeful history of the empire as a moral necessity as Tenzing Norgay is "drafted" into the "Great Game." Tenzing is "drafted" because the mountain could not have been climbed without the aid of supplemental oxygen—bottled "English air," as the Sherpas called it—and Western rational organization. As Steven Marcus has pointed out in regard to the photo, "Who can tell the difference between a white man and a Sherpa when both are wearing bulky down suits, balaclavas, and oxygen masks? The famous snapshot of Tenzing on the summit could have been a picture of almost anyone" (80).

Tenzing's symbolic representation of the "native's" entrance into modernity is reflected in Hunt's statement that "Tenzing [had] established himself not only as the foremost climber of his race but as a mountaineer of world standing" (61). If Hunt had simply stated that Tenzing was "a mountaineer of world standing," Tenzing would be validated—like anyone else—as a human being who had achieved great proficiency as a mountaineer. But because Hunt categorizes Tenzing *racially*, he demarcates a racial boundary between whites and the "Oriental native." The category of "world standing" implicitly means Western modern achievement as represented by male climbers such as Hillary. In this case Tenzing is specifically measured against and validated by white imperial masculinity, reflected later in the narrative when Hunt explains how on one "occasion . . . I had my first chance of climbing with Tenzing; it showed me not only what a capable mountaineer he is, but also that he was, even at that time, fitter than any of us" (82–83). And yet Tenzing had already more than proven his capabilities as a mountaineer as a member of the Swiss expeditions to Everest in 1952. In fact, Tenzing, who

had climbed with the Swiss climber Raymond Lambert, had more experience climbing at high altitude than any member of the British expedition, having reached a height of 28,000 feet.

Hunt reverts to racialized discourse in other passages as well. Describing the Sherpa Da Tensing, Hunt writes, "[He] has the dignity, courtesy and charm of the elders of his attractive race" (61). And the Sherpas are described as "Tibetan stock," "sturdy men" (60). It is as if the Sherpas "have an aura of apartness, definiteness, and collective self-consistency such as to wipe out any traces of individual [Nepalese] with narratable life histories" (Said, *Orientalism* 229). The Sherpas are collectively romanticized as the exotic racial Other, as if their virtues somehow emanate from their "race." Aesthetically racialized objects, the Sherpas' "racial" virtues make them more easily manageable by the white masculine sahib. As "charming" people, they seem almost like caricatured cultural artifacts explicitly made for the pleasurable consumption of the self-satisfied, detached masculine hero.

Other examples of Nepalese "traits" serve Hunt's aesthetic imperial tastes as well. For instance, Hunt explains that "Tenzing's simplicity and gaiety quite charmed us, and we were quickly impressed by his authority in the role of Sirdar [leader of the Sherpas]" (61). Like Da Tensing, Tenzing is also relegated to the image of the "primitive Oriental." Hunt also writes that in the trek to base camp, "Accompanying the Sherpas were a number of Sherpanis: their wives and sweethearts, who hoped to be engaged as coolies on our journey to their native land of Khumbu. I was delighted to agree with this arrangement, for not only would they add colour and gaiety to our company, but they carry loads as stoutly as their menfolk" (63). For Hunt, the addition of the Sherpanis has nothing to do with how their addition to the expedition would serve the concerns and desires of the Sherpas, who would potentially be away from their families for more than a month. Instead, the Sherpanis add pageantry for the conquering heroes as they trek off to climb the mountain for the glory of England, and as a bonus they provide additional logistical support for the expedition.

Hunt's sentiments toward the Nepalese are not uniformly "flattering," however. For instance, describing the reception given for the climbers by the monks of Thyangboche in Nepal, Hunt writes, "The performing monks . . . proceeded to whirl and gambol in a strange and undignified manner around the prayer flag marking the centre of the courtyard. Others provided some very rudimentary music with horns and cymbals. It was quaint, sometimes comic, but quite unbeautiful. It went on for a very long time" (220). The Nepalese monks' music, and by implication their culture, is "rudimentary,"

“quaint,” and “comic”—so much so that Hunt is bored. Like the Sherpanis, the monks are dehumanized as examples of an inferior, simple people. Hunt reinforces his patronizing image of Nepalese culture when he recalls how he explained to the abbot “that we had climbed Everest. He was plainly incredulous and nothing would shake his unbelief. But his natural courtesy forbade him to give expression to this in so many words, and when we left he graciously congratulated us on ‘nearly reaching the summit of Chomolungma’ [the Nepalese name for the mountain]” (220). Chomolungma, according to the monks’ beliefs, was the home of the gods; in the Nepalese Buddhist belief system, humans could not possibly penetrate this holy abode. But Hunt offers no cultural context for the monks’ response. Instead, his reaction to Hunt’s claim seems little more than puerile and irrational, Hunt’s discourse rendering him intellectually inferior to Western culture. Like the other images of Nepalese culture, the monks help to codify the white male hero’s conception of himself as culturally superior to the primitive “native” of the Orient.

Yet although Hunt’s narrative essentially dismisses the integrity of Nepalese culture, he is nonetheless forced to confront the reality that the “natives” of the Orient have their own desires and conception of reality—a reality that challenges the preeminence of British egocentrism and their imperial worldview. This is particularly so in Hunt’s account of the Nepalese reception of Tenzing Norgay after he returns to Kathmandu following the success of the expedition. For instance, although Hunt views the Nepalese national pride in Tenzing as appropriate, stating “they rightly hailed [him] as a national hero,” he regrets that the celebration of Tenzing’s success was “mingled with some political opportunism” (224). In part, his reaction may be a subtle reference to a claim by many Nepalese who circulated “a heroic story about Tenzing dragging a helpless, anoxic Hillary up to the peak” (Marcus 80). But regardless of whether this is the case, the sentiment about “opportunism” is ironic considering Hunt’s overt nationalism in the narrative. Apparently, it is acceptable for the English to capitalize politically on the expedition but not for the Nepalese to do so. At another point Hunt explains that the Nepalese were incapable of understanding how to properly congratulate the expedition for its success: “In all these rejoicings [after the climb], I could not help feeling sorry that the nature of our enterprise was so misinterpreted by many of these good people. In their rightful pride and joy over Tenzing, they quite neglected the other Sherpas and most members of the expedition, his comrades in the great achievement” (224). Although others no doubt deserved credit for the success of the expedition, it is not

unusual that one figure is celebrated over the other Sherpas. And ironically, Hillary became *the* imperial hero for the British populace.[5] Hunt's reflection that Nepalese desires are misguided is an attempt at ideological closure, a desire to supplant postcolonial desires by enveloping them within the omnipotent discourse of British imperialism. Yet in Hunt's negotiation of the Nepalese "misinterpretation," he acknowledges their ability to "interpret" and refract history rather than passively reflect imperial desires. In "misinterpreting" the expedition, they underscore the contested nature of history, their voices pressing up against and destabilizing the uniformity of the imperial project.

In the end, Hunt's narrative reinscribes the ideology of empire in a changing world. In one sense,

> When you can no longer assume that Britannia will rule the waves forever, you have to reconceive reality as something that can be held together by you the artist, in history rather than in geography. Spatiality becomes, ironically, the characteristic of an aesthetic rather than of political domination, as more and more regions—from India to Africa to the Caribbean—challenge the classical empires and their cultures. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 189–190).

What the *Ascent of Everest* makes clear is that assumptions about empire do not go away. If the empire no longer exists literally, it can exist aesthetically. Yet the voice of the colonial "subject" does attempt to disrupt the ideological closure of the narrative—a voice that, as I will show, Tenzing Norgay is sure to make heard in his autobiography, *Tiger of the Snows.*

6 No Longer Sahibs: Tenzing Norgay and the 1953 British Expedition to Mount Everest

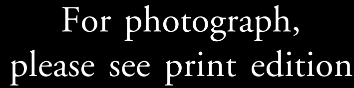
IN THE INTRODUCTION TO *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson critique the *London Times* transcription of the first successful climb of Mount Everest in 1953, noting that it is not politically innocuous. Rather, imperial rhetoric contours the *Times* article (1–3). As I showed in Chapter 5, to the British the expedition innocently exemplified "how a new post-imperial co-operation could overcome the greatest of obstacles" as Sherpas (who were residing in India), Indian porters, and Englishmen worked together toward success (Holt 278). Although the British color their account with seemingly equitable postimperial rhetoric, the success of the expedition in fact projects an aesthetic analogue of imperialism because the British exhibit their enlightened rationality and thus their "superiority" to the "natives" of the "primitive" Orient. The "official" account of the climb, Sir John Hunt's best-selling *The Ascent of Everest* (1953), portrays Everest as a distinctly British domain, as if the mountain had forever been an extension and a rightful British possession—a particularly remarkable assertion considering Nepal was never part of the British Empire.[1]

It is this British imperial aura, both in *The Ascent* and the wider public discourse surrounding the expedition, to which Tenzing Norgay responds in

his autobiography, *Tiger of the Snows* (1955).[2] Tenzing[3] "writes back" to the presumed master "Sahib."[4] Just as Younghusband's and Hunt's narratives illustrate the continuing, assured presence of imperial masculine ideologies in English culture, Tenzing's narrative, too, points to the persistence of these ideologies in that he must counter them in his autobiography. By appropriating the "master's" discourse of enlightened masculine rationality, he offers a counterhistory against the hegemony of the "official" British version and its incipient imperial aura—undermining the seemingly harmonious, utopian postimperial cooperation eulogized by the British. In the end, Tenzing rejects imperial values that posit one nation's people above another's.

Before critiquing Tenzing Norgay's narrative, however, it must be noted that *Tiger of the Snows* is "written in collaboration with James Ramsey Ullman." This is somewhat problematic, for not only does Tenzing narrate and thus interpret the expedition, but Ullman recounts and inevitably reinterprets the story. To complicate matters, Tenzing is not wholly fluent in English, so what he articulates must be literally translated through the efforts of Ullman. Deciding whether Tenzing actually speaks is theoretically problematic, too, particularly when poststructural and postcolonial theory reminds us that no "one" really speaks.[5] Because Tenzing uses the English language, he is already to some extent co-opted and contained by the "master's" discourse. I would argue, however, that although Tenzing cannot possibly stand outside colonial discourse, through his appropriation of the English language and rationalist discourse, history is "opened up to questioning, rewriting and re-routing" (Chambers 24). For through the "strategy of appropriation . . . the postcolonial subject is not only given a voice but the medium itself is changed in the process" (Ashcroft, "Excess" 39). Theoretically, I would like to claim that Tenzing is always in excess of the dominant discourse,[6] "sidestepping" it as he articulates his story; and it is because of this that I will assume that some version of Tenzing in fact speaks.

In fact, Tenzing self-consciously interrogates his own identity, confronting the problem of who speaks. For one, he explains that in his culture surnames do not exist. Yet his international fame with an audience of people with surnames has "pressured" him to acquire one. He has been told by lamas that his name is best rendered as "*Tenzing Norgay.*" To this he jokingly responds, "But at home and with my friends I am just Tenzing, and I hope I can stay that way and not wake up some morning and be told I am somebody else" (6). Later he notes that he has "become quite a linguist" (6), adding, "for many years I have gone to the mountains with British expeditions and known British people in India, and now my English is good enough so I could



6.1 Tenzing Norgay (1953). Photographer, Alfred Gregory. *Courtesy,* Royal Geographical Society, London.

tell much of the story in this book without an interpreter" (7). Tenzing's self-consciousness illustrates his control over the story, for he uses "the language of a revolutionary awareness" (Bhabha 41) that confronts the terms of the "master's" discourse. Or following Bill Ashcroft, "By taking hold of the means of representation, colonized peoples throughout the world have appropriated and transformed those processes into culturally appropriate vehicles" (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 5).

Tenzing's self-consciousness is particularly evident in his statement that he tells "much of the story." He also knows the "British people in India," reinscribing his narrative authority; Tenzing Norgay knows "their" language, their culture, their cultural biases. Thus he is not blindly enveloped by the "master's" discourse because of his acute awareness of British cultural norms. For instance, the title of his book is part of this "revolutionary awareness."

In his appropriation of the British term *Tiger,* which as I noted in Chapter 5 was awarded by the British to Sherpas they considered worthy climbers, Tenzing reneges imperial discourse—using it in the context of his narrative to subvert imperial authority. As Tashi Tenzing, Tenzing's grandson, has written, "Tenzing valued his Tiger Medal above all the other honors he received. The fraternity of the 'Tiger of the Snows' was thus established [in 1938], and despite the subsequent political and cultural changes throughout the Sherpa community and the Indian subcontinent in general, this honor is still regarded by Sherpas as the ultimate mountaineering prize" (35). Moreover, the famous photo of Tenzing on the summit of Everest—used by Hunt opposite his title page to reinforce imperial ideology—is transformed by Tenzing to serve his own purposes in that his title page now stands opposite the photograph.

Just how difficult it is to speak, however, is further complicated by more insidious problems than the English language or Ullman as editor because Tenzing must tell his version of this historical event against an "official" account of the expedition, as well as against the ideological presuppositions attached to the "nature" of an "inferior" easterner. In fact, when Tenzing visited London after the expedition, the press presented him as the naïve, simple Oriental overwhelmed by the press and the bustling metropolis of London. His supposed lack of sophistication was symbolized by his proud display of two wristwatches, symbols of Western technology and supposed cultural superiority. When he appeared before British royalty, the press portrayed Tenzing as the obsequious servant of the Empire, only too happy to gain royal recognition for his achievement (Stewart 189–191). Tenzing's version of events is immediately suspect to a British audience because traditionally he is part of "a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves" (Said, *Orientalism* 35). Additionally, whereas westerners "are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; [Orientals] are none of these things" (Said, *Orientalism* 49). The stock image of the untrustworthy, irrational Oriental is evident in the Royal Geographical Society's concerns about Tenzing's autobiography. Prior to its publication, L. P. Kirwan of the Royal Geographical Society had met with Ullman and discussed Tenzing's perception of the expedition. After this meeting, Kirwan wrote to John Hunt complaining that Tenzing had distorted the truth to Ullman about the relationship between the British and the Sherpas, making it seem as if the British were incompetent and Tenzing was the main reason for their success (Stewart 194–195).

As Gordon Stewart points out, Tenzing presents an even-handed account of the British in his autobiography (195). Kirwan's fears may be an exaggeration on his part—an overreaction to a "native's" claims. In any case, this incident helps to underscore how Tenzing must overcome an entrenched ideological obstacle before he even speaks. He is similar to the wrongly accused Aziz in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* who is presumed guilty of assaulting a British woman until proven innocent. And even after "proven" innocent, in the eyes of the British, Aziz still must be guilty. To counteract this problem, Tenzing presents himself within the British rationalist discourse.

Tenzing explains, "The British gave us a warm welcome, but unfortunately there were difficulties almost right away" (209). But before discussing these difficulties he adds, "I must say again, as I have said before, that in telling about such troubles I am trying only to be honest, to say what truly happened, and not in any way to make complaints or accusations" (209). Nonetheless, because of the publicity surrounding the expedition,

> All sorts of people started twisting the facts around for their own purposes, and events sometimes ended up sounding very different from what they really were. In his own book of the expedition Colonel Hunt (now Brigadier Sir John) refers to these various troubles hardly at all; and perhaps he is right, for his is an official account, he is writing as an Englishman for Englishmen, and certainly none of our difficulties were of any importance compared to the climbing of Everest. But each man must tell his story—as he lives his life—from his own point of view. And my story is not "official." I am not an Englishman, but a Sherpa. I must tell what I, not someone else, saw and experienced, or my book will have no honesty and no value. (210)

Hunt's version of the expedition offers an apparently seamless narrative, rendering innocuous what was in fact a tense colonial encounter with the "native." Tenzing stresses his "honesty," allaying preconceptions about the stereotypically untrustworthy native. At the same time, he is able to analyze the event from more than his "limited" viewpoint; thus he is capable of rationally objectifying the situation. And yet although clearly self-deprecating, emphasizing that his version of events is unofficial, he undermines the narrative authority of British history. For although the British narrate an "official" history, it too is only a version of events told for a particular audience to serve that audience's interests, which are "partial and partisan" (Chambers 24). The British reader's demands are met by Hunt. He gives them a narrative that reconfirms their utopian values of postimperial cooperation. Tenzing appropriates the seamlessness of British discourse—the official account

related by Hunt—and dismantles the "seamlessness" narrative authority through "a transgression in which the bandit post-colonial mounts [a raid] across the porous borders of discourse" (Ashcroft, "Excess" 39). He co-opts Hunt's discourse, negates it, and opens up a space from which he can speak truthfully as a Sherpa.

Tenzing Norgay bluntly criticizes the British expedition and appropriates the 1953 expedition's imperial overtones. He explains that "in all honesty, then, I would rather have gone back to Everest with the Swiss [with whom Tenzing climbed in 1952]" (204). This sentiment remains even after Tenzing became one of the first men to reach the summit of Mount Everest, and it undermines the British and their pride in "their" success. Tenzing continues, "In spite of the way some people have tried to twist things, this does not mean that I dislike the British. . . . Some of them . . . [are] counted among my close and dear friends" (204). Thus again Tenzing does not want to appear stereotypically irrational, but he simultaneously inverts the patronizing aura of imperial discourse. Continuing his analysis of the British, he adds, "But it is still true that the English in general are more reserved and formal than the men of most other countries whom I have known; and especially is this so, I think, with people not of their own race. Perhaps this is because they have so long been rulers in the East, or perhaps it is only something in their own nature" (204). By probing the question that it might be in Britain's "nature" to act the way it does, Tenzing appropriates racist discourse and redirects it back to its source. English demeanor toward peoples "not of their own race" demarcates them as racists.

Yet Tenzing exposes what seems to be natural—the racist discourse underlying and helping to support imperialism—as perhaps fraudulent, juxtaposing the "natural" against the social construction of imperial discourse. Just as Asians are erroneously configured as "naturally" inferior, Tenzing ironically portrays British paternalism as if it too were necessarily natural, which it is not. Earlier in the narrative, too, Tenzing challenges British paternalism, for "with the Swiss and the French [Tenzing] had been treated as a comrade, an equal, in a way that is not possible for the British" (204). In 1952 the Swiss had asked Tenzing to join them, "not only as the sirdar of the Sherpas but as a full expedition member" (188). Tenzing invokes another colonial power, the French. Thus if one colonial power can suppress its ethnocentrism, so can the British.[7] Yes, the British "are kind men; they are brave; they are fair and just, always. But always, too, there is a line between them and the outsider, between sahib and employee, and to such Easterners as we Sherpas, who have experienced the world of no-line, this can be a

difficulty and a problem" (204–205). Just how much of a problem it was becomes clear.

The fact that the expedition was hardly an example of harmonious "post-imperial cooperation" was apparent when it arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal. Rather, it was a situation that reinforced a hierarchy of the British over the "primitive" Sherpas. Whereas the British slept in the embassy, the Sherpas' sleeping quarters "were in a garage, formerly a stable, on the grounds of the British Embassy . . . and our men didn't like it at all" (210). Because of their predicament, Tenzing explains that he attempted to ameliorate the situation by going to the British, but he was unsuccessful at persuading them to redress the Sherpas' grievance. Also, when they departed for the mountain, unlike other Western expeditions they had accompanied, the Sherpas were not issued their full load of mountaineering equipment. A clear act of British distrust, a distrust that once again reinforces the racist typology of the untrustworthy "Oriental," only amplified the disunity between Sherpas and British. The Sherpas too complained that whereas the British climbers received Western tin rations for the trek, they were forced to eat local food.

As the sirdar, Tenzing was the conduit for the desires of both parties. In response to the difficulties he faced, he mentions that Hunt had written a "fine book" (219). He recalls repeatedly trying to persuade the Sherpas not to make a "fuss over little things" (212). And his indication that he went to the British to address the problem is crucial because it demonstrates his dispassionate diplomacy, thus imbuing his narrative with a tone of sincerity and authority, for he speaks the reasoned language of the "master." Diplomacy is reinforced later in the narrative:

> This was the worst time I had on the whole expedition. Along with Major Wylie, who was also doing his best to make peace, I felt like the middle of a sandwich pressed between two slabs of bread. Each side thought I was working for the interests of the other side, and the Sherpas especially seemed to think I was being paid big money by the British to argue against them. Half the time I wished I was just an ordinary Sherpa and not in the middle of all the arguments. (214)

One of the justifications for imperialism was the belief that the peoples of empire desired to be dominated by the enlightened westerner (Said, *Culture* 9). The Sherpas' distrust of the British undermines any sense that the natives "beseeched" British guidance and recognition. And here again Tenzing subverts the stereotypically untrustworthy native, for both the British and the Sherpas thought he "was working for the interests of the other side."

Nonetheless, although he appears ambivalent about his position, he subtly indicates his partiality toward the Sherpas. After having to sleep in the stalls, the Sherpas discovered that they had no toilet facilities. As a form of protest, Tenzing explains that the Sherpas "showed their displeasure by using the road in front of the garage as a latrine. This made the Embassy staff good and mad, and they were given a lecture; but I don't think anyone was listening very hard" (210–211). Although it might appear that the Sherpas (and consequently Tenzing's account of the situation) simply reinforced their "primitive" status by their actions in front of the embassy, they were merely playing by the rules the British had already established for them. They were treated as "primitives," so they appropriated this perception and redirected it toward its origins—which in fact are the British themselves because they set the conditions. The fact that the Sherpas did not simply act irrationally is made clear by Tenzing's comment "I don't think anyone was listening very hard" regarding the Sherpas' reaction to their reprimand by the British. He ironically implies, why should anyone listen under these abysmal circumstances?

In regard to the equipment problem, Tenzing explains, "Once I was so fed up I said to Major Wylie: 'Look, I have my Swiss equipment with me and will use that. Give my British equipment to the others, and maybe that will keep them quiet'" (214). In one sense he shows that he was willing to cooperate fully with the British by relinquishing his equipment. And he was seemingly "fed up" with the whole situation, not just with the British. It might at first appear that Tenzing was securely couched within British interests because he assumed the status of the British objective, which was literally to keep the Sherpas quiet and in their place as "lowly natives." But because the remark refers to his Swiss equipment, this passage is ironic. The British actions were so distressing because Tenzing was the most experienced member of either cultural group. Not one of the British had been as high on the mountain as Tenzing had. His Swiss equipment reminds Wylie that Tenzing was a highly experienced climber who had been to and attempted Mount Everest more times than any of the British. Thus, considering his experience on the mountain, the British actions were especially humiliating.

Regardless of all his experience, Tenzing felt like he was repeatedly patronized even after he and Hillary had reached the summit. He complains that Sir John Hunt, who was perturbed by the attention the Nepalese paid to Tenzing after the climb, made a disparaging comment about Tenzing's climbing ability (270–271). Additionally, in *The Ascent of Everest,* a chapter on the final push to the summit was written by Edmund Hillary. In the chapter

Hillary delineates himself as the capable mountaineer whereas Tenzing is totally reliant on Hillary's presence, thus reinforcing the imperial structure elevating the enlightened westerner over the "primitive" native. Tenzing responds, "I must be honest and say that I do not feel his account, as told in *The Conquest of Everest,* is wholly accurate. For one thing, he has written that this gap up the rock wall was about forty feet high, but in my judgement it was little more than fifteen" (245). By addressing the perception of the "Hillary Step," Tenzing appears rational and objective because he simply describes an inanimate object. Tenzing establishes himself as "objectively truthful" while divulging Hillary's hyperbole. Tenzing inverts the stereotypical portrayal of the untrustworthy, irrational Oriental. He is the rational, truthful one, whereas Hillary becomes untrustworthy. This helps to frame the rest of Tenzing's depiction of events:

> [Hillary] gives the impression that it was only he who really climbed [the step] on his own, and that he then practically pulled me, so that I "finally collapsed exhausted at the top, like a giant fish when it has just been hauled from the sea after a terrible struggle." Since then I have heard plenty about that "fish," and I admit I do not like it. For it is the plain truth that no one pulled or hauled me up the gap. I climbed it myself, just as Hillary had done; and if he was protecting me with the rope while I was doing it, this was no more than I had done for him. (245)

To protect himself from a perception of strictly personal, petty jealousy, Tenzing explains that he respects Hillary despite the latter's errors: "In speaking of this I must make one thing very plain. Hillary is my friend. He is a fine climber and a fine man, and I am proud to have gone with him to the top of Everest. But I do feel that in his story of our final climb he is not quite fair to me; that all the way through he indicates that when things went well it was his doing and when things went badly it was mine. For this is simply not true" (245). By emphasizing friendship, Tenzing aligns himself with Hillary rather than against or "over" him. And to further emphasize that he does not simply wish to fashion himself as the hero, he adds, "All the way up and down we helped, and were helped by, each other—and that was the way it should be. But we were not leader and led. We were partners" (246). Whereas the English formulation of the expedition may have perceived a new, harmonious Commonwealth with England at its apex, Tenzing's version turns out to be more equitable. He has addressed the imperial subtleties of Hillary's discourse, discredited that discourse through the "master's" rational discourse, and reformulated it to narrate a story that no longer silences and patronizes himself or the Orient. And at the same time, he does not simply invert a

power relationship that posits him over the westerner. He rejects this discourse outright.

What is particularly crucial to Tenzing is that the question of who reached the summit first, Hillary or him, should be irrelevant because of misguided political implications. He explains that "in India and Nepal, I am sorry to say, there has been great pressure on me to say that I reached the summit before Hillary. And all over the world I am asked, 'Who got there first?'" (247). But he explains that it was always a team effort. He must tell the truth, which is that Hillary did step "on top first" (248). By stating this fact, Tenzing again appears objective and thus truthful. He is not interested in self-acclaim, nor is he—unlike the British and his own people—interested in promoting national interests. In fact, he laments that even the order of the flags raised on the summit was politicized:

> The order of the flags from top to bottom was United Nations, British, Nepalese, Indian; and the same sort of people who have made trouble in other ways have tried to find political meaning in this too. All I can say is that on Everest I was not thinking about politics. If I had been, I suppose I would have put the Indian or Nepalese flag highest—though that in itself would have been a bad problem for me. As it is, I am glad that the U.N. flag was on top. For I like to think that our victory was not only for ourselves—not only for our own nations—but for all men everywhere. (250)

Although Tenzing does not wholly escape cultural pride, he nonetheless distances himself from nationalist politics, implicitly undermining British nationalist overtones. This passage reinforces an earlier section in the narrative in which he explains the British perception of Everest. With the Swiss attempt in 1952, the British were anxious because "they had always considered Everest *their* mountain, and now it seemed to be slipping away from them" (203). Because of this and other nations' imminent climbing attempts, the 1953 expedition was crucial: "Certainly the circle was drawing tighter around the top of the highest mountain, and it seemed almost sure that if the British did not win it now they would lose it forever" (203).

For the British, success on Everest reinvigorates the legacy of the West's scramble to dominate the world's surface. The mountain is "their" possession, although it exists geographically outside an area over which they have any inherent claim. And further, the mountain is located in countries (Nepal and Tibet) the British never occupied. One can imagine the English response if a Nepalese wrote about a mountain in the Lake District in the same fashion. Tenzing's sentiment that he might have chosen an Indian or a

Nepalese flag displaces British "possession" of the mountain. But by also espousing the accomplishment under the United Nations, the mountain becomes no country's possession. Thus Tenzing rejects unequivocally Britain's obsession, its "frank covetousness" of the world's surface (Said, *Orientalism* 216). Moreover, Tenzing cannot be accused of pursuing political opportunism for his own people, for he explains that he was disappointed by the Nepalese reception of the British following the climb because all their attention was lavished upon him (264–265, 271).

Earlier in the narrative, too, Tenzing establishes his position beyond essentialized limitations of national identity:

> About nationality and politics I can only say again what I said then: Some people call me Nepali, some Indian. Some of my family lives in Nepal, where I was born, but now I live in India with my wife and daughters. For me Indian and Nepali are the same. I am a Sherpa and a Nepali, but I think I am also Indian. We should all be the same—Hillary, myself, Indian, Nepali, everybody. (10)

In one sense one could argue that Tenzing has simply accepted the Western conceptions of universality because he states that "we" are all "the same." And yet for him, his total ambivalence about a fixed notion of nationality, coupled with his other contention that "no line" exists between Sherpas and Western man because they are equal, frees him from limiting himself to any essentialized Western ideology of a "superior" race, nation, or culture. Rather, his message is truly transnational, beyond essentialized constructions of identity.[8]

As Gordon Stewart has pointed out, Tenzing's emergence as a celebrity worked to challenge the triumphant imperial rhetoric of British expeditions to Everest, reflecting the political realities of Britain's demise as an imperial power and the emergence of "native" voices (197). Tenzing's autobiography, in particular, offers an alternative history to the "official," utopian British history of the 1953 expedition and its incipient ideological underpinnings. In his version of the expedition, Tenzing not only undermines the stereotype of the irrational, primitive "Oriental," but also rejects the imperial rhetoric of geographical possession. Recognizing the divisiveness of nationalist ideologies, Tenzing redefines the first successful expedition to Mount Everest in anti-nationalist terms by constructing himself as a transnational figure. But although Tenzing challenged the British imperial narrative, the residues of imperial ideologies in regard to Everest expeditions seem alive and well today, as the next chapter illustrates.

7 Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* (1997), Postmodern Adventurous Masculinity, and Imperialism

In 1991 the "Everest Peace Climb" brought two Chinese (who were in fact Tibetan climbers), two Russian (at the time Soviets), and two U.S. climbers together in a joint effort to reach the summit of Mount Everest. The expedition had problems in terms of cooperation, given the different philosophies about how to climb the mountain and the fears inherent in ascending an extremely dangerous mountain. But in a film about the expedition, "Three Flags Over Everest," one of the American climbers described a night spent at around 28,500 feet—an altitude within what is known as the "death zone" in mountaineering because of the very real chance of the occurrence of pulmonary edema and certain death—with two Tibetan climbers saying Buddhist prayers for the six members of the summit party. The American climber stated,

> I had an affinity for these two. I can truthfully say I dearly loved these guys. And when it came down to these little ceremonies each night, it transcended the language barrier and we were in total harmony with each other. They were praying for all of us. And to be involved in that was an honor. It was when we could all relax and we could all not worry about trying to say, well, and y'know, "Don't put the yak butter in my tea." We didn't need to communicate. We were communicating, but we weren't having to work at it. It was easy—it was just natural, and it was pure.

It is difficult to see the American climber's statement—in its honesty and spontaneous humor—as a simple romantic gesture toward Buddhist mysticism. Given the reliance and intimacy among climbers necessary to survive the wrath of Mount Everest, his perception seems valid. It certainly suggests that human beings from disparate cultures not only can but also must speak to one another—and not in a manner predicated on a relationship of power, whether material or discursive. This perception suggests that American masculinity may not need to suppress an Other to achieve self-realization. Nationalism is rendered impotent at 28,500 feet, particularly as these countries are brought together within the discourse of international peace and cooperation. This moment signifies an intercultural exchange of what I would argue illustrates a deep human connection between these mountaineers, one not superseded by destructive imperial ideologies. Bill Ashcroft has written, "We think that because one person cannot have the same *experience* as another they cannot understand each other's *meaning*. But . . . even speakers in the same culture can never have exactly the same experience of language, yet this does not stop them [from] communicating" (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 69). Ashcroft, and this American mountaineer's sentiments, suggest a way out of the reductive notion that just because cultures are different—even radically different—communication between them will always reach an impasse because each person is supposedly forever subsumed in his or her totality of culture and individual identity.

However much this episode suggests the possibility of a genuine connection between cultures, Jon Krakauer's best-selling *Into Thin Air* attests to the invidious presence of imperialism with respect to mountaineering and Mount Everest. No, this book does not fit squarely within a specific American or British literary and cultural tradition of heroic masculinity and imperialism; rather, it squares all too neatly with the destructive ideological and material resonance of imperialism as globalization. In this narrative masculinity is no longer construed as "naturally virile," nor is it particularly heroic. It is a commodity that can be bought for a modest price of up to $65,000 or more to bolster the egocentric whim of anybody with the cash to buy "adventure." Mountaineering, in other words, is no longer the province of skilled male adventurers, but is instead brought into the postmodern age. As his narrative illustrates, Krakauer's anxieties during the climb result in part from his insecurity and guilt about his decentered postmodern "heroic" masculinity, for he is "feminized" as a dependent to his guides and the Sherpas. As a result of his "feminized" masculinity, Krakauer is unable to act heroically to save his fellow climbers when they are in peril, as he should in the masculine

adventure tradition. But Krakauer's guilt, I would argue, also emanates from his recognition of heroic masculinity's imperialist underpinnings—both historically and in the present—in respect to Western expeditions to climb Mount Everest. Krakauer represents a new version of masculinity that through guilt tries to absolve imperial masculinity of its sins, for Krakauer's text shows that both his and the masculine identity of the imperial past are built upon the backs of the Sherpa people and thus can hardly be deemed heroic. As I argue, Sherpas might have challenged and shaped imperialist ideologies in regard to mountaineering, and Sherpas might have the opportunity to control their future in Nepal by not succumbing to postmodern imperialism. But Krakauer's narrative leaves one feeling that the residues of imperialism might, in the end, dictate their future for them.

Before critiquing the text, however, I would like to define what I mean by *postmodernity* and *globalization*. Just what postmodernity means has been endlessly debated, and I do not wish to become mired down in a discussion that would occasion a book of its own; but it is generally understood that postmodernity means that the grand narratives of modernity are, in effect, dead. History, presumably, is no longer moving progressively toward an enlightened end (not that history ever was inherently progressive); rather, we are now in an age in which totalizing narratives no longer exist. The "authentic" no longer exists, truth no longer exists, and a unified human identity ("subject") no longer exists.[1] Krakauer and mountaineering on Everest, I would argue, in many ways exemplify these notions of postmodernity, particularly as it applies to Krakauer's struggle with his own sense of masculinity and its relationship to the imperial adventure tradition.

Globalization is part and parcel of the postmodern age. As Graham Smith has pointed out, under globalization the old paradigm in which culture and capital move from an imperial center to the periphery (a paradigm itself challenged by recent scholarship) has given way to centerless imperial spatial relationships of power and subordination (Smith 63). But as Smith points out, globalization's history must "be located in a much longer history than the present moment. It is inextricably bound up with the making of the capitalist world economy, whose crystallization can be traced back to sixteenth-century Europe and which expanded to become truly global in scope by the late nineteenth century" (58–59). My argument is that Krakauer's book *must* be understood for its connections to an imperial past—in other words, it is not so far removed from the "linear" narrative of globalization—for the residue of cultural imperialism from the "center" of the past fuels the production of postmodern Western identity[2] on Mount Everest of the present,

which for the most part is superimposed upon the Sherpa peoples and realized in a materially exploitative and dehumanizing imperial fashion.

Although postcolonial scholars have argued that postmodern theory is not useful to the interests of postcolonial theory and criticism because in the end it offers no grounds for sustained political critique and agency on the part of the postcolonial world, Krakauer's text suggests that postmodernity is a force postcolonial critiques must reckon with.[3] Fredric Jameson has argued that postmodernity is simply late capitalism's final and totalizing commodification of all cultural forms.[4] Homi Bhabha might be right that Fredric Jameson's critique of postmodernity in the context of the First World does not necessarily apply to Third World contexts (240), but Krakauer's narrative seems to suggest that Jameson's critique helps us understand what is at stake for the Sherpas and their future. Iain Chambers contends that "in the post-colonial world, the arrow of time, of linearity, of nation and identity, and the 'progress' of occidental history, is deflected into diverse spaces that disrupt the single, unfolding narrative by introducing multiple sites of language, narrative, histories and her-stories, and a heteronomy of different pulses" (75). Although Chambers's claim might very well have validity with much of the "post-colonial world," I am not convinced that it holds true for Sherpas.

As I pointed out in the Introduction, although Nepal was never a part of the British Empire, Sherpas and their culture are part of the "postcolonial condition" because of their intimate ties to a colonial past in Darjeeling, India, as well as to expeditions to Everest—which were configured as imperial adventures. Moreover, British imperial ideologies were projected upon Nepal (and Tibet) as aesthetic extensions of the empire. In the case of the Sherpas, the notion of "a heteronomy of different pulses" seems somehow utopian, for they have little choice but to reckon with their relationship to an imperial past and its linear, progressive version of history, particularly because of its persistent residues in the present—residues that, I would argue, make it extremely difficult to "disrupt" occidental history. Certainly, Chapter 6 on Tenzing Norgay illustrates that Sherpas did not take imperial history lying down. And as I illustrate later, Sherry B. Ortner, in "Thick Resistance: Death and the Cultural Construction of Agency in Himalayan Mountaineering," has shown the ways in which Sherpa culture has worked to resist and shape imperial ideologies in regard to Himalayan mountaineering. Although agency does exist among contemporary Sherpas and their culture, and thus I am not ready to make the statement that their future has been written for them, in the context of a Western postmodern vision they are

little more than commodities to be consumed and spat out in the interests of "performing" "postmodern" masculinity (and "femininity," for that matter[5]) in mountaineering on the flanks of Mount Everest.

By now, Krakauer's story is familiar to many. Krakauer's book recounts how in 1996 he was hired by *Outside Magazine* to write a story on the commercialization of Mount Everest. Krakauer was part of a guided expedition to climb Everest, and his team shared the mountain with another guided expedition, as well as with both private and national expeditions (on both the Tibetan and Nepalese sides of the mountain). Although there were tragic mishaps and divisions, as well as competition between teams on the mountain, many teams—two guided expeditions in particular—positioned themselves high up on the mountain to reach the summit. Tragically, however, the teams were overcome by a storm, and five climbers from the guided expeditions died. Krakauer explains that twelve climbers died on the mountain that season, including Sherpas. Additionally, other climbers paid the price of frostbite, disfigured for life, whereas still others suffered emotional scars.

Early in the narrative Krakauer recounts the attempts to climb Everest by the British expeditions of the 1920s and the successful 1953 expedition. In regard to the expeditions of the 1920s he recounts how George Mallory and other climbers read *Hamlet* and *Lear* high on Everest's flanks (17). Importantly, Krakauer acknowledges the connection between the 1953 expedition and the nostalgia for empire (20). Krakauer then points to the national fervor surrounding Tenzing Norgay as well and the fact that he was deemed a national hero in India, Nepal, and Tibet (21). Krakauer links his own interest in Everest to his boyhood friendship with Willi Unsoeld, who reached the top of Everest in 1963 (21–23). Unsoeld was part of a distinctly national U.S. expedition to climb Mount Everest, and the expedition's success was sanctified by a White House ceremony in which President John F. Kennedy presented its members with the National Geographic Society's Hubbard Medal. Because of his association with Unsoeld, Krakauer explains that as a boy he dreamed of climbing the mountain himself one day.

Krakauer's history of mountaineering on Everest functions in an important way, for it suggests that in the past the expeditions seemed to represent an "authentic" mountaineering experience with a grand purpose. This is not to say that Krakauer necessarily endorses the ideological undercurrents of those expeditions. But this historical perspective, I think, is offered to frame a critique of Krakauer's experience on Everest. For Krakauer suggests that the earlier history of Everest is one of *romance* in the adventure tradition. Mallory

represents pure and gentlemanly masculine heroism and refinement versus the crass consumerism represented by the commercial expeditions in 1996. In framing the narrative in this fashion, not only does Krakauer reveal Everest's connection to imperial and nationalist history, but he also indirectly links it to the present, which as I will show has its own imperial underpinning. The narrative provides a framework by which Krakauer critiques his own masculinity and its relationship to imperial adventurous masculinity of the past, as well as the guilt he feels about the continuing imperial role masculinity plays—however "inauthentic"—in the present. And in his acknowledgment of Tenzing Norgay, he suggests that the Sherpas, too, have had a stake in the history of Mount Everest.

As Krakauer explains, in his past, climbing was a way of gaining purpose in his life (23)—a purpose intimately tied to a conception of "virile," individualist masculinity. As he explains, "The culture of ascent was characterized by intense competition and undiluted machismo, but for the most part, its constituents were concerned with impressing only one another" by trying increasingly difficult routes and by "free-soloing" (climbing without ropes) these routes (23). In this portrayal of masculine mountaineering culture, Krakauer both distances and reinforces masculinity's relationship to imperialism. On the one hand, his individualism runs counter to the institutionalized imperialist masculinity of the past. But one has to wonder if this machismo is the residue of an imperialist past, particularly when one of Krakauer's boyhood heroes is directly connected to the nationalist U.S. success on Mount Everest in 1963.

To climbers of Krakauer's ability, the standard route up Everest was considered an easy walk-up and not worth the effort—a belief shaped greatly by the first guided ascent of the mountain. As Krakauer explains, when Dick Bass, a wealthy Texas businessman, was guided up Everest in 1985, "Our contempt [for the 'easy' South Col route] was only reinforced" (24). According to Krakauer, whereas before climbing Everest was a sought-after goal in a mountaineer's career—a way of establishing one's status as an elite climber—"Bass's ascent changed all that," and his success "rudely pulled Everest into the postmodern era" (24–25).

Nonetheless, when Krakauer is invited to climb Everest with a guided expedition, the lure of the mountain supersedes any misgivings about how he was going to reach its summit. Although an accomplished climber, Krakauer—like any of the less experienced clients on the mountain—is subordinated to the guides, a reality he obviously struggles with throughout the expedition. Not only does his portrayal of his experience on Mount Everest

counter the self-sufficiency central to his mountaineering ethic, but it is an implicit assault on the conception of individualist masculinity that has been central to that ethic. Yet Krakauer is caught in a bind on the expedition, for when he exerts himself as the typically "masculine" mountaineer he knows himself to be, he ties himself directly to the masculine imperialist adventure of the past. As I will show, even as a "passive" climber, he participates in an imperialist tradition.

Throughout the narrative, Krakauer clearly struggles with his subordinate position. On the day the climbers go for the summit, Krakauer winds up well out in front of his fellow clients; and when faced with the reality that no ropes have been secured to protect him and other clients from a fall along the summit ridge, he must stop and wait for the guide service to secure the ropes—even though, as an experienced mountaineer, he is capable of doing so himself. Recalling his arrival at 27,400 feet, he explains that although he and Ang Dorje could have helped install ropes for safety, Rob Hall, Krakauer's guide, "had explicitly forbidden me to go ahead," and others who had authority to secure ropes were "far below" (229). The plan had been for Sherpas to secure the ropes, but for reasons that appear unclear, this was never done. After a prolonged wait, Krakauer finally has an opportunity to show his mettle once other guides—Neal Beidleman, Andy Harris, and Anatoli Boukreev—show up and begin installing ropes up the summit ridge. Krakauer explains that he "quickly volunteered to help" (235–236). Krakauer's desire to help indicates his desire to prove that he, too, is or can be one of the elite he fantasized about during his childhood, a way to reestablish his masculine ethic central to his personal experience with mountaineering. No longer feminized by his subordination to the paternal whims of his guides, implicitly he is once again masculine. Soon after, however, Krakauer is again reminded of his place in the hierarchy. He and the guides reach the famous "Hillary Step," the last major obstacle to be overcome before reaching Everest's summit. Krakauer informs us that he had hoped to have the opportunity to lead the pitch, "as any serious climber would," but "it was hypoxic delusion on my part to think that any of [the guides] was going to let a client hog such a coveted lead," and Boukreev leads the pitch (236–237). For Krakauer, a moment such as this, when linked to the romance of heroism exhibited by his forebears on Everest and coupled with his own experience as a mountaineer, is clearly painful on a personal level, and ultimately it is a reminder of his diluted masculinity.

Krakauer safely attains the summit of Everest and as he descends the storm moves in. Although he reaches the safety of his tent on the South

Col, most of the climbers from his and other expeditions who are trying to reach the summit are trapped out in the storm. Krakauer—understandably exhausted by his endeavor—collapses in his tent, only viscerally aware of what the consequences of the storm would be. And even when he realizes the seriousness of the situation when other climbers do not return to the South Col, he is unable to summon himself to help them—something for which Krakauer obviously feels guilty. In one sense this is completely understandable, for throughout the narrative Krakauer tries to assuage his guilt by reminding his readers that under any circumstances climbing Everest is physically debilitating, no matter how technically "easy" the traditional route up the mountain might be. But throughout the debacle Krakauer suggests that he was unable to do anything to help the others, not just because of his physical exhaustion but because he had been "indoctrinated" to follow his guides and not act heroically to save others.

Thus as Krakauer recalls event after event of his summit day and the following days on the mountain, he is reminded constantly of his inability to act, again implicitly as a masculine mountaineer should act. This is not to say that Krakauer overtly ties his impotence to masculinity, but that tie is implicit in the text given the parameters Krakauer has set at the beginning of the narrative. Thus when he encounters a guide, Andy Harris, cognitively debilitated by the altitude and struggling near the summit of Everest, Krakauer does not register that Andy is in trouble; and after a brief conversation with Harris, he descends the mountain. Living with the guilt of not helping Harris, Krakauer writes, "My actions—or failure to act—played a direct role in the death of Andy Harris" (352). Krakauer clearly is not a hero in the masculine adventure tradition, something of which he is keenly aware.

Yet although Krakauer does not act—not only in this instance but even after he reaches the safety of the South Col—others do act, serving to amplify Krakauer's guilty feelings of unworthiness and impotence. While he lies in his tent, Boukreev goes out in the storm and finds clients and others, bringing them back to the safety of the tent. Moreover, Beck Weathers, who had been left for dead, miraculously revives himself and finds his way to the tents on the South Col. Weathers is terribly frostbitten (and left with permanently mangled hands, feet, and face). Weathers—much like Boukreev—acts as a foil for Krakauer, amplifying his inability to act heroically, even though he is in much better shape than Weathers. Implicitly, if Weathers can rise from the dead, the least Krakauer could have done was to leave his tent and look for others. Sherpas also act, risking their lives to try to save non-Sherpas from death.

To compound matters, Krakauer and the other men share the mountain with women, further reinforcing his guilt that he does not measure up to "proper" masculine heroism. Krakauer explains that the socialite Sandy Hill Pittman had Lopsang Jangbu unnecessarily carry an 80-pound satellite phone from Camp III to Camp IV, a waste of energy that could potentially have added to the debilitating affects of altitude as the climb progressed. Although he refrains from directly judging Pittman, Krakauer explains that to many observers, Pittman—whose every need was catered to by paid servants—represented everything that was wrong with guided expeditions (156). During the push to the summit, Pittman was "short-roped" by the Sherpa Lopsang Jangbu, and thus she was literally dragged much of the way to the summit. Although this did not happen to Krakauer, Pittman figuratively represents an extreme example of what in many respects *has* happened to Krakauer, which is that he has been "feminized" by the paternal relationship between guide and client. Although not literally tethered to guides, he is emotionally tethered to them. In other words, Krakauer seems to recognize that he is not all that different from a self-absorbed socialite because he is a commodity, working for *Outside Magazine,* which pays for him to "be" an Everest mountaineer. But not only Krakauer is a commodity, for the Sherpas are as well, and this reality is another source of Krakauer's guilt.

Thematically, what emerges frequently in Krakauer's narrative is the relationship between the history of Himalayan mountaineering and the Sherpa people. For as Krakauer guiltily suggests, his postmodern masculine self-definition—and by extension the definition of Himalayan mountaineering in history and the present—has generally been sustained by its relationship to Sherpas, a relationship that has altered Sherpa life forever. Krakauer explains that although originally farmers, over the course of decades Sherpas have been recruited to aid expeditions. Whereas as many as thirty-four Sherpas, not to mention a mass of porters, might have been engaged to transport expedition hardware in the past, twelve to eighteen Sherpas are generally recruited to serve contemporary expeditions; and climbing Sherpas are paid "$1,400 to $2,500 for two months of hazardous work—attractive pay in a nation mired in grinding poverty and with an annual per capita income of around $160" (57). Unquestionably, the Sherpa people have benefited economically from mountaineering and the increasingly popular trekking industry, both of which hire guides and porters and increase the need for lodging, but the cultural influence of tourists radically changed Sherpa culture. Krakauer explains that many tourists regret that tourism has caused these changes in Sherpa culture. Rather than wearing traditional garb, Sherpas are likely to be

wearing T-shirts and jeans and "Families are apt to spend their evenings huddled around video players viewing the latest Schwarzenegger opus" (57). But as Krakauer explains, although this might be disturbing to westerners, he "didn't hear many Sherpas bemoaning the changes" (58). Monies from trekking and climbing, as well as international grants, "have funded schools and medical clinics, reduced infant mortality, built footbridges, and brought hydroelectric power to Namche and other villages" (58). Although some westerners might long for a romanticized past rather than a people influenced by "the untidy flow of human progress," Krakauer writes that "the last thing Sherpas want is to be preserved as specimens in an anthropological museum" (58).

Krakauer rightly recognizes that cultures are not static, nor has there ever been an "authentic" Sherpa people. And Krakauer illustrates that in an age of globalization, power relations between the "West" and the "East" do not flow in one direction. The Sherpa people actively engage global capitalism rather than being simply victimized by it. As Bill Ashcroft has written, "Global analysis confirms something that has become increasingly clear in our present examination of post-colonial discourse: that the dominant and the subaltern do not exist in a simple and incontrovertibly oppositional mode. Neither is their interpenetration a one-way process of 'contamination' from an imperial discourse to a colonized subject" (*Post-Colonial Transformation* 215). Or, in fashionable terms, the relationship between Sherpas and the "West" is "rhizomic." As Ashcroft explains, "Rhizome explains the very complex system of opposition and complicity which characterizes the relationship between post-colonial subjects and imperial discourse" (53). Of course, Krakauer's use of the term *progress* suggests that history is linear and that the Sherpas are now a part of its "untidy flow," which hints that the Sherpas exist more at the hands of history and less as *agents* of their own histories. Krakauer's observation that the Sherpas are happy in their Westernization helps to deflect any guilt he may have that an unequal power relationship exists between the "West" and the "East." The Sherpas, in the tradition of imperial ideology, seemingly beseech the West and its culture—no matter the human cost to them. But Krakauer, in the end, cannot avoid the dark undercurrent of how Sherpas access globalization.

Although I do not think history is inherently linear, I do believe that directly and indirectly Krakauer's text shows how theories of globalism are delusional if they make too much of "postcolonial" agency, at least in the case of the Sherpas.[6] Yes, Krakauer shows that the Sherpas are very happy to be a part of the "modern" world, but the residues of imperial and colonial

discourses permeate Western postmodern consciousness, working to circumscribe Sherpa agency. This suggests that the "authentic" heroic masculinity of the past, as well as the "inauthentic" postmodern masculinity of the present, is built largely on a binary opposition of West over East. Krakauer even notes the colonial legacy of early expeditions and their reliance on Sherpas who "had developed a reputation among the resident colonialists for being hardworking, affable, and intelligent" (56). Obviously, this colonial perception is patronizing in that it stereotypes Sherpas. And as I have shown in previous chapters, this ideology was used to help define imperial masculinity.

Krakauer's book shows that these colonial discourses and their material consequences are very much alive in the formation of postmodern masculinity, for Sherpas are still, if less readily and overtly, stereotyped by westerners—in great part victimized by imperial and colonial discourses and ultimately the economics of imperialism. I would argue that the subtle discourses of imperialism and colonialism allow for Western mountaineers to unproblematically accept employing Sherpas for expeditions. Economic relationships are sustainable because the West, or more properly the West's postmodern fantasies of the East, allow for the exploitation of Sherpas. In this sense, "Post-modernism . . . operates as a Euro-American western hegemony, whose global appropriation of time-and-place inevitably proscribes certain cultures as 'backward' and marginal while coopting to itself certain of their cultural 'raw' materials. Postmodernism is then projected onto these margins as normative, as a neo-universalism" (Adam and Tiffin, quoted in Williams and Chrisman 13).[7]

Imperial discourses can continue to operate, as Krakauer's book suggests, if a westerner at the least feels guilty about his or her complicity with these ideologies. Krakauer, for instance, illustrates his guilt when he points to the pervasiveness of colonialist ideologies in contemporary Nepal. Recounting a conversation he overheard between an American trekker and a Sherpani at a lodge in Namche Bazaar, Krakauer explains that the Western trekker spoke to the Sherpani in pidgin English. Even after she answered him in fluent English, he responded patronizingly, "Men-u. Good, good. Yes, yes, we like see men-u" (54–55). This episode seems mind-boggling, and it illustrates the cultural gap among the postmodern American traveler, his colonialist impulse to experience the "authentic" colonial encounter with the backward "Other," and the Sherpas themselves. Although this episode is not about mountaineering and Krakauer does not recount an event such as this on Everest, I would argue that this patronizing attitude is inherent in mountaineering activity, for it allows Western climbers to unquestioningly employ

Sherpas for expeditions regardless of the human cost. Mountaineers can buy the cultural "raw materials" of the colonialist/imperialist Everest experience, complete with "authentic" Sherpas. Just as Krakauer links his masculinity to the history of Everest and its romantic imperialist past, so too can any postmodern male climber attach himself to this history as a means to vicariously relive the historical ambience of the 1920s expeditions and Hillary and Tenzing's triumph in 1953. I would argue that Krakauer's mockery of the trekker, however well deserved, is also a reflection of his own sense of guilt over the fact that in some ways he might not be all that different from the trekker. Krakauer's portrayal of the trekker is a way of trying to distance himself from the neocolonialist fantasies of the American trekker, but this does not change the fact that Krakauer himself replicates a neocolonialist relationship on Everest.

In fact, Krakauer's critique of the trekker only takes him so far, for although he critiques imperial ideologies, Krakauer still replicates these ideologies in regard to Sherpas and their Buddhist practices. When a Sherpa who later died on the expedition, Ngawang Topche, became sick at Camp II, the Sherpas claimed his illness occurred because "Sagarmatha" was taking revenge on Ngawang because "one of the climbers on Fischer's team had angered" Sagarmatha by having sex at base camp with a member of another expedition (165). Krakauer refers to this as "superstition" (165), a typical colonialist interpretation of this belief. Yet Sherry Ortner has shown that Sherpa religious practices are crucial to the construction of their agency against the gods, even shaping the practices of Himalayan expeditions. She writes, "The issue for the Sherpas then is not simply enacting correct and effective religious behavior to get some measure of protection against the risks; it is a matter of drawing the sahibs as much as possible into the Sherpas' specific concerns" (150). But she continues, "The problem with enacting the relevant religious practices on Himalayan climbing expeditions has always been that the Sherpas are not free agents" because they are often asked to offend the gods at the request of "sahibs" (150).

Krakauer also points out that the Sherpas are nondogmatic in their beliefs, for when a lama could not come to perform the puja—a preclimb ceremony at base camp designed to help the Sherpas stay in Sagarmatha's "good graces"—"Ang Tshering declared that it would be O.K. for us to climb through the Icefall after all, because Sagarmatha understood that we intended to perform the puja very soon thereafter" (167). Rather than see this as a moment to question Western pressures to forge ahead up the mountain—after all, Ang Tshering knows very well that his livelihood depends on doing so—

Krakauer indirectly suggests that it is perfectly acceptable for westerners to challenge any of the Sherpas' religious beliefs. In Krakauer's view, it seems, Sherpas seem more than willing to modify their superstitious beliefs to suit the needs of postmodern Western masculinity because they are passive and malleable "Orientals" and irrational in their inconsistent beliefs. By suggesting that Ang Tshering "declared that it would be O.K. for us to climb through the Icefall," Krakauer relieves himself of the psychological burden of what might happen to the Sherpas—shifting responsibility for any mishap from himself and onto Ang Tshering.

Sherpas in the postmodern global age are left with little choice but to become climbers if they want to improve both their family's and community's living conditions, and they even compete with one another for status as climbing Sherpas to increase their capital. Considering that a Sherpa mountain guide can make in a day fifteen times what other Sherpas make in a year, the Sherpas help to illustrate how "despite the broad patterns of geopolitical hegemony [of transnational capitalism], power relations in the Third World are also dispersed and contradictory" (Shohat 128). In other words, just as First World/Third World relations exist within populations in the Third World and between countries in the Third World, Sherpa climbers become radically elevated economically from their fellow Sherpas. But this push to compete with one another comes at an enormous cost. When Ngawang died in 1996 of pulmonary edema by pushing himself too hard on the mountain, it was likely as a result of his desire to constantly prove himself and thus increase his marketability and pay. Or observe Lopsang Sherpa's sentiments in regard to his strategy for future employment. As Lopsang said to Krakauer in regard to his position with Scott Fischer, the leader and head guide of the Mountain Madness guide service: "Scott does not pay me as well as Rob or [the] Japanese, but I no need money; I am looking to future, and Scott is my future"—a future he hoped he would be able to cash in once he became a famous Sherpa (170). Lopsang's plan to improve his financial status did not work out, for Fischer died on Everest during the expedition. And Lopsang was later guiding a Japanese client up Everest, and he died in an avalanche, leaving "behind a young wife and a two-month-old baby in Kathmandu" (371). During the expedition Krakauer notes part of a body of a Sherpa on Everest. All told, a third of all climbers who have died on Everest were Sherpas.

Sherpas, then, are useful to Western masculine identity not only for their cultural "raw materials" but also for their bodies; in the process of constructing their masculinity, climbers lay waste to families and friends as little more than discarded commodities. Ortner has written that

> of the more than thirty climbing Sherpas I interviewed about their expedition experiences, there was not a single one who had not lost at least one (and usually more) close friend, covillager, or—unlike most sahibs—kinsman in a mountaineering accident, and not a single one who had never been on an expedition with a fatal accident. Indeed, for some climbing Sherpas, nearly every expedition they had worked for had had a fatal accident. And it is probably fair to say that there is no Sherpa at all—man, woman, or child, climber or nonclimber—who does not personally know a fellow Sherpa who was killed in mountaineering. (141)

A stereotype of Sherpas is that they do not react emotively to death but are philosophical about its reality because of their Buddhist belief in reincarnation, making their humanity "invisible" to Western male "heroes" and thus making it easier for the latter to employ Sherpas on expeditions. But their continuous relationship to death is a staggering truth, and the emotional scars of this reality are very much a part of Sherpa culture, even leading to suicide among bereaved wives (Ortner 157).

But the most powerful critique of the exploitation of Sherpas, and perhaps the most telling example of Krakauer's guilty sense of his complicity in their plight, come from a Sherpa orphan, whose sentiments Krakauer quotes at length. The Sherpa explains that he lost his father and mother in expeditions; and he and those of his siblings who did not die from natural causes became orphans. He explains that "I never have gone back to my homeland because I feel it is cursed" and degraded by the influence of Western culture (371). Vowing never to return to Nepal, he writes, "I have no regrets of not going back, for I know the people of the area are doomed, and so are those rich, arrogant outsiders who feel they can conquer the world" (371–372). This Sherpa obviously has little use for modernity and postmodernity and their imperialist universalizing discourses and material consequences, which in this case arguably have worked and are working to destroy a culture. By including this quotation a mere few pages from the end of the narrative, Krakauer foregrounds his guilt about the production of imperial masculinity—in both the past and the present—and its consequences. Importantly, this Sherpa argues that Sherpas have participated in their own destruction, and although pessimistic about the future, he suggests that the capacity for agency did and does exist, a point reiterated by Tashi Tenzing.

Tashi Tenzing, the grandson of Tenzing Norgay, is less pessimistic about the future of the Sherpas. In his book, *Tenzing Norgay and the Sherpas of Everest,* Tashi, too, recounts in detail the radical changes Western influence has brought to Sherpa culture, noting both its positive and negative effects. Like Krakauer, he describes the raised standard of living the legacy of Everest

expeditions has brought for the Sherpa people as a whole, pointing out that "no other region in the Himalaya can boast the same number of schools, hospitals, and health posts" (262). And personal opportunities previously unknown now exist as a result of the legacy of mountaineering; Sherpas formerly resigned to a difficult existence farming and trading now have more career choices, however limited. But Tashi does not romanticize this fact. He also points out that with

> ever-increasing numbers of mountaineers and would-be summiters clamoring for permits, it is unlikely the Nepalese government will reduce its own income by reducing the number of climbers permitted on the mountain each season. That constant number means that Sherpas with the courage—or more accurately, the lack of alternative career options—can expect to be hired by expeditions for the foreseeable future. (265)

There is no question that some Sherpas climb for reasons other than money, but this is rare; the primary motivation is nearly always money (263). Whereas foreign climbers can easily *choose* a career as guides or easily *choose* to climb the mountain, for Sherpas climbing has become a necessary vocation.

Krakauer's guilt about his masculine identity is in the end tied to its dark imperial underside, a reality his guilt does not quite absolve. Rather, his guilt helps to justify his participation in the expedition. The pervasiveness of colonial ideologies in Nepal suggests that the Sherpas will continue to be exploited by westerners. But perhaps there is hope for the Sherpa people, that they will be able to shape themselves in and against postmodernity and globalization. According to Tashi Tenzing,

> Sherpas today possess more power than any generation before them to preserve and protect their homeland, with its unique culture and society. They have also inherited an extraordinary strength, determination, and love for the mountains. If they are able to remain grounded in this great legacy and augment it with education and wisdom in this new millennium, then the safe and prosperous future of the Sherpa people and their beloved Himalaya is assured. (270)

Talking of his grandfather, Tenzing Norgay, he continues, "He remains the symbol of all that Sherpas are and will continue to be: adaptable, strong, and deeply committed to all that their Himalayan Buddhist traditions instill in them" (270).

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. See Chapter 7 on Krakauer's *Into Thin Air.*

2. I never assume that what constitutes masculinity in these narratives is inherently "natural" but that it is instead a historically situated construct. On masculinity as a construction or "performance," see David Buchbinder, *Performance Anxieties.* Following the work of Michel Foucault, Buchbinder argues that masculinity is produced as a cultural phenomenon. On masculinity as a social construction, see also Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization* 5–8 and the introduction to Peter Murphy, *Fictions of Masculinity.* Murphy writes, "Masculinity in general and male sexuality in particular cannot be understood as static, ahistorical, or essential" (5–6). See also Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland, *Out of Bounds.* See Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities* 13–20 for a critique of social constructionists and cultural performance. Knights believes social constructionists fetishize discourse, thus ignoring the "obviously material aspects of life" (15).

3. For my purposes, "At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 7). Following Said, too, " 'Imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory" (9). Imperialism can be manifested in multiple, overlapping contexts, such as economic, political, social, or cultural contexts. For instance, Alison Hickey points out that "to contend that there is a definitive border separating, for

example, a political or economic sense of 'imperialism' from a linguistic [discursive] one would be false. It is not that political or economic imperialism is 'literal,' while linguistic imperialism is 'figurative'; rather, the categories overlap, and each can operate as a figure for the other" (284). Robert Young explains that although historical materialist critique is necessary to the analysis of colonialism, "it could be also argued that [these critiques] also involve a form of category mistake: the investigation of the discursive construction of colonialism does not seek to replace or exclude other forms of analysis, whether they be historical, geographical, economic, military or political" (*Colonial Desire* 163). The same can be said not only for colonialism itself but for imperialism as a whole. In this study I show how these narratives reflect and shape imperial ideologies within specific historical contexts.

4. In the main, England and the European powers have been considered to have a long history of imperial expansion, whereas the United States was a latecomer as an imperial power. But just as England and other European nations built empires, so did the United States build an empire from the early national period onward. It would be an understatement to say that in its expansion westward the United States was acting as an imperial power in its dispossession and colonization of indigenous lands, as well as in its formal and informal legacy of attempting to physically and culturally annihilate indigenous peoples. Edward Said writes (acknowledging the recent scholarship of Richard Slotkin, Patricia Nelson Limerick, and Michael Paul Rogin) that with the "United States expansion westward, along with the wholesale colonization and destruction of native American life . . . an imperial motif emerges to rival the European one" (*Culture and Imperialism* 63). Ward Churchill emphasizes "that the very core of the U.S. imperial structure lies not abroad in the third world, but right here 'at home'" (5). See also Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism.* John Carlos Rowe, Richard Van Alstyne, Hans Koning, and Eric Cheyfitz also argue that the U.S. westward movement must be understood as an imperial enterprise.

5. British imperialism is closely linked to nationalism, for as Richard Holt argues, "it was through the channel of imperial ideology that 'British nationalism'—or more accurately the attachment to a certain idea of Englishness—was most fervently expressed" (203). The same can be said for the United States and its imperial project. A number of scholars point to the role of imperial adventure narratives in the production of national identity, Martin Green being perhaps the best-known critic on the genre. Green writes, "The great adventure tales *are* those acts of imagination and narration that constitute the imagined communities called nations" (*Seven Types* 7). See also Green's classic *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire,* in which Green writes "that the adventure tales that formed the light reading of Englishmen for two hundred years and more after *Robinson Crusoe* were, in fact, the energizing myth of English imperialism. They were, collectively, the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night; and, in the form of its dreams, they charged England's will with the energy to go out into the world and explore, conquer, and rule" (3). As I will argue, adventure tales charged the English imagination well into the twentieth century. Following Timothy Brennan and his analysis of the importance of the novel in the construction of national identity, adventure narratives helped to codify "the national longing for form."

6. See Filson, *Life and Adventures of Daniel Boone*; Lewis and Clark, *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*; Cooper, *The Prairie, The Last of the Mohicans, The Deerslayer, The Pathfinder,* and *The Pioneers*; and Fremont, *Narratives of Exploration and Adventure.*

7. As Edward Said explains, imperial ideology provided a framework to support the belief that "the more one is able to leave one's cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment *and* generosity necessary for true vision" (*Orientalism* 259).

8. See Reuben Ellis's chapter 3, 95–134, on the mountaineer Annie Smith Peck and her relationship to U.S. imperialism.

9. See, for instance, Ellis's critique of Halford Mackinder's *The First Ascent of Mount Kenya* and Annie Smith Peck's *A Search for the Apex of America* 52–134.

10. Illustrating the relationship between topography and human culture, Jean Arnold argues in "Mapping Island Mindscapes" "that mapping island mindscapes . . . verifies the vital role the shape of the land plays in structuring ideas, beliefs, and cultures" (24). Arnold explains that "human interaction with natural surroundings, spaces, and places consistently produces meaning. Following this logic, it is no surprise to find that, when writers include the 'temporal shapes' of nature in their works, these architectonic geographical formations are able to lend their forms to the structure of ideas or meanings that unfold in literature" (26). Arnold's essay, as her title indicates, critiques how the geographic formation of islands helps shape certain cultural meanings. Considering Arnold's assumptions about topography, it follows that mountains lend themselves to particular meanings that "unfold in literature" as well.

11. See Green, *The Adventurous Male* 61.

12. In regard to the symbolic import of the male body, R. W. Connell writes, "True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies—to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body. Either the body drives and directs action . . . or the body sets limits to action" (45). Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin explains, "Patriarchal ideology takes the male body, or rather a fantasied version of the male body, as its metaphoric basis, as the metaphor for its generating and structuring principle. In other words, patriarchy homologizes human existence with man's corporeality and man's experience of his bodily nature as male" (240); and Martin Green has pointed out that adventure narratives are predicated greatly on the "potency" of the male body (*Seven Types* 19–20).

13. See the introduction to J. Hillis Miller's *Topographies* 1–8. Miller argues that to assign a name to a piece of geography is an act of ideological possession.

14. See Christine Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," for a historical overview of the construction of the sublime in nature.

15. According to Seamus Deane, "All nationalisms have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realize their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form. The form may be a political structure or a literary tradition" (8).

16. See Rob Wilson, *American Sublime,* on U.S. imperialism and the sublime. Wilson writes, "Arguably, after Emerson, any abyss does not so much threaten as exalt the American will to power, which is to say, the American will to accrue fresh

sublimity" to expand the self and national identity (11–12). In his "Sublime Politics," Donald Pease also points to the role of the sublime in American Western expansionism: "The sublime enabled the nineteenth-century American to create a second scene, a veritable world elsewhere where he could rewrite and reread national policies of commercialism and expansionism in quite ideal terms" (46). For a critique of British Romanticism and sublime masculinity, see Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity.* As Fulford says of Burke, "He attempted to be sublime in order to subdue and terrify those whose actions had shown them to be rejecting the roles prescribed for them in his analysis of the proper distribution of power necessary for a healthy body politic" (32). For the sublime's specific relationship to British imperial masculinity, see Doyle, particularly 26–36.

17. See, for instance, the introduction to Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* particularly 10–16, in regard to this dynamic in American imperial discourse. Martin Green writes that in the frontier adventure tale, "The crucial human relationship is between the white frontiersman and his friend of another race" (*Seven Types* 119). In respect to the British tradition, Edward Said writes, "Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (*Orientalism* 7).

18. See in particular Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture,* particularly 85–92. Following Bhabha, my point is that these authors both consciously and unconsciously wrestle with their identities, having to shore them up by repeating the same old stereotypes of the "savage" to recodify their identities. In that they are forced to constantly confront the possibility that their identities are in fact socially produced, their discourse betrays an ideological ambivalence that undermines its legitimacy as a fixed and unalterable truth. See also Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters,* on what he calls "textual upheavals" in his analysis of Columbus's *Journals,* which betray the supposed truths those journals represent (33).

19. Pratt writes that these "contact zones" are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). Similarly, Joshua David Bellin writes, "Texts [are] formed by, forming, and a form of encounter: fertile, contested, and multiply determined, they exist on the shifting borders, or in the indefinite field, between peoples in contact" (6).

20. See, for instance, Moore-Gilbert 130–138. Critics of Bhabha have pointed to how his colonial discourse theory does not adequately account for agency on the part of indigenous peoples. Moreover, they point out that his analysis is ahistorical and that it fails to account for widely disparate colonial contexts. For a summary and critique of Bhabha and his colonial discourse theory, see Moore-Gilbert 114–151 and Young, *White Mythologies* 141–156.

21. As Noreen Groover Lape points out, Frederick Jackson Turner's essay and its assumptions have been highly influential in regard to literary scholarship on the frontier. Largely in reaction to the influence of Turner's thesis, the term has been redefined

in recent years. For instance, following the scholarship of ethnohistorians, Lape explains that her book, *West of the Border,* "draws on [the] view of frontiers as places where cultures make contact rather than on the Turnerian notion of the frontier as an 'area of free land' traversed by westering pioneers" (5). In his *Ten Most Wanted,* Blake Allmendinger challenges what he sees as the conservative approach to studies of the frontier in American literature, particularly as it applies to the American West. He writes that "although I search for the frontier in places as far-flung as China, I'm also content to stay home, looking for new frontiers within the West where I was born and raised and now work. My 'new' western literature moves across geographical borders and spans several centuries" (12). In regard to "wilderness" and "nature," William Cronon points out that ecocritical scholarship "has yielded abundant evidence that 'nature' is not nearly so natural as it seems. Instead, it is a profoundly human construction" (Introduction 25). David Mazel argues, too, that although the environment is a tangible entity that is in great part physically shaped by humans, our ideas about the environment are a "discursive construction" (xii). Similarly, Susan Kollin writes, "Nature is perhaps culture's best invention" (21).

22. In her recent book on the construction of Alaska as the last frontier, *Nature's State,* Kollin extends the analysis of Progressive-Era masculinity to Rex Beach. My aim is not to fault Kollin for the limits of her study but simply to expand the field of inquiry.

23. For instance, in his *Male Call,* Jonathan Auerbach has shown that in Jack London's Northland tales his fictive Yukon Natives are crucial to his construction of white masculinity and are ultimately used to bolster white male racial superiority, but Auerbach's analysis centers on how London's writing relates to the production of his literary persona and is not concerned with larger questions of national identity. See Auerbach 47–83. In Kollin's analysis of Progressive-Era masculinity in *Nature's State,* she points out how in popular accounts of the gold rush in the Klondike, First Nations are marginalized and thus play a minor role in the production of national identity (81). These mountaineering narratives help to show how Alaska Natives, although marginalized in terms of their rights to their land, play a central role in the production of masculinity and national identity as realized in Alaska during the Progressive Era. Scholarship has long pointed to the role of Native Americans in the American cultural and literary imagination. See, for instance, Roy Harvey Pearce's classic *Savagism and Civilization* and Richard Slotkin's trilogy, *Regeneration Through Violence, The Fatal Environment,* and *Gunfighter Nation.* For Pearce, the Indian is a site of white guilt, and for Slotkin, the Indian functions as an imaginative Other against which to enact violence in the name of national identity. Recent scholarship has begun to foreground the specific, although ambivalent, historical role of Native Americans in the dominant culture's construction of whiteness and national identity in American literature and culture. See, for instance, Deloria, *Playing Indian,* and Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian.*

24. In regard to Conrad, Andrea White writes, "Conrad's works, then, were initially read within or against that [imperial adventure] tradition also, but they challenged to greater or lesser extents the ways in which that form had constituted the imperial subject. In his fiction, the nature of the telling itself made the tale suspect; it

lent instability rather than authority" (7). Said argues that "Conrad, Forster . . . T. E. Lawrence take narrative from the triumphalist experience of imperialism into the extremes of self-consciousness, discontinuity, self-referentiality, and corrosive irony" (*Culture and Imperialism* 188). Writing on Graham Greene's *Burmese Days,* Elleke Boehmer states, "*Burmese Days* is distinguished from earlier colonial writings by its knowingness—its anti-adventure cynicism, its penetrating insights into the less than honourable mechanisms of empire. Flory the anti-hero, the little man of modernism transplanted to the colonial town, bears the painful self-consciousness of one aware of imperial wrongdoing yet impotent against it" (163). In regard to the writings of Evelyn Waugh, Boehmer writes that they "transform the conventional motifs of empire into the stuff of mock-exotic and pseudo-epic. . . . The grand themes of the civilizing mission, or of the white man's self-discovery, are converted into jokes" (165). An exception to these readings is John McClure. In *Late Imperial Romance,* McClure argues that modern British adventure texts "reestablish the conditions of an earlier moment in imperial history, a moment when the aristomilitary and aristospiritual values central to the party of romance prevailed" (5). For McClure, this reestablishment shifts adventure texts from "heroic *political* romances of imperialism, which are discredited, to heroic *spiritual* romances which enact the rediscovery of mystery and depict the disillusioned individual's strong resignation from the world of political engagement" (12). In the end, "These texts are anti-imperial . . . in their repudiation of the West's self-image as a heroic agent of global civilization" (12). Younghusband's and Hunt's texts do celebrate aristomilitary and aristospiritual values, but they do so in a way that codifies the *validity* of the political project of imperialism.

25. As I point out in Chapter 4, Graham Dawson has argued that although scholarship generally maintains that war adventure narratives were no longer sustainable in the British imagination following the Great War, this is in fact not the case. Dawson makes the case that scholarly critiques of war adventure tend to neglect popular forms of military adventure. Dawson critiques the American journalist Lowell Thomas and his role in constituting T. E. Lawrence as an adventure hero. Thomas introduced Lawrence to the British public via a "multi-media show [that] used film and slide material accompanied by a narrative commentary" ("Blond Bedouin" 114). Dawson argues that Thomas's portrayal of Lawrence and the popularity of that portrayal illustrate the importance of masculine military adventure—in this case in an imperial context—to the British psyche. See "Blond Bedouin." Also, in his *The Literature of War,* Andrew Rutherford points to the persistence of the heroic tradition in literature. Younghusband's text also helps to corroborate the attractiveness of masculine military adventure to the British imagination, and in particular it illustrates how important the portrayal of English-British masculinity within the tradition of *imperial* adventure was to the British public following the Great War.

26. See *Denali: Deception, Defeat, and Triumph.*

CHAPTER 1

1. Although there is no definitive truth regarding Cook's success, it is generally accepted in mountaineering circles that Cook fabricated his account. See, for in-

stance, Walt Unsworth, *Hold the Heights* 221–228. The Frederick Cook Society, however, has built a case that Cook did in fact reach the summit of McKinley. See, for instance, the society's 1996 republication of Cook's *To the Top of the Continent,* which has an afterword and an appendix to support Cook's case. I develop the importance of the controversy regarding Cook's claim in Chapter 2.

2. See Nash, *Call of the Wild* and *Wilderness and the American Mind,* particularly chapter 9, "The Wilderness Cult," 141–160. See Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism,* particularly chapter 3, "Crisis in the Nineties," 29–41, and chapter 7, "Back to Untamed Nature," 86–97. On Teddy Roosevelt, see in particular Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization,* chapter 5, "Theodore Roosevelt: Manhood, Nation, and 'Civilization,' " 170–215. On Roosevelt, see also Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* particularly 29–62. On Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" shows, see in particular Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 63–87.

3. In regard to the importance of the Western frontier in the white middle-class male mind, Susan Lee Johnson writes, "The construction of a masculine West was part of a larger late-nineteenth-century 'crisis of manliness' in the United States—a crisis in which older definitions of white, middle-class manhood that emphasized restraint and respectability (manly men) gave way to newer meanings that focused on vigor and raw virility (masculine men)" (257). Although many white males were unquestionably obsessed with proving their manhood, critics debate just how much this obsession represented a "crisis." As Gail Bederman writes, "There is no evidence that most turn-of-the-century men ever lost confidence in the belief that people with male bodies naturally possessed both a man's identity and a man's right to wield power" (11). On the merits, or lack thereof, of the "crisis" interpretation, see also Clyde Griffen.

4. For reactions to the annexation movement in British Columbia, see Richard E. Neunherz's "Hemmed In" in Haycox and Mangusso, *An Alaska Anthology* 118–133.

5. Welch writes, "It is possibly congenial to our current self-esteem to believe that only in our generation have Americans appreciated the value of American ownership of Alaska. Such a view, if gratifying, is incorrect. Contemporary public opinion—as reflected in the newspapers of the day—was far from universally opposed to our purchase of Alaska" (103).

6. See Kollin 7. In chapter 2 of *Nature's State* she examines how early-twentieth-century U.S. writers effectively annexed Canada by aesthetically blurring the geographical distinction between Canada and the United States, particularly in writings about the Yukon. Their aesthetic concerns reflected a wider discourse in the United States and Canada about the eventual possible institutional annexation of the latter by the former. On the call to annex Canada, see also Wrobel 21–22.

7. On Muir and Young's role in configuring Alaska as the "last frontier," see Kollin 28–39. See also Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* 279–286, on Muir's importance in transforming the image of Alaska from a barren wasteland to an important landscape of aesthetic value as pristine "wilderness." Nash also briefly points to the importance of Alaska as the "last frontier."

8. The impetus to send Cook to check on Peary stemmed from the fact that the Peary Arctic Club, organized to raise money for Peary's expeditions, had not heard from Peary since 1899. See Abramson 47.

9. Cook also led a commercial tourist "expedition" to the arctic to raise money to fund his own South Pole expedition. The expedition was a disaster from the start. The boat chartered for the expedition, the *Miranda,* struck an iceberg off Newfoundland and later hit a rock when it left a port in Greenland. Cook had to paddle 100 miles with local Native people to get help. The passengers were eventually moved to a new vessel, and the *Miranda* was left to sink. Unbelievably, while the *Miranda*'s passengers were heading back to New York aboard the *Portia,* the *Portia* struck another vessel, killing four crewmen. Despite the disastrous expedition, the passengers felt Cook performed admirably. See Abramson 20–22.

10. See ibid. 28–42.

11. See Bloom, *Gender on Ice,* particularly 1–56. See Wrobel, *The End of American Exceptionalism,* chapter 5, "External Solutions," 53–68, for a discussion of how U.S. expansionist ambitions related to "frontier anxiety" in America as the United States sought to participate in the "New Imperialism," which refers to the way European powers scrambled to divide the colonial world among themselves in the late nineteenth century. Wrobel writes, "As the major European powers scrambled for overseas colonies in the late nineteenth century, some Americans naturally felt their country should be sharing in the bounties of the 'New Imperialism'" (53).

12. See again Wrobel, chapter 5, "External Solutions," for an overview of Progressive-Era beliefs about the need for imperial expansion.

13. See Smith's classic *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth.*

14. See Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness* 88; Haycox, *Alaska: An American Colony* 29.

15. Haycox writes, "The Pacific canned salmon industry became the great symbol of exploitation of natural resources in Alaska. Despite the congressional law protecting stream mouths above tidewater, passed . . . in 1896, despoliation of the fishery continued, due to inadequate enforcement of the law and the willingness of operators to violate it. Indeed, violation of fishery regulations was endemic and recognized as such by federal enforcement officials" (*Frigid Embrace* 47).

16. Cook's concerns are linked to the wider conservationist movement of the Progressive Era. On conservationism and the Progressive Era, see in particular Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* 122–181.

17. See Kollin, in particular 81.

18. This idea is the underlying theme of Richard Slotkin's trilogy, *Regeneration Through Violence, The Fatal Environment,* and *Gunfighter Nation.* See especially *Gunfighter Nation* 14.

19. On Indian stereotypes, see Berkhofer, in particular 25–31. See also Barnett, *The Ignoble Savage.*

20. As Slotkin writes, "As the 'man who knows Indians,' the frontier hero stands between the opposed worlds of savagery and civilization, acting sometimes as mediator or interpreter between races and cultures" (*Gunfighter Nation* 16).

21. See in particular Kristen L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood.*

22. Again, see Slotkin's trilogy.

23. Rob Wilson writes that "arguably, after Emerson, any abyss does not so much threaten as exalt the American will to power, which is to say, the American will to accrue fresh sublimity" (11).

CHAPTER 2

1. See Browne, *Conquest* 70–73.

2. See Bryce, *Cook and Peary* 425–434 in particular.

3. For a detailed account of McKinley's role in "resolving" the polar controversy, see in particular ibid. 415–496.

4. See Bloom, *Gender on Ice,* chapter 1, for a critique of the polar controversy and its relationship to masculinity and nationalism.

5. On Browne's role in the creation of the park, see Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness* 103–106; Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* 285–286. See also Bates, *Mountain Man.*

6. For the history of the park's creation, see Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness,* chapter 4.

7. On national park formation and the dispossession of Native American lands, see, for instance, Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness,* and Keller and Turek, *American Indians and National Parks.*

8. Following Joshua Bellin, I do not presume to think there is an "authentic" Indian "outside of the conditions of contact within which textualization operates" (8–9). In other words, as much as Browne configures Indians with stereotypes, this does not mean some Indian "essence" exists outside of his perceptions of them.

9. For a history of the U.S. military's relationship and conflicts with Alaska Natives, see Mitchell, *Sold American* 22–57.

10. Richard White explains, "The show and lived historical reality constantly imitated each other. Sitting Bull, whom Americans credited with being the architect of Custer's defeat, toured afterward with the Wild West. And a famous picture . . . shows him, in a long eagle-feather headdress, posing with Buffalo Bill before a studio backdrop" (29–32). And Sitting Bull was not the only "authentic" Indian in Buffalo Bill's "Wild West." Buffalo Bill also included in his show Geronimo and other Native Americans who had battled the U.S. Cavalry (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 68).

11. I do not mean to oversimplify Native cultures of the American West in the nineteenth century by suggesting they had not already transformed themselves culturally through contact with whites before the "Indian wars."

12. As Simon Ryan points out, "Although maps offer themselves as primarily mimetic, functional tools, the inevitable selectivity of what they record and their normal reference to that most vital of individual and national empowerments, land, make them a crucial and fascinating element in the project of Empire" (115).

13. See in particular Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian,* "European Primitivism, the Noble Savage, and the American Indian," 72–80.

14. See Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep,* 303–308 in particular, for a critique of how the Allotment Act of 1887—otherwise known as the Dawe's Act—was a disaster in part because it did not address Indian cultural realities. The goal of the Allotment Act

of 1906 was essentially the same as that of the 1887 Allotment Act—the government hoped to assimilate Native individuals to white culture through a series of progressive steps until they were ready to fend for themselves as "civilized" Americans. For a history of U.S. Indian policy, see Dippie, *The Vanishing American.*

15. Or following Bhabha, "This site is . . . under threat from diachronic forms of history and narrative" (71).

16. Coined by John Louis O'Sullivan in 1845, the term *Manifest Destiny* was used to morally justify U.S. imperial ambitions.

17. Browne's ideological maneuver of relocating Indians in the historic past to reduce their moral threat to the historic present was nothing new in American literature and culture. An infamous example of this strategy is seen in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans.* See also Susan Scheckel's *The Insistence of the Indian* for her critique of how the nineteenth-century dominant culture used this strategy to elide the historical reality of U.S. Indian policy and its material and moral consequences in an effort to comfortably define U.S. national identity.

18. See again Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation,* 14 in particular.

CHAPTER 3

1. As reflected in scholarship such as Wrobel's *The End of American Exceptionalism* and Kollin's recent *Nature's State,* white Progressive-Era frontier masculinity in Alaska is seemingly always enacted through the lens of masculine "virility." My aim is not to challenge their readings of frontier masculinity as it relates to the texts they critique but to show how Stuck suggests other conceptions of white frontier masculinity in Alaska were possible in this period.

2. For an account of Stuck's travels in the Alaska interior, see his *Ten Thousand Miles With a Dog Sled.*

3. For Jackson's role as a missionary and government appointee in regard to educating Alaska Natives, see Dauenhauer, "Two Missions to Alaska." After President Chester Arthur appointed the first governor for Alaska, Jackson was named First District general agent of education. Under his direction and pressure from whites, white and Native children were separated for their schooling, and Native children were taught only in English. For Stuck, having Alaska Natives learn English was not a first priority, although it was clearly important to him.

4. All information regarding Stuck's life has been gleaned from David Dean, *Breaking Trail.* For Stuck's views on Alaska Natives, see in particular chapter 7.

5. Stuck was an ally of Peary's, writing to him when Peary was declared the true discoverer of the North Pole in 1909 by a special commission of scientists who met at the University of Copenhagen to resolve the dispute between Cook and Peary. Stuck declared to Peary, "I am so greatly rejoiced at the news that the imposture is already detected and exposed, that I cannot forebear venturing to write you with my warmest congratulations. . . . In the world's chivalry of geographic exploration your place is secure for all time" (quoted in Bryce 476–477). Although the pole dispute had been "resolved" in Copenhagen, Cook still had supporters, and whether he had actually reached the summit of McKinley remained in question. Stuck's narrative, like Cook's

and Browne's before him, must inevitably be understood in the ongoing production of heroic masculinity not only in the United States and Alaska but in how it is projected to the world.

6. Summarizing articles by Arjun Appadurai, Clifford writes, "Appadurai has challenged anthropological strategies for localizing non-Western people as 'natives.' He writes of their 'confinement,' even 'imprisonment,' through a process of representational essentializing, what he calls a 'metonymic freezing,' in which one part or aspect of peoples' lives comes to epitomize them as a whole, constituting their theoretical niche in an anthropological taxonomy. . . . 'Natives, people confined to and by places to which they belong, groups unsullied by contact with a larger world have probably never existed'" (100).

7. In regard to the Indian boys, Johnny and Esaias, Stuck writes, "Nor must Johnny be forgotten, the Indian boy who faithfully kept the base camp during a long vigil, and killed game to feed the dogs, and denied himself, unasked, that others might have pleasure, as the story will tell. And the name of Esaias, the Indian boy who accompanied us to the base camp, and then returned with the superfluous dogs, must be mentioned, with commendation for fidelity and thanks for service" (xii).

8. And as Ward Churchill writes, for a dominant culture that might feel guilty for its wrongs against the Indian, literature that represents images of "civiliz[ing] the savage . . . is of considerable importance insofar as therein lies the primary function of literature within colonialism. . . . The potential for a mass psychology of national guilt at its apparent policy of genocide and theft could be offset in no other conceivable fashion at that time" (35).

9. See also Kolodny's classic *The Land Before Her* for a critique of white frontier women and their relationship to "nature." Kolodny writes, "Avoiding for a time male assertions of a rediscovered Eden, women claimed the frontiers as a potential sanctuary for an idealized domesticity" (xiii).

10. See, for instance, George Tinker's *Missionary Conquest,* which recounts the lives of four Christian missionaries and their goal to "civilize" Native Americans.

11. Stuck's narrative follows the convention of the frontier myth in that the "man who knows Indians," "the [white] American must cross the border [between Indian and white] into 'Indian country' and experience a 'regression' to a more primitive and natural condition of life so that the false values of the 'metropolis' can be purged and a new, purified social contract enacted. Although the Indian and the Wilderness are the settler's enemy, they also provide him with the new consciousness through which he will transform the world" (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* 14). For Slotkin, the regeneration of the moral conscience occurs through violence. Stuck obviously tries to transform this ethos.

CHAPTER 4

1. In his remarkably colorful life, Younghusband rubbed elbows with the likes of Kitchener, Rhodes, and Curzon. In addition to leading the 1903 "mission" to Tibet in an effort to head off supposed Russian political influence in the region, he very much embodied the masculine adventure tradition by exploring routes in Asia, including the

Gobi Desert and mountain passes in the Himalayas. For biographies of Younghusband, see George Seaver's *Francis Younghusband: Explorer and Mystic* and Patrick French's more recent *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer*.

2. See Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*.

3. On the role of the RGS in promoting imperialism, see Ellis 30.

4. See 24–25.

5. Irvine's ice ax was found in 1933, and Mallory's corpse was found in 1999. See Breashears and Salkeld's *Last Climb* for a history of the expeditions.

6. As Holzel and Salkeld write, "Response at large to the tragedy was unexpectedly warm. It suddenly became clear just how much interest the public had been taking in the Everest story, for it was by no means just mountaineers who were expressing real sorrow at the loss of the two men. A surprised Hinks wrote to Norton on 26 June, telling him, 'We have been overwhelmed with telegrams and messages of sympathy from the King, from many geographical societies and climbing clubs all over the world and from numbers of individuals in this country. The papers have vied with one another in paying their respect to the glorious memory of Mallory and Irvine'" (234).

7. Moreover, according to L.C.B. Seaman, in the 1920s "it was possible . . . by too close a study of the popular Press or too eager an absorption in the works of 'advanced' writers, to conclude that Christianity was almost extinct, that marriage was an outmoded convention, that the dawn of complete sexual freedom had already broken and that the Victorian virtues of public-spiritedness, thrift and hard work had all been relegated to the past" (22–23). Moreover, many males believed Englishmen had lost their virility, evidenced by the fashions of the times, which had "the overall effect [that] was so desperately elegant as to make men seem unrobust to the point of effeminacy" (67). According to Seaman, this supposed "effeminacy" resulted from "a revulsion from militarism, toughness and romantic extravagance" (67).

8. "To keep them quiet until the expected Peace Boom started, the Government gave every member of the Fighting Forces below commissioned rank a free Unemployment Insurance policy, which entitled him to benefit while he was seeking work" (Graves and Hodge 27).

9. On the origins of the General Strike, see ibid. 150–170.

10. Stanley Baldwin, the prime minister who succeeded George, longed for "a more stable and less strident past" (Seaman 26). And as "*The Times* wrote of Baldwin, 'It is the fragrance of the fields, the flavour of apple and hazel nut, all the unpretentious, simple, wholesome, homely but essential qualities, suggestions and traditions of England that Mr. Baldwin has substituted for the over-charged, heavy-laden decadent atmosphere of post-war days'" (27).

11. I do not mean to suggest that the climbers seamlessly integrate all the tropes of an epic knight figure. Certainly, they do not partake in the tradition of "courtly love." Following Dean Miller, the knight figure assumes many different, sometimes antithetical purposes. See Miller 12–14.

12. See French 275–375 for a complete overview of Younghusband's thinking in regard to religious mysticism.

13. For a history of Scott's competition against Amundsen, see Roland Huntford, *The Last Place on Earth.*

14. See also Arendt 34.

CHAPTER 5

1. For a short history of the climbs of the 1930s, see Ullman, *High Conquest* 219–224.

2. Climbing Everest is generally no small task for an expedition. In this case tons of supplies had to be ferried from England to India and then transported overland to Nepal. Once the supplies reached base camp, they had to be carefully rationed to ensure that the necessary supplies reached high camps on the mountain, thus helping to ensure the expedition's success. See Hunt's appendix for details about the supplies for the 1953 expedition.

3. Marcus refers to the American edition, *The Conquest of Mount Everest.* Although the title was changed for that edition, the text remained the same.

4. The Joint Committee is made up of "the Royal Geographical Society" and "the Mount Everest Committee."

5. Although Hillary is a New Zealander, as a member of the Commonwealth he was an extension of English national identity.

CHAPTER 6

1. Tenzing, in his autobiography, refers to the American edition of Hunt's text, *The Conquest of Everest.*

2. *Tiger of the Snows* was published as *Man of Everest* in London. Tenzing later wrote another autobiography in 1977, *After Everest.*

3. The Nepalese do not use surnames, as Tenzing later explains.

4. I am borrowing the phrase "writes back" from Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back.*

5. See Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice* 113–138. This question is one of the central concerns of postcolonial criticism. See, for instance, Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value"; Mishra and Hodge, "What Is Post(-)colonialism"; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 171–197; ibid. 38–77; Mohanram and Rajan, *English Postcoloniality* 3–9.

6. In other words, Tenzing Norgay's position is not cemented by any fixed signification—he is not co-opted by any ahistorical conception of signification; rather, because language is always a process, signs are full of ruptures that continually exceed any fixed meaning, and thus Tenzing is always only partly co-opted by any imperial discourse. See Ashcroft, "Excess."

7. Of course, it is possible to argue that the French still organize and lead the expedition. Thus the "native" is co-opted into an activity the French have initiated.

8. Following Aparna Dharwadker and Vinay Dharwadker's analysis of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses,* Tenzing Norgay's text might also be "an allegory especially of the postcolonial condition. . . . [It is] ambiguously antinationalistic in the extreme, since it dismantles the whole emotional framework of national identity erected on concepts

like 'home,' 'self,' 'land,' and 'belonging,' and apparently accepts the radical disruptions of migrancy and metropolitan cosmopolitanism" (102).

CHAPTER 7

1. A number of critiques illustrate this point, but for starters see Martin 37; Hebdige 222–235.

2. Plenty of expeditions to climb Mount Everest are not from the "West." But whether Taiwanese or Japanese expeditions and so forth, they all participate as partners in what I would argue are Western ideologies. This is not to say that specific cultural traditions do not influence how and why people climb Everest, but in the postmodern global age even these, one could argue, are subsumed under globalism, whose history can be traced back to the West.

3. I agree with R. Radhakrishnan who argues that postcolonialism must pay attention to postmodernism. Radhakrishnan writes that "given the dominance of the West, the epistemic location of postmodernity has a *virtual* hold over the rest of the world also. If modernity functions as a structure in dominance that regulates and normativizes the relation between the West and the rest . . . it is only inevitable that the very regionality of Western forms will travel the world over as dominant-universal forms" (40).

4. See in particular 1–54 in Jameson's *Postmodernism.*

5. The 1996 expeditions, as I point out later, had women members. And historically, other women have climbed and continue to climb Everest. But consistent with the trajectory of this book, my main concern is the production of masculinity.

6. To recall Eagleton's warning, which I noted in the Introduction, "In denying that this constitutes a metanarrative, one should be careful as a Westerner that one is not subtly diffusing it. It is curious that so much postcolonial theory should want to deny the systematic, world-historical nature of the imperial history it examines, its repetitions as well as its differences, thus in some sense letting it off the hook" (*Illusions of Postmodernism* 111).

7. The quotation is from Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin, *Past the Last Post* viii.

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