FRONTIER TRAVEL NARRATIVES:
THE MAKING OF AUTHORSHIP AND CULTURE
IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY UNITED STATES

BY
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ABSTRACT

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Frontier Travel Narratives:
The Making of Authorship and Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States

Thesis directed by Associate Professor John-Michael Rivera

This project enacts a recovery of travel writing’s vital importance not only to the institution of American literature and authorship in the early nineteenth century, but to the very foundation of the nation itself. Far from existing on the margins of American letters, travel narratives performed a critical role in a high-stakes battle to produce an entire culture—politics, history, science, and literature—of the United States, freed from European antecedents and in defiance of a British intellectual legacy perceived as royalist, imperially corrupt, and infested with colonial power dynamics. This dissertation mines the print culture and historical currents of the era to rewrite traditional notions of literary history, challenging the novel’s accepted centrality in the early formulation of literary canons and placing travel narratives at the heart of the intellectual and print marketplace of the early nineteenth century. A network of publishers, editors, scientists, and explorer-authors undertook an ambitious project to defy lingering British influence in a United States barely sixty years from independence. This intelligentsia sought to create not just an American literature, but an entire system of knowledge that originated from, and was authored by, the nascent nation. The tools of book history, including original archival research and an analysis of the publication, circulation, and reception of a seemingly unrelated group of travel texts, reveal that travel narratives served as the key instrument of this mission. The travelogues examined in this dissertation capture the indeterminate position of a young United States caught between nascent imperialism and post-colonial insecurity, revealing the
still-precarious base from which the fledgling nation struggled to rise. Thus, this study establishes travel accounts not only as the implements of imperialism, as they are conventionally understood, but also as texts of decolonial resistance and vibrant participants in the effort to construct—materially and intellectually—a new nation from the unstable leavings of empire.
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Finally, my family, to whom I dedicate this dissertation: My mother, Mary Nell Story, who improbably named me after a character in a Faulkner novel and taught by example that women are strong, smart, and capable; my dad, Paul Story, who’s read every paper I’ve ever written and sat up late into the night when I was in high school to discuss literature and movies. My trophy husband of two decades, Tim McAndrew, who in spite of his expertise in finance and business is my most valuable and insightful commentator, steadiest support, and source of the perfectly timed motivational push. I married well: He’s read every draft, poor fella. Our girls, Casey and Samantha McAndrew, two of the most engaging people I know, delightedly sent me off to school that first day, and have graciously supported me ever since. Being your mother is, and always will be, the most rewarding and important project of all. Love you forever. And of course, Scout, the dissertation dog, constantly cheerful early morning companion and enthusiastic partner for anything the day brings.

It is said that dissertations are a solitary, lonely business. Not so. Thank you all.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION:</th>
<th>The Case for Travel Narratives</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1:</td>
<td>Authorship and Travel Narratives in Evert Duyckinck’s <em>Library of American Books</em></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2:</td>
<td>The Destiny of Empires: The Transnational Democracy of Alexis de Tocqueville and Josiah Gregg</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3:</td>
<td>Manifest Democracy: John Russell Bartlett, the Ethnology of Travel, and Literary Nationalism</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4:</td>
<td>American Authorship and the Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY:</td>
<td></td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Case For Travel Narratives

It will be our best plan . . . to publish the journal by itself, rather than in a magazine, and thus make an independent author of you at once.

Nathaniel Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge, April 1, 1844

In 1844, Nathaniel Hawthorne collaborated with Horatio Bridge to edit the latter’s now-obscure travel account, *Journal of an African Cruiser*. Already a seasoned author, Hawthorne advised his close friend to avoid magazine serialization and move directly to one of the most successful print formats of the age: a travel account published as a book. Titles like Richard Henry Dana, Jr.’s *Two Years Before the Mast*, Herman Melville’s *Typee*, and John Lloyd Stephens’s *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* achieved blockbuster sales; countless others lined publishers’ catalogues and validated Hawthorne’s strategy. In spite of that vast popularity, travel narratives today appear only at the edges of academic scrutiny, an unfavored ugly duckling of literary studies. The travel genre itself holds at least partial responsibility for the oversight. Travel writers—in their blithe trespass between fact and fiction, science and art, the journalistic and the personal—continually unsettle their own place in literary

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2 Even the landmark, five-volume series, *History of the Book in America*, contains only a short eight-page essay by Donna Brown on travel narratives (“Travel Books,” Volume 2, 449-457). Susan S. Williams notes that “recent literary history” tends to organize writing hierarchically, with “authors who were the most original . . . being at the top; the writers of ephemera at the bottom; and the various kinds of popular writing (including travel narratives, poetry, sketches, slave narratives, and sentimental novels) somewhere in between.” [In “Authors and Literary Authorship,” *History of the Book in America*, vol. 3, 100.] Although scholarly emphasis has shifted to include more focus on “in between” forms like slave narratives and sentimental novels, travel narratives remain largely marginalized.
history. The novel, still a suspect genre in the early nineteenth century, offered uncertain returns and lingered shadily at the margins of the print market. It would soon eclipse travel as the primary vehicle of American literature, commandeering scholarly attention and obscuring travel narratives’ period significance from modern view. Yet, the fact remains that early nineteenth-century presses turned out an unceasing stream of travel narratives to a market eager to receive them. This historical prevalence calls for further investigation.

As a genre, antebellum travel narratives encompass the entire 1840s and 1850s United States—a fledgling country barely sixty years from winning independence, grappling with antebellum torsion and laboring to knit a durable nation from the regional fragments of post-colonial liberation. The country remained subordinate to Britain and disparate from itself, a loose federation of geographically divided regions identified more by their differences than by their national affiliation. A lack of international copyright protection meant that legally pirated, foreign reprints flooded the U.S., locked American authors out of the national book market, and

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3 Travel scholars frequently comment upon the slipperiness of the travel genre. For instance, Susan Williams, in the footnote above, places them “in between” original writing and ephemera. Steven Clark notes that travel writing “is necessarily an interim form.” [In “Introduction,” Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit (London: Zed Books, 1999) 17]. Mary Louise Pratt feels compelled to address “scientific and sentimental travel writing” as different but complimentary forms of travel accounts. [In Imperial Eyes Travel Writing and Transculturation (Rutledge: New York, 1992) 5].


6 Sexton notes that inhabitants “most often thought of themselves in terms of the state (Virginians and New Yorkers, for example) or region (Westerners and New Englanders) from which they hailed” rather than as citizens of the United States (9). William Charvat, Trish Loughran, Michael Winship, and Meredith McGill also all provide detailed studies of the fragmented nature of the nation during this period.
suppressed the emergence of a distinctly American field of letters. These conditions spawned a resistant literary nationalist effort called the Young America movement, a group of New York intelligentsia who lobbied for copyright reform and agitated to institute a national literature that would assert the autonomy of the United States. Far from limiting their efforts to the realm of belles lettres, this study reveals that the nationalists’ all-inclusive ambitions stretched towards a much more audacious goal: they sought to engender an entire system of knowledge, perpetuated in print, that originated from the United States. Their endeavor comprised a broad swath of intellectual disciplines on the verge of—but still lacking—modern formalization, including the rise of authorship and literary canons, the professionalization of scientific and intellectual pursuits into discrete fields, and the delineation of an at-risk, barely formed nation bent on expansion but beset by internal strife and international peril.

Travel narratives, the narratologically homely cousin of the novel, sat dominant at the center of it all: they served as the critical tool of the literary nationalist movement. This study seeks to return them to their rightful place at the heart of antebellum U.S. history and culture. Along the way to its final conclusions, this dissertation accepts, but moves beyond the argument that travel narratives minister to expansion and reproduce the imperial gaze of the conqueror (as in Mary Louise Pratt’s Imperial Eyes). Instead, this study considers the flipside of the literary

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7 This dissertation’s discussion of the effects of copyright law and periodical publishing on the state of authorship and the book market in the United States relies heavily upon Meredith McGill, American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003). As she notes, “Petitions on behalf of international copyright frequently register anxiety about the dislocating social and cultural effects of immigration, western expansion, and sectional conflict; the nation they seek to protect and preserve is internally divided and urgently in need of reconciliation” (91).

8 For further discussion of Young America, see Edward L. Widmer, Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999), and Yonatan Eyal, The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007).

nationalist coin: travel narratives also provide a critical means of decolonial resistance and self-expression to a young country unsure of itself, moving towards the future on still-precarious national legs.

The primary argument of this dissertation is that early nineteenth-century travel narratives enable the rise of American authorship as we understand it today. To publish a travel book in the antebellum United States was to become an author “at once,” as Nathaniel Hawthorne confidently assured his friend Horatio Bridge. Neophytes like Bridge or a young Herman Melville could draw industry attention if they shopped a travel narrative; shrewd publishers accepted them even amidst the easy temptations of the reprint-laden market.10 Travel writer George Barrell Cheever notes, “The eagerness with which they are read is a premium on their production.”11 He underscored the fact that profit-friendly travel accounts dodged cheap economies that otherwise curtailed investment in new, more costly American authors and their books.12 Travel narratives also overcame the anonymous publishing practices of the era. In a market characterized by authorial obscurity, the successful travel writer scored the instant gleam of celebrity, as Herman Melville discovered upon the appearance of Typee and Bayard Taylor learned upon the publication of his Views A-foot, or Europe seen with knapsack and staff.

10 For instance, Eugene Exman observes of the Harper Brothers that, “the author that the brothers were probably most excited about was Captain Benjamin Morrell, Jr., who had recently returned from his fourth voyage to the South Seas. They knew that sure-fire sales would result from the publication of a book of travel and adventure in strange, colorful, and distant lands.” The Harpers also published Morrell’s wife’s book, Narrative of a Voyage to the South Seas; they had so much confidence in the titles that Exman states that “the Morrell books were the lead items in the four-page, twenty-four-title section, ‘voyages, Travels, &c.’ in the 1833 Harper catalogue.” In The Brothers Harper (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 29-30.


12 Meredith McGill and William Charvat both have extensive discussions about the impact of British reprints on American authorship.
Travel narratives not only sold well, they provided the natural bedrock from which a nationally fashioned literature would spring—and from which a nation might author itself. Although they’re conceived abroad, travel accounts remain grounded in the home country; their authors write themselves into their texts as citizens of the United States observing the world from an exclusively American point of view. As Cheever describes in his literary nationalist travelogue, *The Pilgrim in the Shadow of the Jungfrau Alp*, “Wherever an American goes, the image of his country, like a lake among the mountains, should, as a mirror, receive and reflect the world’s surrounding imagery.” The United States, by proxy from the travel writer, stands as the reflective source of knowledge imparted in the narrative—the nation itself becomes authoritative through the implement of the citizen-traveller. Authors like Bridge and Cheever tag their texts with the imprimatur of the United States, a condition of the genre that activist publishers and editors readily leverage in their efforts to create a national literature, especially in the New York publishing industry of the 1840s and 50s United States.  

Exotic travel adventures pleased publishers, entertained readers, and fashioned the world from an American perspective; they also supplied the necessary germinative fodder for the development of every branch of a national culture. Travel accounts served as the major vehicle for the advent in the United States of the natural sciences, including biology, ethnography, anthropology, and social and political science. The non-fiction observations, scenic vistas, and romantic adventures that travel writers recorded also served as inspirational grist for all of the

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14 In 1840, the population of New York was 300,000, three times larger than the next biggest city in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau). Edward Widmer notes that “The new American culture naturally emanated from New York City, already undergoing a stunning metamorphosis . . . outstripping all rivals in size and complexity. As it became the great emporium of American commerce, it inevitably emerged as the nation’s cultural marketplace.” in *Young America* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999) 11.
imaginative arts. In 1849, the influential critic and editor Rufus Wilmot Griswold encapsulated the significance of travel literature to antebellum culture when he acknowledged a long list of American travellers (he names twenty-three, including Melville, Cheever, Washing Irving, James Fennimore Cooper, John Fremont, and John Lloyd Stephens),

who have not only added to the literature of this country by their journals, full of novel facts and important observations, or attractive by the graces of style, but have sown seeds for richer harvests in exposing the subjects and materials for the sculptor and painter, the poet and romancer, scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Polar to the Carib seas.\textsuperscript{15}

Nineteenth-century audiences envisioned travel narratives not only as discrete instances of American literature in their own right, but also as the imaginative and scholarly turbine driving the development an entire national culture. This culture would define and draw together the United States and defy European dominance of the intellectual marketplace.\textsuperscript{16}

The intellectual disciplines that founded this new culture existed in a protean state of disorganization and flux relative to the modern formalization that follows.\textsuperscript{17} Antiquarianism, for instance, contentedly mixed anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology. Botany, geology, and biology rested, comfortably indistinguished, under the friendly umbrella of natural science. In attempting a systematic analysis of travel narratives, the modern scholar faces a related conundrum: the disorder of early nineteenth-century travel writing, which also defies rather than adheres to modern formal conventions. Charles Forsdick points out the “generic indeterminancy of the travelogue, a literary form situated somewhere between scientific observation and fiction .

\textsuperscript{15} Rufus Griswold, \textit{Prose Writers of America} (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1849) 44.

\textsuperscript{16} In the terms of public sphere theory, one might think of the United States as attempting to construct a “counter public” in response to the dominant public created by the influx of British reprints into the market.

\textsuperscript{17} The messy cacophony of the reprint-driven print market echoes the intellectual disorganization of the era.
. . simultaneously problematizing any clear-cut distinction of those two poles.”

Travel narratives’ generic fuzziness mirrors the typical indeterminacy of intellectual pursuit during the period. As a result, they often read like an embryonic form that hasn’t quite matured (much like the antebellum United States itself). In their ebullient variety, travel narratives make it difficult to grasp, exactly, what they are, and where, particularly, they fit on the spectrum of print culture.

**How To Solve a Problem Like Travel Narratives?**

Among their scattered preoccupations, early nineteenth-century travel writers ramble nonchalantly across the boundaries of politics, philosophy, economics, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, geology, and biology, all of which they embed in ostensibly true, first-person adventures that veer unpredictably into the imagined and the romantic. The performance of objective fact-finding is a natural outgrowth of the travel narrator’s first-person authority. It permeates the genre from top to bottom, from scientifically driven reportage to the blatantly

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20 In *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: ‘From an Antique Land’* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002) 298, Nigel Leask, for instance, suggests “that romantic period travel writing still struggled to integrate literary and scientific discourses, rather than embodying the achieved triumph of imagination over knowledge” (7). He also opines “the art of travel writing would increasingly be subsumed within the literary field, shorn of its scientific pretensions.”

21 William Stowe notes that antebellum travel writing was “a genial form of narrative that served as a meeting place for various narrative voices, literary styles, levels of speech, and kinds of subjects, combining disparate models of discourse without necessarily generating any tension among them or forging them into a ‘higher unity.’” See “Conventions and Voices in Margaret Fuller’s Travel Writing,” *American Literature* 63.2 (June 1991): 243.

22 As Susan Castillo notes, travel narratives were able to draw authority “from the physical presence of the first-person narrator-witness.” In “‘The Lies of a Distant Traveller’? The travel writing of Louis de Hennepin,” *American Travel and Empire*, ed. Susan Castillo and David Seed (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009) 50.
touristic, but it also coexists with seemingly incompatible, often flagrant, bouts of the imagination. Hawthorne, for instance, urges Bridge on the one hand “to fit the book [Journal of an African Cruiser] for practical men. Look at things, at least some things, in a matter-of-fact way.” The seasoned Hawthorne knew that the Journal’s viability depended upon tangible realism; anticipating the book’s practicality, he muses a few lines later: “Oh, it will be an excellent book.”

Incongruously, Hawthorne also directs his friend to embellish his account, saying that

I would advise you not to stick too accurately to the bare fact, within your descriptions or your narrative . . . Allow your fancy pretty free license, and omit no heightening touches because they do not happen before your eyes. If they did not happen, they at least ought, which is all that concerns you. This is the secret of all entertaining travellers.

Even Bridge’s narrative, fitted for “practical men” and received almost entirely as an objective, eyewitness account of the U.S. colonies in Liberia, had space for flights of fancy.

No matter their situational focus, travel accounts rove haphazardly between scientific fields and blend fact with fiction, entertainment with edification. They might be written by rank amateurs or educated professionals, and they traverse the gamut from careful observation to sensational gossip.

Donna Brown expresses a common sentiment when she notes that antebellum travel accounts occupy a “middle ground between the dangers and delights of fiction and the serious toils of history, philosophy, and political theory.” Brown’s “middle ground” suggests a genre neither fully delightful nor entirely serious, whose trickster identity is always suspect and often unsettling. The discomfort travel narratives’ instability creates may explain

\[\text{23} \text{ Hawthorne to Bridge, April 1, 1944. Bridge, Recollections, 97-98.}\]

\[\text{24} \text{ Hawthorne to Bridge, May 3, 1843. Bridge, Recollections, 92.}\]

\[\text{25} \text{ See Leon Jackson.}\]

\[\text{26} \text{ Donna Brown 449.}\]
their relative absence from the itinerary of literary history. They were popular, but travel accounts also appear undisciplined to the modern eye, like a scholarly no-man’s land of half-formed, untrustworthy parts, none of which quite accomplish the goals of any field with which they engage.

Antebellum audiences, on the other hand, felt little compunction about travel accounts’ ebullient variety, because travel narratives are perfectly adapted to their particular moment in time. Not only do early nineteenth-century travel narratives make perfect sense to early nineteenth-century readers (think of the unsystematized contents of the era’s periodicals), they provide a convenient umbrella for expressing the period’s preoccupation with a broad range of first-person intellectual inquiry—something that we might term “natural history” today.27 Some travel writers like Charles Darwin trained formally as scientists—Darwin’s own 1839 blockbuster Journal and Remarks, quickly renamed Voyage of the Beagle (perhaps to highlight its identity as a travel narrative and make it more marketable) illustrates the early nineteenth-century flair for pairing adventure autobiography with multi-disciplinary scientific observation. However, travel writers who had no formal training also comfortably assert authority through their first-person-observer status. Josiah Gregg, author of the seminal Commerce of the Prairies, had little education as a botanist or social scientist, yet he provides ethnographic, geological, and political observations of the Mexican borderlands. Gregg still has at least eighty Western plants that he first described named after him in their Latin derivations.28 Newlywed housewife Susan Shelby Magoffin follows Gregg down the Santa Fe Trail, presses flowers into her leather-bound journal, and emulates not just Gregg, but the entire discipline of travel as personal adventure and

27 Pratt 15.

social science in her diary. Fanny Trollope’s famously acerbic *Domestic Manners of the Americans* arises from the same tradition of travel-based social science that Alexis de Tocqueville’s cerebral *Democracy in America* emerges from a few years later.

Each of these texts lingers comfortably in Donna Brown’s “middle ground” between disciplines, thwarting straightforward categorization and resisting systemic analysis. As William Charvat points out, however, “We err, as historians, in allowing the taste of the modern reader to nullify the taste of the nineteenth-century reader.”  

How then to put scholarly skepticism aside and assess this unruly genre, which is so difficult to evaluate but so prevalent in the early nineteenth-century book market? By moving first outside the text to explore the historical and cultural framework in which these travellers write and publish their work. Although this dissertation considers generic form and content, it first utilizes the tools of book history and cultural studies to examine the mechanisms that frame travel narratives’ historic popularity. It is only from within this larger context that the significance of the travel genre fully materializes.

**Methodology**

Recent scholarship from Meredith McGill, Eric Gardner, and Leon Jackson similarly blends cultural analysis with book history. The outcome has been an extraordinary reconfiguring of American literary history (about the U.S. print market, the African American literary canon, and the vocation of authorship, respectively).  

While these scholars do not discuss travel, their successful upsetting of the literary apple cart indicates a rich methodological opportunity: the

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29 Charvat 290.

same approach promises to jostle formerly conclusive notions about travel writing into radically new configurations. Following Gardner, Jackson, and especially McGill, this dissertation mines the print culture and historical currents of the antebellum United States to reconfigure traditional notions about the rise of authorship and the formation of American literature in the early decades of the nineteenth century. From its historical perch, this study recovers an expansive definition of the term “literary” that centers upon non-fiction and reflects the actual conditions of the antebellum print market, findings that ultimately replace the novel with the travel narrative as the primary medium for the emergence of American authorship, literature, and culture in the early nineteenth century.

Using original archival research, this study traces the publication and reception of a discrete archive of travel texts, generating an investigative trail that connects seemingly disparate works and people. For instance, the politically active firm of J. and H.G. Langley, who were avid Democrats, published Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, Josiah Gregg’s *Commerce of the Prairies*, and democratic agitator John L. O’Sullivan’s influential periodical, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. O’Sullivan promoted Tocqueville and Gregg in his magazine, and intervened in Gregg’s dispute with an early literary collaborator.31 Once O’Sullivan disentangled Gregg from that relationship, Gregg worked with O’Sullivan’s close political ally, John Bigelow, to prepare his text for publication. These associations suggest that political activism drove the publication of Gregg’s work, a heretofore-undiscovered fact that radically complicates traditional readings of *Commerce of the Prairies* as a straightforward travel narrative. Tocqueville and Gregg’s common publisher and O’Sullivan’s reviews imply a larger

context in which the New York intelligentsia wielded travel writing for political and national aims.

These aims were deeply embedded in concerns surrounding authorship and international copyright that produced the Young America literary nationalist movement in the United States.³² In addition to suggesting alternate readings for Gregg’s text, the timely intervention of John Bigelow and John L. O’Sullivan into Commerce of the Prairies also advocates for a reconsideration of the parameters of the literary nationalist movement. Nationalist politics, fed by the impetus west, certainly motivated the effort to bring a book titled “Commerce” of the Prairies to market, since Gregg addressed (among other topics) economic trade in the borderlands. However, this subject appears far afield for the Young Americans, a group that agitated for international copyright law and the foundation of American literature, and that famously promoted authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, and Herman Melville. What was Josiah Gregg, a one-off book author who “had no notions of literary art and knew it,” doing in the midst of such august company?³³

Redefining the “Literary”

Surprisingly, not only did the seemingly anomalous Gregg find purchase in the literary nationalist movement, travel writers like him were the primary authors of the effort. The term “literary nationalism” admittedly rings discordant amidst contemporary scholarship, absorbed as that scholarship is not by the delineation or celebration of nations, but by their ambiguity, contestable nature, and dubious exertion of power. An imposing group of scholars usefully

³² See Meredith McGill, Perry Miller, Yonatan Eyal, and Edward Widmer for detailed background.

challenges the assumptions of the literary nationalists of the early nineteenth-century United States. Amy Kaplan and Shelly Streeby address the hypocritical, imperial impetus behind the movement, which espoused democracy but yearned to acquire territory from Mexico and native populations. Trish Loughran and Meredith McGill point out the period’s divisive regionalism, while Michael Winship and William Charvat observe that spotty infrastructure and the discount system partitioned the United States into niche markets, rendering a national publishing effort structurally unachievable. 34 Leon Jackson challenges our modern emphasis on professionalization and reveals the disparate economies of exchange that supported authorship. Lara Cohen discusses the “fabrication” of literary nationalism and the cronyism and self-interest behind the promotion of American literature. 35 William Charvat similarly exposes the careful orchestration of reviews by publishers in the period. Finally, Joseph Rezek argues that “peripheral” writers like James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Washington Irving sought not resistance, but access to the powerful publishing hub of London as they imagined a trans-Atlantic literary sphere that ignored borders and politics in favor of commonality and community (and a lucrative shared market). 36 All of these scholars contest the “nationalism” of the early nineteenth century as a pipe dream of starry-eyed activists whose ambitions overreached the structural practicalities of the age or whose idealism proved to be little more than imperialism and profiteering packaged under another name.

These critiques assess the problematic “nationalism” in the antebellum literary nationalist movement; in contrast, this study addresses what early nineteenth-century readers—nationalist or


otherwise—actually believed the “literary” to be.\textsuperscript{37} Even after decades of fruitful recovery and expansion, the modern definition of literature and its application to literary nationalism remains deeply influenced by a mid-twentieth-century canon that is itself a contested nationalist construct.\textsuperscript{38} This canon formed amidst the political currents of the World War II-era United States, not in response to the actual proclivities of the early nineteenth-century print market. The resulting scholarly lens perpetuates a historical blind spot, whereby readers perceive a relative dearth of literary productivity in the early decades of the nineteenth-century United States.\textsuperscript{39} In contrast, the antebellum definition of the literary fills this imaginary cultural desert with a vital outpouring of non-fiction literature, often offered as travel narratives, written for an eagerly receptive audience. This historical perspective suggests that modern definitions of literature are too narrow, that they overlook a substantial, influential segment of the print market, and that authors like John Lloyd Stephens, Bayard Taylor, Isabella Bird, George Barrell Cheever, Joseph T. Headley, Fanny Calderón de la Barca, Richard Henry Dana, Jr., Louise Clappe, Josiah Gregg, and Susan Shelby Magoffin—as well as Herman Melville’s \emph{Typee} and \emph{Omoo}—deserve a prominent place in the annals of American literary history, and more considered attention to their role in forming American culture and literature in the antebellum United States.

In the early nineteenth century, the definition of literature does not merely refer to \textit{belles lettres} as we might understand it today (clearly not, if the artless Josiah Gregg was a part of it).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37} As Ezra Greenspan notes: “One can discern striking differences between the twentieth-century canon of American literature and the general pool of books from which that canon has been selected. . . . One can see, in fact, that the idea of ‘literature’ was very far from that which has gained currency in our own time.” In “Evert Duyckinck and the History of Wiley and Putnam’s Library of American Books, 1845-1847,” \textit{American Literature} 64.4 (Dec. 1992): 689.
\item \textsuperscript{38} For a discussion of the construction of the field of American Literature in the late-nineteenth and twentieth century, see David Shumway, \textit{Creating American Civilization: A Genealogy of American Literature as an Academic Discipline} (St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
\item \textsuperscript{39} F.O. Mathiessen’s 1941 \textit{American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman} exerts powerful influence even today.
\end{itemize}
Rather, “literature” in the antebellum era signifies a print vehicle whose primary function is to create and transmit knowledge. The literary nationalists in New York promoted the careers of not just familiar, now-canonical authors like Herman Melville or Nathaniel Hawthorne, but also the anthropologists E.G. Squier and John Lloyd Stephens, the critic Margaret Fuller, the political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville, and the explorers Bayard Taylor, Joel T. Headley, and Josiah Gregg. While Taylor, Headley, and Gregg are known for travel writing, each person on this list also incorporated travel accounts into the formative moments of their careers. A notice of *Typee* in *The Athenaeum* underscores the period’s strong association between authors that don’t necessarily appear related today. The reviewer positively associates the neophyte Melville with the already famous archaeologist John Lloyd Stephens, noting that, “Mr. Melville’s manner is New World all over; and we need merely advert to the name of Stephens, the foremost among American pilgrims, to explain our epithet.”

The *Athenaeum* writer’s choice of the noun “pilgrim” unites Stephens’s and Melville’s texts under the common banner of travel writing.

Artistic fiction, particularly in the form of short stories and poetry (but not novels) had a place in the early nineteenth-century definition of the literary, but non-fiction—and especially travel—dominated, as can be seen by an investigation of the era’s popular publisher’s series. British publishing powerhouse John Murray III filled and launched his *Home and Colonial Library* with travel narratives but eschewed novels. Scott E. Casper notes that “histories, biographies, and travel books dominated” the 187-title, highly successful *Harper’s Family Library*. The effort by Evert Duyckinck and his contemporaries to establish a U.S. canon with

40 “Reviews,” *Athenaeum* 956 (Feb. 21, 1846): 189.

the *Library of American Books* included only a single novel, while travel dominates the series from beginning to end.\(^{42}\)

The broad definition of the term “literary” surfaces in scientist John Russell Bartlett and editor Evert Duyckinck’s never-before-revealed friendship, shared organizational affiliations, and mutual nationalist activism. Although the men sat on opposite sides of the political aisle—Bartlett was a Whig, Duyckinck a Democrat—their lifelong alliance confounds the era’s acrimonious political divisions. It likewise overlaps literature with science, uniting the men in a larger cause in which “American literature” referred to knowledge created by American authors that was reproduced in print. Bartlett co-founded the American Ethnological Society, a scientific body that exists today, and also rejuvenated the defunct New York Historical Society. These organizations promoted American scientists and historians and their written work; travel, and travel narratives, were the primary vehicle for collecting and disseminating their original research and first-person observations.\(^{43}\) Literary man Duyckinck joined both the New York Historical Society and the American Ethnological Society as an active member and published articles for the Ethnological Society in his periodical, *Literary World*.\(^{44}\)

John Russell Bartlett in turn extended his own scientific and historical predilections to include what we would consider the literary: Like Duyckinck with his stable of American authors, Bartlett mentored some of the most influential ethnological writers of his day, including

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\(^{42}\) I use the Americanized pronunciation “Die-kink” for “Duyckinck.” I’ve been informed by scholars in the field that Dutch speakers might say “Deutch-ink.”

\(^{43}\) Mary Louise Pratt also discusses, in terms of European travel, “the new knowledge-building project of natural history” (24).

the sensations John Lloyd Stephens and E. G. Squier. Similar to Young America’s familiar efforts to promote a literary national sphere, the New York Historical Society and American Ethnological Society foster American anthropological and ethnological research and the publication of those findings. John L. O’Sullivan’s literary nationalist print organ, The United States Magazine and Democratic Review in turn promotes these efforts. Bartlett’s New York antiquarian bookstore, Bartlett and Welford, famously attracts ethnologists, historians, and archeologists to its collections. It also quickly becomes the gravitational center for literary personages in the city, providing a physical manifestation of the intersection of science with literature in the antebellum era. Even the geographical location of Bartlett’s shop situates him in close proximity to the literary nationalists: he sits right next door to the publisher of the Democratic Review, J. and H. G. Langley. Very likely, Duyckinck, who became the literary editor of the Langley-published periodical, visited each storefront in turn. Most tellingly, John Russell Bartlett’s name appears in Duyckinck’s handwritten rolls for the American Copyright

45 Gesa Mackenthun notes that Stephens’s work may “be seen as part of the larger intellectual project of spelling out an American cultural identity independent from that of Europe” (100). I argue that the literary nationalists and Bartlett spearheaded much of this effort.

46 John Russell Bartlett’s career is ripe for a re-examination that considers his influence on literary ethnographers and anthropologists in the same manner that literary scholars consider Evert Duyckinck’s influence on writers like Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville.


48 For more on Bartlett’s bookshop, see Robert Gunn’s article, “The ethnologists’ bookshop: Bartlett & Welford in 1840s New York,” Wordsworth Circle 41.3 (June 2010): 159-164.

49 Bartlett and Welford’s address is published; my knowledge of the location of J. and H. G. Langley is based upon title pages that list the firm’s address. See, for instance, the fourth edition of Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America published by “Henry G. Langley 8 Astor House, New York” in 1846, or their second edition of Josiah Gregg’s Commerce of the Prairies, published by “J. and H. G. Langley 8 Astor House New York” in 1845.
Club, the activist organization of the Young Americans that vociferously agitated for copyright reform in the United States.\(^{50}\)

John L. O’Sullivan and John Bigelow’s adoption of Josiah Gregg’s *Commerce of the Prairies* signals the expanded scope of the “literary” in the Young America movement. The presence of ethnologist John Russell Bartlett at the American Copyright Club meetings likewise extends that organization’s priorities beyond *belles lettres*. For the literary nationalists, it was equally important that writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and E.G. Squier find a place in the United States print market and assert their right—and, by association, the nation’s right—to publish. The twentieth and twenty-first century emphasis on literature as fiction obscures the broader urgencies of the early nineteenth-century literary nationalist movement and delimits the rich complexities of a history that emphasized non-fiction—and especially travel narratives—as a legitimate, vital component in the development of American letters and culture.

**A Question of Authorship**

Nathaniel Hawthorne knew first-hand that pursuing career as a dedicated author in the antebellum United States was no easy task. On April 1, 1844, in the same letter in which he advises Bridge to avoid magazines when he publishes *Journal of an African Cruiser*, Hawthorne complains wearily, “I continue to scribble tales . . . But the pamphlet and piratical system has so broken up all regular literature that I am forced to write hard for small gains.”\(^{51}\) Hawthorne refers to the unstaunched, legalized pirating of foreign—and especially British—books in the United States that had driven him to low-paid periodical publishing. As Meredith McGill establishes, a

\(^{50}\) Duyckinck. Copyright Club Proceedings, Duyckinck Family Papers, 1793-1899. Box 36. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

\(^{51}\) Nathaniel Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge, April 1, 1844. Bridge, *Recollections*, 98.
lack of international copyright protection for foreign authors in the U.S. resulted in a market inundated with cheap, quickly produced books originally written overseas. William Charvat notes that “the market was flooded with ten and twenty-five cent editions” of British works.\textsuperscript{52} These reprints—inexpensive to bring to market, with no royalties, and therefore cheaply sold—devastatingly undercut the ability of American authors to find financial support from publishers in the United States.\textsuperscript{53} These cheap efficiencies skewed publishers’ business models away from American authors, whose more expensive, original content was simply far too risky of an investment.

As a result, the nation’s writers turned to the ephemeral pages of the country’s regionally divided periodicals, which offered low pay and no copyright protection. The periodical exchange system encouraged rampant, unauthorized repurposing of content and meant that most magazines reprinted pieces without the authors’ permission or knowledge. Editors freely altered appropriated material without regard for the integrity of the original and without crediting the author—if the author was even listed with the original publication at all. American authors labored in underpaid obscurity, largely unacknowledged and locked out of the book market by invasive foreign-authored reprints that choked the flowering of a native literature in the United States.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} Charvat 285-286.

\textsuperscript{53} Even if a publisher could afford to pay an American author, attaining that author and the cost and effort of original production extended the book’s time to market and drove up its price. Financially, American books simply couldn’t compete with British reprints’ low price-point, minimal front-end investment, and quick return. Cutthroat competition amongst American publishers incessantly escalated the number and speed of reprints rushed to market in the 1840s and undercut their price, perpetuating a situation in which British texts completely overran the ability of American authors to find a publisher.

\textsuperscript{54} McGill, for instance, discusses “the struggle of the author to emerge in the first place, to distinguish himself out of an indistinguishable mass of texts” (211).
In response, the literary nationalists began to lobby for a change of law, arguing that the lack of international copyright fostered an insidious, British-borne soft imperialism that smothered democratic thought and prevented the emergence of a unifying national culture. The American Copyright Club agitated for reform and published a manifesto, their “Address to the American People.” In it, the Club describes, in revolutionary terms, the battle they imagine playing out for the hearts and minds of the nation’s citizenry:

In almost any shape other than that of silent books you would have spurned the foreign and held fast to the home-born; but stealing in quietly at every opening, making themselves the seemingly inoffensive and unobtrusive lodgers in every house they have full possession of the country in all its parts: and another people may promise themselves, in the next generation of Americans, (as the question now goes,) a restored dominion, which their arms were not able to keep. The pamphlet will carry the day where the soldier fell back.

The convention of unattributed authorship and the lack of international copyright protection in the United States generated nothing short of a crisis of being for the young nation: if the U.S. meant to establish itself as autonomous, powerful, and durable, it had to wrest authority (i.e., the right of authorship) from Britain to compose the world on its own, acknowledgeable terms.

From this perspective, the impetus towards literary nationalism might be reimagined not only as a questionable outpouring of imperialism and United States’ exceptionalism, but also as an ongoing effort by a subordinate population to throw off the lingering mantle of colonial repression. Post-colonial and borderland studies reveal the persistent, destructive power disparity between a dominant nation-state and its weaker neighbors and repressed populations.

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55 Robert Scholnick notes that Emerson delivered his address on “The American Scholar” in 1837, six years before the Copyright Club issued their proclamation (132).

56 William Cullen Bryant, Francis L. Hawkes, and Cornelius Matthews. “Address to the People of the United States in Behalf of the American Copyright Club” (New York: The American Copyright Club, Oct. 18, 1843) 2.

57 Jay Sexton notes that “The transition from colony to empire was not linear” in the United States (5).
Unquestionably, this period—and its print culture—witnessed the rise of United States power and imperial greed, as scholars like Amy Kaplan and Shelly Streeby usefully establish. Their work reinforces the lasting significance of Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, which famously argues that travel narratives enact the panoptic gaze of the imperial conqueror. Simultaneously, however, the work of Jay Sexton on the Monroe Doctrine and Meredith McGill on copyright law explores the relative weakness of the United States in the period. Sexton in particular offers a complication of the United States’ nascent imperialism, picturing a country facing an unsure destiny, hungry for an American hemispheric alliance in the face of internal division and European imperial covetousness. As Sexton points out, “the insecurity of the United States in the nineteenth century was two fold: it was weak relative to the Old World powers that dominated international affairs, and it was internally vulnerable, its union in danger of dissolution.” In post-colonial terms, the early nineteenth-century United States exists as both center and periphery, as both emergent imperial power and as a resistant, threatened population struggling towards fully realized nationhood.

Envisioning the United States as a post-colonial nation in the early nineteenth century argues for a temporal extension of Ralph Bauer’s argument in *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity* to the post-Revolutionary and Antebellum periods. Bauer suggests that native colonial accounts of shipwreck, captivity, and travel disrupt the centralized production and control of information from the imperial center. Authenticated by their first-person observations and written in native vernacular, these texts provide a self-determined awareness of the surrounding world—and of the author’s central place in it—that resists colonized structures of comprehension. This function continues into the nineteenth century as post-colonial defiance on an even larger scale. As the market and nation

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58 Sexton 10.
begin to consolidate, travel narratives exceed their role as localized islands of resistance (à la Bauer) to partake in a wholesale, coordinated effort to shake the remnants of British influence and claim autonomy and cultural authority for the young United States.

Attributed authorship by nationally identifiable writers loomed as the critical first step in this endeavor. As Meredith McGill writes, “In the culture of reprinting, authorial stature remained uncertain without some mechanism for tying author to text.” Travel narratives provided the means to achieve that tie. Their popularity allowed for the professionalization of American authorship in the face of a market flooded by cheap British reprints. They were the primary means of publishing knowledge collected in the emergent fields of ethnology, anthropology, and social and political science, disciplines all founded on the experience of travel. Most of all, travel accounts denied the period’s typical authorial anonymity and obscured textual origins, because travel writers embed themselves into their texts as both subject and narrator. Explorer-authors imagined the “author function” as a national endeavor; they wrote themselves as knight-errant avatars of the nation, embodying the United States in their world-views, in their adventures, and in their texts, creating a national voice and a national literature along the way.

Each chapter in this dissertation addresses a particular element of the larger argument of this study, and examines a discrete archive of travel texts to illustrate their representative role in antebellum U.S. culture. This study’s investigatory emphasis on the print culture milieu of its exemplary texts also leads in each chapter to previously undiscovered or unattended revelations. Chapter one establishes the overlooked significance of travel narratives to Evert Duyckinck’s author-making turn in the Library of American Books. Chapter two reveals the close ties of the literary nationalists to Josiah Gregg’s Commerce of the Prairies and Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America. Chapter three explores the previously undisclosed alliance between

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59 McGill 89.
power-editor Evert Duyckinck and explorer-scientist John Russell Bartlett. Finally, chapter four undertakes the first-ever close examination of Susan Shelby Magoffin’s commonplace diary and its relation to her first-person travel narrative. These explorations inform a series of close readings that demonstrate the often-obscured, contradictory leitmotifs embedded in the era’s travel accounts. Travel authors project—and often critique—the democratic experiment beyond the edges of the frontier, embedding expansion and American exceptionalism into their narratives. They simultaneously document the uncertainty and ideological conflicts engendered by that expansion. The travelogues in this dissertation capture the insecure, indeterminate position of a United States caught between nascent imperialism and post-colonial identity, revealing the still-precarious base from which the young nation struggles to rise.  

Chapter One undertakes a fresh examination of Evert Duyckinck’s *Library of American Books*, which was dominated by travel narratives from beginning to end. The *Library* significantly marks the absence of the novel in the early formulation of the United States literary canon. Instead, Duyckinck utilizes the publisher’s series format and travel narratives to promote American authorship and literature in the antebellum United States; travel narratives in the *Library* also launch several now-prominent authors’ careers. A study of the reception of several of the travel titles in the *Library* illustrates the way that these writers successfully exert an American identity into the era’s print market. Finally, a close reading from the Nathaniel Hawthorne-edited *Journal of an African Cruiser* demonstrates how Duyckinck sought to appease

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61 Ezra Greenspan and Perry Miller (in *The Raven and the Whale*) have provided valuable research on the *Library of American Books*. My analysis builds on their work and concentrates specifically on travel books in the series and Duyckinck’s efforts to establish American authors with it.
national tension over slavery while also introducing an assertively American book into the transatlantic marketplace. Like all the travel narratives examined in this dissertation, an undercurrent of contradiction challenges the democratic idealism expressed in the *Journal* and underscores the conflicted position of the United States in the period.

Chapter Two considers the affiliation between John L. O’Sullivan’s periodical, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Josiah Gregg’s *Commerce of the Prairies*, and Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, all published by the democratic activist firm J. and H. G. Langley. This chapter examines the close relationship between the literary nationalists, the writing and marketing of travel narratives, and the international debate over democracy. It also examines the nearly synonymous association between travel and the emergence of social and political science during the early nineteenth century, fields launched at least partially by the vogue for travel books about the United States. 

Gregg turns this social science lens onto the United States as he travels the Santa Fe Trail; this chapter argues that his narrative follows from the tradition that spawned Tocqueville. Surprisingly, close readings of Gregg and Tocqueville also disclose an uncannily similar thread of apprehension that underlies both authors’ visions of the United States and the promises of democracy. These moments belie traditional readings of their texts as straightforward celebrations of American exceptionalism and democracy.

Chapter Three reveals the previously undisclosed friendship between Evert Duyckinck and John Russell Bartlett that brings the “literary” into close collaboration with the “scientific,” particularly in regards to the nascent fields of ethnography, archeology, and anthropology. 

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62 As David Seed and Susan Castillo remark, “America as a destination was repeatedly invested with special, mythic stature as a country unlike others” (2) a perception that inspired travel writing about the United States with a particularly investigative flair that tended to sociological or political observation.

63 In *The Conquest of Antiquity: The Traveling Empire of John Lloyd Stephens*, Gesa Mackenthun notes the “larger climate that gave rise to America’s major historical societies and ethnological collections in the period before the Civil War” (100-101).
close reading of Bartlett’s *Personal Narrative* complicates popular and print culture rhetoric surrounding the “Mexican Question” as to how new peoples and territories will be incorporated into the expansive nation. Bartlett represents a moment of extraordinary potential for the United States, whereby the country’s national imaginary teetered towards Pan-American, rather than European-American, identification. His travel account demonstrates his egalitarian hopes for the spontaneous outbreak of participatory democracy on the frontier. The collapse of Bartlett’s project and his vilification in the popular press represent the failure of the nation to embrace his positivist view of the new border culture, while the suppression of his government report and reams of data represents a failure of his attempt to exchange America’s European heritage with one equally antique but “home-grown” on the continent.

The fourth and final chapter examines Susan Shelby Magoffin’s personal diary as a case study for how travel writing enables the rise of modern authorship from the anonymous, reprint-driven market of the antebellum United States. Scholars almost wholly ignore the initial fifty-page commonplace portion of Magoffin’s leather-bound notebook. An examination of the poems’ publication histories dramatically reveals the fractured conditions of the nineteenth century print market and traces Magoffin’s reiterative function in that market as reader and

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65 I consider that Bartlett’s interest in antiquities is rooted in what Gesa Mackenthun helpfully terms as a “historiography of self-invention . . . of cultural traditions and a nostalgic search for the mysterious origins of modern nations in the mists of antiquity” (102). In chapter three, I argue that Bartlett’s “self-invention” involved inventing not himself, but the nation. He attempts to adopt American cultural antecedents as an alternative origin myth for the United States in opposition to European and Western history.


67 For instance, in her long-standing introduction to Magoffin’s printed diary, Stella Drumm merely notes, that these pages were “devoted to poetry, mostly about love” (xxiv).
copyist. She stakes her first claim to authorship only when she moves outside the United States, demonstrating the way in which travel writing generates an original, nationalized authorial voice. Close readings of Magoffin’s narrative and the material features of her journal place her firmly within the context of a nineteenth century print culture that conflates the domestic with the imperial and the imperial with the sexual and martial conquest of exotic peoples. In Magoffin’s case, however, it is her own domestic union and authorial self—and by extension the authority and integrity of the United States—that are threatened by expansive travel and the realization of Manifest Destiny.

Conclusion

On April 17, 1845, almost exactly two years after they began collaborating on Journal of an African Cruiser, Nathaniel Hawthorne notified Horatio Bridge that no less a personage than Evert Duyckinck had accepted their completed manuscript for publication. Hawthorne, thrilled with the news, wrote Bridge delightedly that, “few authors make their bows to the public under such favorable auspices.” The highly regarded editor had just begun working with publisher Wiley and Putnam on an exciting new series. In a move that surprised even Hawthorne,


70 I argue that a threat to the traveller’s individual condition metaphorizes an equivalent threat to the nation. Brian Musgrove discusses the “complete evacuation of the self . . . recognizing that the traveller’s action of wavering between worlds is potentially annihilation.” In “Travel and Unsettlement: Freud on Vacation,” Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit, ed. Steven Clark (London: Zed Books, 1999) 32.

71 Nathaniel Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge, April 17, 1845. Bridge, Recollections, 100.
Duyckinck didn’t just select the *Journal of an African Cruiser* for inclusion in that project. He went even further: Duyckinck made Bridge’s travelogue the critical first volume in his revolutionary effort to transform authorship and literature in the nineteenth-century United States. That effort was the *The Library of American Books*.

This dissertation enacts a recovery of travel writing’s vital importance not only to the institution of literature in the United States, but also to the foundation of the nation in the early nineteenth century. These results displace the novel’s accepted centrality in the early formulation of American letters, rewriting conventional notions of literary history to reposition travel narratives from the margins of literary studies to the very center of a high-stakes battle to produce an entire culture—politics, history, science, and literature—of the United States, freed from European antecedents and in defiance of a British intellectual legacy perceived as royalist, imperially corrupt, and infested with colonial power dynamics. This dissertation establishes the function of travel accounts not only as the implements of imperialism but as texts of decolonial resistance, as vibrant participants in the effort to construct—materially and intellectually—a nation from the unstable leavings of empire.
Chapter I

Authorship and Travel Narratives in Evert Duyckinck’s
Library of American Books

In May 1845, visionary editor Evert A. Duyckinck launched a publisher’s series, Library of American Books, into a United States market flush with British reprints. A lack of copyright protection for foreign authors in the U.S. institutionalized the legal pirating of overseas works, creating cheap economies that locked American authors out of the book market.1 Duyckinck and his publisher Wiley and Putnam fired the Library into the resultant British-reprint invasion, aiming to counter its tide by initiating a revolutionary transformation of authorship in the United States.2 Surprisingly, the savvy editor chose travel narratives as the primary weapon of his radical mission. Of the first ten titles in the Library of American Books, six were travel accounts, and they pepper the collection from beginning to end. Duyckinck chose a now-obscure travelogue, edited by Nathaniel Hawthorne and written by Horatio Bridge, Journal of an African Cruiser, to inaugurate his groundbreaking effort on behalf of American letters. This chapter examines Duyckinck’s choice to emphasize travel narratives in his project, an exploration that begins to reveal the widespread and critical role travel narratives played in instituting American authorship and literature in the early nineteenth-century United States.

Ezra Greenspan and Perry Miller establish the canonical significance of Duyckinck’s Library to the formation of American literature.3 Though Greenspan lays the groundwork for

1 Meredith McGill and William Charvat both discuss how a lack of international copyright protection for foreign works in the U.S. effectively locked American authors out of book publishing and drove them into the ephemeral pages of the largely anonymous, low-paid disarray of periodicals.

2 Ezra Greenspan observes that, by the 1840s, Duyckinck “had maneuvered himself into a situation of editorial influence unprecedented in American literary history” (682).

further investigation of travel in the series, no scholar explicitly addresses the genre’s importance to the collection or to its nationalist aims. Miller, in his seminal work *The Raven and the Whale*, erroneously claims that Edgar Allan Poe’s *Tales* launched the *Library*; he fails to mention *Journal of an African Cruiser* at all.\(^4\) Ironically, Miller’s oversight reads like a more credible version of the series, given its reputation for promoting American literature and the now-canonical authors Poe, Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. Yet, Duyckinck, no novice to the antebellum print market, made a counterintuitive move: instead of leading with Poe’s more literary *Tales*, he chose a straightforward travel narrative by a completely unknown author to initiate his revolutionary *Library of American Books*. Duyckinck’s decision was no casual accident: the entire future of his series depended on the success of *Journal of an African Cruiser*, which also by its primary position announced Duyckinck’s vision of what American literature should be. These designations call for further investigation into Bridge’s work and why the powerful editor would find it so compelling.

**The Essential First Volume**

Before all considerations of taste, politics, or ideology, in order to gamble the success of the *Library* on Bridge’s travel narrative, Duyckinck had to believe that *Journal of an African Cruiser* would sell. The life of any series depends upon the performance of its first title: the law of diminishing returns promises that a lackluster start forebodes a more lackluster future. Over one hundred years after Duyckinck issued the *Library of American Books*, publishers at twentieth-century powerhouse Time-Life Books knew that the success of any publisher’s series

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\(^4\) Miller 126.
always hinges on the first volume’s sales. In Time-Life’s case, over three decades of historical data, quantitative analysis, and sophisticated market research predicted the best subject for the first title; the topics remained remarkably consistent over time. Duyckinck, without masses of complex data at his fingertips, attempted just such a strategic decision. He didn’t select the Journal to lead The Library of American Books just because he happened to like it, although he did write Hawthorne in August, 1845 that, “I always liked the book and gave it the best position in the series.” Duyckinck made his decision in response to powerful trends in the market—Bridge’s travelogue represented a subject that would sell. As the former President of Time-Life Books, John D. Hall, remarks of his own experience, “If it was a cookbook collection, the lead had to be Chicken. Otherwise, if we could make the first volume of any series about Egypt, we did.” Duyckinck chose Journal of an African Cruiser to initiate the Library of American Books because it was a travel narrative about an exotic locale, one of the most sure-fire book topics in the early nineteenth-century print market.

The potential for Journal of an African Cruiser to drive sales trumped the potential drawback of Bridge’s authorial obscurity. Moreover, in spite of the wide reputation of some of

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8 John D. Hall interview.

9 Reviews of Journal of an African Cruiser lauded it for its exotic subject. The Examiner exulted that, “This journal . . . touches on a scene little hackneyed by journalists or travellers,” while the Spectator noted that only three books on the region had been published in the last ten years, and Bridge himself commented his preface that “the West Coast of Africa is a fresher field for the scribbling tourist, than most other parts of the world.” [“Journal of an African Cruiser,” The Living Age 7.73 (Oct. 4, 1845): 21, attributed to The Examiner; “Journal of an African Cruiser,” The Spectator 18.891 (Jul. 26, 1845): 712; and Horatio Bridge, Journal of an African Cruiser (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846) vi.
the Library’s authors today, in the 1840s, Bridge’s anonymity pointed to the exact problem that Duyckinck sought to resolve with his publisher’s series. Due to the reprint-driven market, at the moment of its launch, all of the Library’s authors were obscure. Ezra Greenspan notes, “Duyckinck was as upset by few things as he was by the subversion of native authorship by the cheap foreign reprinting policy common among American publishers.”¹⁰ The editor and his partners Wiley and Putnam challenged the market’s oppressive conditions by fashioning the Library of American Books as an avenue through which American authors could flourish and win renown.¹¹

The Author-Making Machinery of the Library of American Books

Contributors to the Library included a broad array of now-familiar literati, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Herman Melville, William Gilmore Simms, Caroline Kirkland, Edgar Allan Poe, Cornelius Matthews, and Bayard Taylor. With the possible exception of Nathaniel Hawthorne, none of these authors had achieved wide recognition by the time Duyckinck included them in his project. Hawthorne enjoyed a growing reputation because he’d already received years of support from literary nationalist and Duyckinck crony John L. O’Sullivan in the pages of The United States Magazine and Democratic Review.¹² Edgar Allan Poe owned some notoriety as a critic, but in spite of regularly publishing short stories and poems

¹⁰ Greenspan 680.

¹¹ Washington Irving and James Fennimore Cooper are exceptions; however, Irving left the United States to publish first in Britain, and William Charvat notes that Cooper was America’s only commercially successful novelist until 1850 (68).

¹² Although Michael Winship discusses Ticknor and Fields’s canonical efforts to promote Hawthorne beginning in the late 1840s (“Hawthorne and the ‘Scribbling Women:’ Publishing the Scarlett Letter in the Nineteenth-Century United States,” Studies in American Fiction 29.1: 3-11, this chapter argues for Duyckinck and O’Sullivan as the critical first instigators of that effort.
in periodicals, even he wasn’t widely acknowledged as a literary writer.\textsuperscript{13} In its review of the newly launched \textit{Library}, the \textit{New Haven Courier} decries the state of American authorship in the reprint-driven market and praises the \textit{Library}'s mission to correct it:

There are many writers in this country whose articles only see the light in pages of a two or three dollar magazine, who are at least equal to some foreign authors’ whose works are reprinted here in the cheap and nasty style by the cart-load. The consequence is that our own authors are scarcely heard of . . . This is all wrong, and we cordially wish the publishers success in the effort to make us better acquainted with American Literature.\textsuperscript{14}

Duyckinck tackled the problem of authorial obscurity in three ways with \textit{The Library of American Books}: by utilizing the format of the publisher’s series to carve a nationalized space out of the foreign reprint-dominated market, by collecting writers’ already published periodical work into durable anthologies, and by seeking out travel narratives to fill the majority of the positions in the series.

Duyckinck—who devoted his entire influential career to creating a distinct literature of the United States—utilized the formal conventions of the \textit{Library of American Books} publisher’s series to carve an oasis for national talent out of the British-centered print market. Publisher’s series came into vogue in the early nineteenth century and quickly became the preferred format for issuing books. They were collections united under a single series title, whose individual volumes appeared serially—usually every month or two. Subjects included a broad mix of topics, including travel, history, literary criticism, poetry, and biography. Identical size, bindings, and cover design camouflaged the volumes’ disparity and implied that they were part of an eminently collectible, cohesive whole.\textsuperscript{15} Even their shared price suggested that each book held

\textsuperscript{13} McGill 193.


\textsuperscript{15} Scott Casper explains that these libraries “took a variety of individual titles, packaged them together, and advertised them under a single brand name” (129).
value in common with all others in the collection. The display of the identically bound books provided material visualization of “literature” as a durable, singular entity; they suggested in physical form the stable existence of such a thing as a literary canon. The series title, printed on every cover, reinforced the constructed unity of the library. Duyckinck’s title, *Library of American Books*, went even further: it proclaimed the nation as the constitutive umbrella of his collection, designating the series as an exclusive preserve within which United States authors might finally rise to prominence.

Duyckinck’s publisher’s series created a national stage upon which American authors might find the spotlight; next, he needed to actually fill that stage with writers. Although travel narratives dominated the *Library of American Books*, non-travel titles also played a critical role. Duyckinck used them to gather an author’s previously published articles, poems, or stories into authoritative collections. These anthologies promoted American writers who were already actively, and often prolifically, publishing, but who couldn’t achieve renown because of the vagaries of a periodical market that subverted the recognition of American authorship. The *Library’s* anthologies, which are somewhat ironically collections of American reprints, also comparatively highlight the unique function that travel books performed in Duyckinck’s project to institute American authorship in the early nineteenth-century United States.

**Poe’s Tales: Anthologizing Authorship**

The second volume in the *Library of American Books*, Poe’s *Tales*, illustrates Duyckinck’s secondary strategy for promoting American authors (*Journal of an African Cruiser* sits first on both accounts). The cheap economies of reprinting foreign books drove American writers to periodicals as their only outlet for publication. There, they issued, often anonymously,
one-off, stand-alone pieces. Under these conditions of sporadic, dispersed publication broad public recognition came slowly, if at all. As Meredith McGill observes of two of the Library of American Books’ now best-known authors, “The regional and ephemeral nature of most of the periodicals in which Poe and Hawthorne published in the 1830s and ‘40s, and the availability of their texts for unauthorized reprinting, meant that complete or even coherent bodies of their work were unavailable to readers.”16 Duyckinck created the Library’s anthologies in answer, anticipating McGill’s “complete and coherent bodies” of work that materialized his authors’ otherwise invisible oeuvres for the reading public.17

Edgar Allan Poe’s Tales and his second Library offering, The Raven and Other Poems, mark Duyckinck’s relative success with his anthology strategy: neither book was wildly popular, but the two collections provided Poe with his most wide-ranging success as an author of fiction. Ezra Greenspan notes that the volumes were “the best hearing he was to get during his lifetime.”18 Meredith McGill observes that, because of the structure of the periodical market, “Poe, who was well known and well respected as critic, could remain relatively unknown as an author, his writing dispersed, but his reputation indeterminate.”19 McGill, like Greenspan, also notes “the only books written by Poe to have been widely circulated in his lifetime (and the only books for which he was paid a royalty): the 1845 Tales and The Raven and Other Poems.”20

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16 McGill 17.

17 Meredith McGill acknowledges that it is difficult, with our entrenched, modern sense of an author-driven literary canon, to imagine a field of literary production that is not centered on the writer. She points out that our perception of author-driven literature arises retroactively, because “critics have rescued anonymous and pseudonymous texts from their disseminated condition and reissued them in standard, multi-volume author’s editions, creating compositive figures and bodies of work that did not exist and could not have existed in the era in which these texts were written” (3).

18 Greenspan 686.

19 McGill 193.

20 McGill 190.
his preface to *The Raven* (volume eight in the *Library of American Books*), Poe indicts the capriciousness of periodical publishing, and the way an author’s works become subject to rampant, uncontrolled reproduction and indiscriminate editing. According to Poe, his anthology allows him to regain control of his content and assert his proper rights as an author:

> These trifles are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going at random ‘the rounds of the press.’ If what I have written is to circulate at all, I am naturally anxious that it should circulate as I wrote it.\(^{21}\)

William Gilmore Simms, Margaret Fuller, Caroline Kirkland, and James Hall also benefited from Duyckinck’s compilation strategy in the *Library of American Books*. In *Views and Reviews of American Literature* (volume nine), Simms highlights his essays’ scattered provenance, noting that they “are taken from the pages of the Southern and American Quarterly Reviews; from the American Monthly and the Knickerbocker magazines; from the Magnolia, Orion, Southern and Western Review, and from other publications of like character.”\(^{22}\) Greenspan observes that Duyckinck bolstered Fuller’s reputation by collecting her work into *Papers on Literature and Art* (volumes nineteen and twenty), an effort that “gave a more concentrated demonstration of her critical powers than could her scattered pieces in the *Dial* and the *Tribune*.\(^{23}\) As Fuller gathers her articles, she realizes that her sizable output had been obscured even from herself by its dispersed publication. She writes that she quickly overwhelmed the two-volume length Duyckinck assigned her: “I find, indeed, that the matter which I had supposed could be comprised in two of these numbers would fill six or eight.”\(^{24}\)

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\(^{23}\) Greenspan 685.

\(^{24}\) Margaret Fuller, *Papers on Literature and Art*, vol. 1 (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846) v-vi.
Thus, when Ezra Greenspan critiques Caroline Kirkland and James Hall’s contributions to the *Library* (*Western Clearings* and *Wilderness and the War Path*, numbers seven and twelve respectively) as “little more than compilations of mostly earlier work,” he strikes just shy of the matter: Kirkland and Hall’s offerings weren’t “little more than compilations,” they were *exactly* compilations of work that had already been published.25

Duyckinck’s anthologies rescued periodical ephemera from oblivion and created durable books—and durable reputations—out of a writer’s short-form, transient pieces. Before the *Library of American Books* launched, the editor even attempted to lure none other than Nathaniel Hawthorne to the series with the promise of a sequence of anthologies. The canny editor wrote his recruit on March 21, 1845:

> One of the advantages of this mode of publication, a very neat and elegant one, by the way, -- of which I send you a specimen in a signature by mail—might be if this first volume is successful and I see no reason to doubt it—the gradual collection and publication of all your tales in successive volumes.26

Hawthorne responded that while at present he had nothing of his own to contribute, he did have something even better: Bridge’s travelogue. “I look for a considerable circulation—more than of my own book proper,”27 the experienced author wrote confidently to the editor. Hawthorne based his judgment on the fact that in 1845, travel writing offered the most dependable returns to American authors and publishers.

25 Greenspan 689.

26 Evert Duyckinck to Nathaniel Hawthorne, May 21, 1845, Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.

27 Nathaniel Hawthorne to Evert Duyckinck, April 7, 1845. Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.
Travel Writing and Authorship

To write about travel in the early nineteenth century was to become the author of a book; the travel genre provided the most immediate means for launching a literary career. In 1832, when the Harper Brothers’ reputation as the leading publisher in New York was growing, Eugene Exman observes that, the author that the brothers were probably most excited about was Captain Benjamin Morrell, Jr., who had recently returned from his fourth voyage to the South Seas. They knew that sure-fire sales would result from the publication of a book of travel and adventure in strange, colorful, and distant lands.

Similarly, Alexander Humboldt’s and John Lloyd Stephens’s works sold at extraordinary rates and enjoyed years of reprintings. In 1840, Richard Henry Dana Jr. became an overnight sensation with the publication of *Two Years Before the Mast* in the Harper Brothers *Family Library* series. In the *Library of American Books*, Herman Melville, Bayard Taylor, and Joel Tyler Headley achieved instant celebrity upon the publication of their travel titles. Duyckinck plugged Margaret Fuller on the title page of her *Library offering, Papers on Literature and Art*, as “The author of *A Summer in the Lakes,*” a travelogue that Duyckinck admired in 1845 as “the only genuine American book, I can think of, published this season.” Duyckinck endorses Fuller’s inclusion in the *Library* and her compilation of literary criticism—a field seemingly far removed from the travel genre—with her status as the author of a popular travel book.

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28 Dona Brown notes that travel accounts were very much in demand in the United States until at least 1840 (449-557). Nigel Leask observes that travel books saturated the European market between 1770 and 1840, and that publishers speedily translated them into multiple foreign languages and pirated them in the periodical press (11-12). This dissertation indicates that popularity stretched even further into the nineteenth century.

29 Exman 29

30 Diary, July 16, 1844. Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.

31 Fuller was soon to embark on her two-year trip to Italy, during which she sent dispatches back to the *Tribune*. Her writings about her New York visits to asylums, prisons, and mental institutions evinced a mode of travel writing that explored the local as exotic. William Stowe notes that “Like other nineteenth-century writers . . . she was attracted by the marketability of travel writing and found that its loose convictions provided an excellent
the decade, travel narratives remained stalwart market performers. After George Palmer Putnam split with John Wiley to open his own firm, one of his first big successes was Francis Parkman’s 1849 *The Oregon Trail*. In his preface to *Journal of an African Cruiser*, Horatio Bridge accordingly notes that the travel author “smiles to find himself, so simply and with so little labor, acquiring a title to be enrolled among the authors of books!”

Duyckinck leveraged that popularity in the *Library of American Books*. The collection’s volumes include anthologies of short fiction, poetry, and criticism—and a single novel—but travel dominates from beginning to end. Of twenty-six identifiable titles (one is lost), twelve can be classified immediately as travel narratives. In addition, the western writing of regional transplants Caroline Kirkland and James Hall collected together journalistic dispatches from the distant frontier. James Hall even remarks upon his traveller’s perspective, writing that

> Our scene lies in a region seldom visited by civilized men, and only known to us through the reports of the adventurous trappers who seek there the solitary haunts of the beaver, and of a few travellers of the more intelligent class, who have been led thither by scientific curiosity or missionary zeal.

Likewise, William Gilmore Simms’s *The Wigwam and the Cabin* (number four), a collection of stories about the American South, and Cornelius Matthews’s *Big Abel and the Little Manhattan* (number five), a novel whose subject matter remains suggestive of a regional, explorative

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32 Greenspan 689.

33 Bridge, *Journal*, vi.

34 *Journal of an African Cruiser, Letters from Italy, Wanderings of a Pilgrim in the Shadow of Mount Blanc, The Alps and the Rhine, The Pilgrim in the Shadow of the Jungfrau Alp, Typee* (2 volumes), *Scenes and Thoughts in Europe, Early Jesuit Missions in North America* (2 volumes of diary entries and letters from missionary-explorers on the early frontier), and *Views A-Foot, or Europe seen with a knapsack and staff* (2 volumes).

emphasize, raise the total number of titles inflected with travel to sixteen out of twenty-six volumes.\textsuperscript{36}

**Wiley and Putnam’s *Library of American Books* (original order)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><em>Journal of an African Cruiser</em>, Horatio Bridge</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><em>Tales</em>, Edgar Allan Poe</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Letters from Italy</em>, Joel T. Headley</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Big Abel and Little Manhattan</em>, Cornelius Matthews</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td><em>Western Clearings</em>, Caroline Kirkland</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td><em>The Raven and Other Poems</em>, Edgar Allan Poe</td>
<td>1845</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td><em>The Wilderness and the War Path</em>, James Hall</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td><em>Typee</em>, vol. 1, Herman Melville</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td><em>Typee</em>, vol. 2, Herman Melville</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td><strong>Missing</strong></td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td><em>Scenes and Thoughts in Europe, by an American</em>, George Henry Calvert</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td><em>Mosses from an Old Manse</em>, vol. 1, Nathaniel Hawthorne</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td><em>Mosses from an Old Manse</em>, vol. 2, Nathaniel Hawthorne</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td><em>Papers on Literature and Art</em>, vol. 1, Margaret Fuller</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td><em>Papers on Literature and Art</em>, vol. 2, Margaret Fuller</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td><em>Views A-Foot, or Europe seen with a knapsack and staff</em>, vol. 1, Bayard Taylor</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td><em>Views A-Foot, or Europe seen with a knapsack and staff</em>, vol. 2, Bayard Taylor</td>
<td>1846</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td><em>Spenser and the Faëry Queen</em>, Caroline Kirkland</td>
<td>1847\textsuperscript{37}</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td><em>Selections from the poetical works of Geoffrey Chaucer with a concise life of that poet and remarks illustrative of his genius</em>, Charles D. Deshler</td>
<td>1847</td>
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\textsuperscript{36} I determined the original order of the *Library* through a physical examination of first-edition titles in the series, a search of publisher’s advertisements for the *Library*, and WorldCat research.

\textsuperscript{37} Kirkland and Deshler’s titles appear to be anomalies; their important distinction is that they present English authors via an American filter. As a Wiley and Putnam circular asserts, “Mrs. Kirkland’s *Spenser and the Fairy Queen* is just ready for publication . . . it will be succeeded by a similar work on Chaucer, from the pen of an American Scholar.” In “Literary Intelligence,” *Wiley and Putnam’s Literary Newsletter* 6.62 (January 1847): 2.
Duyckinck’s prominent use of travel accounts in the *Library of American Books* wasn’t anomalous to that endeavor or even original to him; the editor merely echoed common practice in the market. The same year he issued *Journal of an African Cruiser* to lead the *Library of American Books*, Duyckinck launched Wiley and Putnam’s *Library of Choice Reading*—an acclaimed publisher’s series that brought European texts to the United States. The editor also began that series with a travel narrative, *Eothen; Or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East*. English historian Alexander William Kinglake authored that account of his journeys in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Before Duyckinck helmed the two Wiley and Putnam series, the influential British publisher John Murray III set the stage by capitalizing on travel narratives in his own literary nationalist effort, *The Home and Colonial Library*. Murray chose travel narratives for the first five volumes in his series, which he initiated in 1843 with George Borrow’s *The Bible in Spain; or the journeys, adventures, and imprisonments of an Englishman in an attempt to circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula*. He followed Borrow with Heber’s *Journals in India*, Irby and Mangles’ *Travels*, and Hay’s *Morocco—Letters from the Baltic*. As Angus Fraser observes, Murray showcased “travel (preferably to exotic places) and history (preferably heroic) . . . and biography and memoirs” in the *Home and Colonial Library*. By the time Duyckinck began his libraries, the influential John Murray had already used travel

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38 An 1843 prospectus for the *Colonial and Home Library* underscores Murray’s nationalist goals for the project, trumpeting it as a “Library for the Empire.” Angus Fraser, “John Murray’s Colonial and Home Library,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 91.3 (Sep., 1, 1997), 350.

39 In an indication of the prevalence of travel in the market during this period, Murray also single-handedly launched the modern template for the travel guide, *Murray’s Handbooks for Travellers*—itself a form of a publisher’s series—in 1836 to broad and continuing success. By the end of the century, the distinctive books with red covers and gold lettering had reached over four hundred titles; they were famous for their attention to detail and scholarly style.


41 Fraser 359 and 358.
narratives as the preeminent subject of his publisher’s series, a strategy borne out by the insatiable demand for the genre by early nineteenth-century readers.\(^\text{42}\)

That demand allowed new American travel authors to achieve a level of instant recognition that could fuel an entire career. Virtual unknowns Joel Tyler Headley, Herman Melville, and Bayard Taylor burst onto the publishing scene with their travel-narrative debuts in the *Library of American Books*. Taylor and Melville’s comparative careers particularly demonstrate the firepower of travel in the market, which overran both authors’ attempts to break out of the genre and develop reputations as writers of literary fiction. After he published *Typee* and *Omoo*, Melville shunned any pretense of authoring non-fiction to make an unabashed turn to fiction. He struggled for recognition and financial solvency for the rest of his life. In contrast, Taylor astutely built a long career on travel, travel writing, and travel lectures, even as he simultaneously produced novels and labored to garner acknowledgment as a poet.\(^\text{43}\) Melville and Taylor’s failure to achieve widespread recognition as writers of fiction, and Taylor’s enormous success as a traveller, underscore the significance of travel writing in the antebellum United States. Their experience also challenges the novel’s accepted centrality in the early rise of American literature and authorship in the period.

**Star-Making Travel: Bayard Taylor and Herman Melville**

Ezra Greenspan points out that Herman Melville was “initially the most unknown writer” in the *Library of American Books* and that Bayard Taylor was “younger even than Melville and

\(^\text{42}\) It’s possible that Duyckinck specifically used Murray’s series as a template. The similarities were obvious to a reviewer in the *Examiner*, who noted that the *Journal of an African Cruiser* “appears to be a part of a series . . . in the shape and on the plan of Mr. Murray’s excellent *Colonial Library.*” “Journal of an African Cruiser,” *The Living Age* 7.73 (Oct. 4, 1845): 21.

almost as unknown” when his Views A-Foot, Europe Seen with a Knapsack and a Staff hit the market. 44 When Taylor embarked on the European tour that would make his career, he had already self-published a book of poems that lost money. Short of cash, Taylor financed his trip as he went, sending dispatches to Horace Greeley’s Tribune and a few other regional periodicals. In keeping with Duyckinck’s compilation strategy for his Library authors, it was the collection of those letters into Views A-Foot that established Taylor as a celebrity author. The volume ran through twenty-four editions in thirteen years; moreover, it garnered literary favor. Paul Wermuth notes that “besides encouraging sales . . . [Taylor] received congratulations from Longfellow and Whittier,” two of the poet-luminaries of the period. 45

As Taylor laid plans to publish his first travel book, he secured the already famous (many would say infamous) editor and writer Nathaniel Parker Willis to write an introduction for his volume. 46 In 1846, Willis was the highest paid periodical contributor of his day, an influential editor and publisher in his own right, and an author who had built his literary renown on travel. Willis had worked as a foreign correspondent for the New York Mirror in the early 1830s; his articles, a series of letters about his travels in Europe, were collected into Pencilings by the Way, First Impressions of Foreign Scenes, Customs, and Manners. The book was published in three volumes to wild success in 1835 and reprinted for at least two decades after. Besides writing poems, criticism, and plays, Willis continued to publish extensively in the travel genre throughout his career, including the enormously successful, heavily illustrated Scenes from America (followed by similar titles on Canada and Ireland), Inklings of Adventure, and

44 Greenspan 686-687.

45 Wermouth 18.

Loiterings of Travel; Willis also edited and wrote the introduction for Theodore Sedgwick Fay’s travel account, *Norman Leslie*.

Bayard Taylor modeled his livelihood on the template forged by the elder literary statesman Willis. In planning his second travel account, the youthful Taylor stuck to the established formula, journeying for five months to California as a journalist sending dispatches home. His old publisher from the *Library of American Books*, George Palmer Putnam (he and John Wiley had dissolved their partnership in 1848), brought out Taylor’s collected travel dispatches under the title *Eldorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire* in 1850. Taylor’s later travel writing included *A Journey to Central Africa; or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile* (1854), *A Visit to India, China, and Japan* (1855), and the *Cyclopedia of modern travel: a record of adventure, exploration and discovery, for the last fifty years* (1856).

Like Melville, the peripatetic Taylor aspired to a more purely artistic career. He wrote verse throughout his life and issued poetry collections that reference travel—perhaps in an attempt to capitalize on the travel genre’s popularity in a different form. Among other collections, Taylor published *Rhymes of Travel* in 1849, *Poems of the Orient* in 1854 (his most successful book of poetry, which sold about 2,000 copies), and *Poems of Home and Travel* in 1855. Taylor attempted his first novel in 1863, when he used his reputation as a travel writer to make the leap to long fiction much as Herman Melville had by moving from *Typee* and *Omoo* to *Mardi* fourteen years earlier. The network established with the *Library of American Books* remained productive for Taylor; Putnam published *Hannah Thurston: A Story of American Life*,

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48 Wermuth 108-155.
and Library stalwart Nathaniel Hawthorne commented positively on it. The New York Times panned Hannah Thurston, calling it “stupid,” but also noted that Taylor’s career as a travel writer allowed him the attempt: “Mr. Bayard Taylor has gained a very extended popularity as a descriptive writer . . . and when it was announced that he had a novel in hand, he was able to claim in advance the suffrages of thousands who were disposed to take on trust anything that might come from his pen.” The novel sold a very respectable fifteen thousand copies; Taylor followed with three more, two of which also sold well, and a fourth that was largely reviled.

Throughout his lifetime, Taylor remained frustrated that he couldn’t exceed his popularity as a travel writer to achieve lasting accolades as a poet. His biographer Paul Wermuth notes that “Taylor wanted to be a poet so much that his desire is almost painful to read about.”

The author chafed under the lasting popularity of Views A-Foot, which continued to define his authorial reputation for years after its initial publication in The Library of American Books. He wrote to his friend George Boker on April 4, 1852,

I am not insensible that nine-tenths of my literary success (in a publishing view) springs from those very ‘Views A-Foot,’ which I now blush to read—I am known to the public not as poet, the only title I covet, but as one who succeeded in seeing Europe with little money, and the chief merits accorded to me are not passions or imagination, but strong legs and economical habits.

Taylor’s disdain for his first book, and his frustration with his audience’s lingering attachment to it, echoes Herman Melville’s more famous exclamation about his Library of American Books.

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50 Wermuth 155.

51 Taylor, Letters, 95.
Melville’s *Typee*: The Dearth of the Novel

Like Bayard Taylor’s *Views A-Foot*, Melville’s *Library of American Books* offering, *Typee*, made him famous and hovered in his public’s imagination for the rest of his career. Although ostensibly a non-fiction travel narrative, the book’s generic classification has sparked challenge for nearly two hundred years. John Sampson notes, “From the moment of its first submission to the publisher, critical debate about Herman Melville’s *Typee* has focused upon its status as fiction or as history.”

Scholars tend to emphasize the author’s sweeping fictionalizations and categorize *Typee* as an imaginative romance that, although founded on a truthful kernel, remains much more a novel than a non-fiction travel account. One fact that particularly damns Melville’s veracity: the author spent a scant few days on the island he describes, a length that he expands to four months’ worth of heady adventures in *Typee*.

Melville also demonstrates the travel writer’s penchant for cribbing observations from extant

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54 Michael Clark sums up the problems of classifying *Typee*, “What is the relationship between literal fact and symbol? Where does fact shade into imaginary event? And at what point does imaginary reconstruction of an event become fiction? These questions have plagued critics of *Typee* since it was first published.” In “Melville’s *Typee*: Fact, Fiction, and Esthetics,” *Arizona Quarterly* 34 (1978): 352.

55 There’s no question that *Typee*’s timeframe is a bald-faced fiction. “And so, with involuted irony,” observes Samuel Otter, “Melville insists that he has recorded events ‘just as they occurred’ in a book whose title claim of ‘four month’s residence’ represents a quadrupling of the length of time he purportedly spent with the Taipi in 1842.” In “Typee: ‘An Almost Incredible Book,’” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 51.1-3 (2005): 172.
works and passing them off as his own, a habit that undercuts his text’s non-fiction integrity in the eyes of modern scholars.\textsuperscript{56}

Ironically, in spite of almost two centuries of discourse over Typee’s slippery credibility, the book’s central truth remains largely unremarked: Melville’s narrative sleights of hand aren’t unusual or even particularly egregious for the time period in which he writes.\textsuperscript{57} His Polynesian narrative reflects the customs of the era’s travel writers, who as a matter of course skated nonchalantly between the factual and the fanciful and whose narratives were always suspect and often flagrantly plagiarized or downright imagined.\textsuperscript{58} The important matter that faced Melville in 1846 was that Typee—and any text that claimed to be a travel narrative—had to maintain a tension with the truth: the narrative could be partially true, but it could not be completely untrue. There must be the possibility, even under pressure, that the most sensational (and salacious) aspects of a travel narrative \textit{might} be real. Early nineteenth-century travel accounts, in other words, anticipate the early-twenty-first-century fascination with so-called “reality” television, which Chris Weller observes “is fiction sold as nonfiction, to an audience that likes to believe both are possible simultaneously.”\textsuperscript{59} It was this titillation—a flirtation with fabulous truth—that

\textsuperscript{56} Mary K. Bercaw Edwards provides a thorough overview of Melville’s sources and notes, “The fact that Melville borrowed much of his information from other writers has long been known, the evidence that he may have boldly claimed this material as his own experience in his first book sheds a new and vivid light on his development as a writer” (24). In “Questioning Typee,” \textit{Leviathan} 11.2: 26

\textsuperscript{57} It is perhaps useful to compare the period’s fascination with dime museum exhibits, like those at P.T. Barnum’s American Museum, with the complex relationship between travel narratives and audience expectation of the “truth.” As Andrea Stulman Dennett notes, museum exhibitors “knew that it was the outrageous curiosities that brought visitors.” At the same time, museums (like travel narratives) subsisted on publicity-generating controversy and a pretense of credible, first person witnessing. As Dennett further notes, “The raison d’etre of the dime museum was the one-of-a kind live exhibit.” In their way, travel narratives offered a “live exhibit” of “outrageous curiosities” in the supposedly non-fiction reportage of the travel writer. In \textit{Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America} (New York: New York University, 1997) 14, 2.

\textsuperscript{58} Edgar Allan Poe skewered the plagiarizing and imaginative tendencies of travel writers when he perpetuated a hoax with his entirely fictional \textit{Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym}.

an acknowledged fiction couldn’t deliver. Real or not, the single most important trait of the book that launched Melville’s career is that *Typee* is not a novel.

Of twenty-seven titles in the *Library of American Books*, Duyckinck chose only one novel, *Big Abel and Little Manhattan* by Cornelius Matthews, for inclusion in his proto-canonical series; it appeared as book number five. The usually shrewd editor had a stubborn faith in Matthews’s literary talent, no matter how much critics and even his (and Matthews’s) fellow Young Americans pilloried the author and tried to change Duyckinck’s mind. John L. O’Sullivan refused to carry a notice of *Big Abel* in the *Democratic Review*, an astonishing betrayal, given the closely shared purpose of the periodical and the *Library of American Books*, not to mention Duyckinck and O’Sullivan’s own close partnership. O’Sullivan writes to Duyckinck, “I could not insert your review of Matthews’s book . . . [due to] my knowledge of your too devoted friendship as a critic. The only two persons I know (both very clever men) who have read it, damned it very unequivocally” (emphasis in the original). Thus, the selection of the single novel in the *Library of American Books* might be best explained not by the book’s genre, but by Duyckinck’s well-documented myopia in regards to his good friend Cornelius Matthews.

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60 Robert Sampson notes that “In Cornelius Matthews, Duyckinck perceived the long-awaited American literary genius; it as a view shared by few others” (134).

61 O’Sullivan’s rejection of his close ally Duyckinck’s request possibly complicates the self-interested cronyism of the review system examined by Laura Cohen in *The Fabrication of American Literature* and William Charvat in *Profession of Authorship* or perhaps it merely indicates the extreme depths of O’Sullivan’s opinion of Matthews.

62 John L. O’Sullivan to Evert Duyckinck, October 3, 1845, Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.

63 Edward Widmer notes, for instance, that “history has not been kind to Mathews, and with good reason. His books remain more or less unreadable” (99).
Influential British publisher John Murray III similarly eschewed novels in his precedent-setting *Home and Colonial Library*. His own biography from the John Murray archive at the National Library of Scotland scolds the famous publisher for that choice, noting that, “Murray did not include many fictional works in the series which was . . . a problem.”

The Library of Scotland’s censure reflects a retroactive assumption about the novel’s importance that does not reflect the actual condition of the early nineteenth-century print market. Angus Fraser writes of Murray’s *Library* that, “fiction was virtually excluded as a matter of course because the House of Murray had opted out of that volatile market in the uneasy 1830s.” Murray selected books for the *Home and Colonial Library* based on market realities, not because he lacked vision.

Correspondingly, the largest publisher in New York and notorious vendor of British reprints, the Harper Brothers, seldom missed a market opportunity, yet excluded novels from their many successful series. They may have been following Murray’s lead, and their practice certainly didn’t hurt their success, as Scott Casper notes,

No American firm issued more books in the 1830s, and none gained as wide a reputation. That reputation wed much to a strategy, borrowed from English publishers, that the Harpers pursued in the 1830s; the creation of ‘library’ series of books, most famously *Harper’s Family Library* and the *School District Library*.

The Harpers pirated their most famous collection, the *Family Library*, begun in 1832, almost volume for volume from John Murray’s own *Family Library* and other British series. According

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66 Fraser 359 and 358.

67 Casper 128.
to Casper, however, novels were largely verboten from that mix: “the Harpers insisted that the *Family Library* would be filled with only useful genres and no novels,” an imperative that suggests the publisher considered novels frivolous and even morally suspect—and, perhaps most importantly, too risky as investments.68

The canny Harpers didn’t ignore novels entirely; they issued and advertised the *Library of Select Novels* beginning in the 1830s, a single-genre publisher’s series that allowed them to explore the long-form fiction market while safely ghettoizing novels from (and minimizing their impact upon) their otherwise generically eclectic publisher’s series. They also hedged their bets and stuck to their tried-and-true piratical formula: at least initially, the novels were reprints.69 An early advertisement for the series acknowledges the debate around the “utility or evil of novel reading,” and goes to great lengths to justify the series, proclaiming both the “irresistible” temptation to publish novels, an argument inherently based on a profit motive, and justifying that mercenary pursuit by arguing that at least *these* novels have been vetted to provide edifying content:

> the universal acceptation which they have ever received, and still continue to receive . . . would prove an irresistible incentive to their production. The remonstrances of moralists and the reasonings of philosophy have ever been, and will still be found, unavailing against the desire to partake of an enjoyment so attractive. Men will read novels; and therefore the utmost that wisdom and philanthropy can do is to cater prudently for the public appetite, and, as it is hopeless to attempt the exclusion of fictitious writings from the shelves of the library, to see that they are encumbered with the least, possible number of such as have no other merit that that of novelty.70

68 It’s quite common to assume that eighteenth-century and antebellum readers thought of travel narratives as a safer and more morally edifying genre than the novel. The controversy surrounding *Tybee* belies this assumption, as does Ulrike Brisson’s observation that “A number of women travellers . . . have always dissociated themselves from the ideal of domestic womanhood” and engaged in flagrantly scandalous behavior (and wrote about it) in their travels. In “Fish and Fetish: Mary Kingsley’s Studies of Fetish in West Africa,” *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 35.3 (Fall 2005): 326.


70 Ibid.
Eventually, the Library of Select Novels proved a great success.\textsuperscript{71} It ran over several decades to more than four hundred titles, earning praise in 1873 in The Boston Transcript as “an institution, a reliable and unfailing recreative resource to the comfort of countless readers. . . . In railway-cars and steamships, in boudoirs and studios, on verandas and in private sanctums, the familiar brown covers are to be seen.”\textsuperscript{72} In the initial phases of canon formation, however, and even later into the nineteenth century, novels had no place in libraries that offered “useful knowledge” with a pretense of truth to the reading public. More importantly, novels posed a high-risk business proposition; Murray exited the market and the Harpers handled them in a way that minimized their impact on their larger business. Travel narratives, on the other hand, were a winning gamble.

Accordingly, John Murray snapped up the unknown Melville’s travel account Typee (first published as Narrative of a Four Months' Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands, 1846) for his Home and Colonial Library. Melville’s brother and agent Gansevoort immediately leveraged that success by visiting the London-based George Palmer Putnam, who rushed Melville’s manuscript stateside for inclusion in the Library of American Books.\textsuperscript{73} The publisher anticipated a commercial triumph, writing Duyckinck that “The ‘Marquesas’ narrative (completed) is the only early book by this steamer. I think from what I read of this that it is sure to take, to a satisfactory extent, if indeed it does not prove as good a hit

\textsuperscript{71} The eventual success of the Library of Select Novels may mirror the rise of the novel generally in the later half of the nineteenth century (see Jordan Stein, “Are ‘American Novels’ Novels?”).

\textsuperscript{72} “Publisher’s Advertisement,” in James De Mille, An American Baron (New York: Harper Brothers, 1872) back matter

\textsuperscript{73} Greenspan 686.
as Dana’s *Life Before the Mast*. Dana’s narrative of life at sea sold 10,000 copies in its first year of publication and remained an industry benchmark six years later. Putnam had high hopes for Melville’s Polynesian adventure.

True to expectations, *Typee* achieved blockbuster status and made Melville a star. Perry Miller notes, “Upon the appearance of his first book . . . in 1846 he became overnight one of the best known, or at least most sensational, writers in America.” Flush with success, the author started on his sequel, *Omoo*, but his reputation was already sinking: as soon as *Typee* hit the market, a scandal erupted so powerful as to threaten Melville’s future literary aspirations.

The Marquesas Island tale he related, filled with seduction (partially clad, sexually available women!) and horror (cannibals!), seemed too good to be true. His description of sylph-like natives, gliding in the water around his boat and then joining sailors on deck in a highly metaphorical “dance” was particularly popular, as Hershel Parker notes: “Numerous reviewers in both countries chose for their extracts passages in which Marquesan women were unclothed.” These sun-drenched scenes lost their magnetic power if they proved to be merely a construct of Melville’s imagination instead of a reality-based voyeuristic opportunity for his audience.

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74 Putnam to Duyckinck, February 2, 1846, Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.


76 Miller 4.

77 As Hershel Parker notes, “Melville’s concerns were genuine . . . for he was fighting for nothing less than a chance at a literary career” (419).

78 Mary K. Bercaw Edwards observes that “Reviewers were skeptical that *Typee* was the work of a common sailor and skeptical about Melville’s adventures” (26).

79 Parker 414.

80 Again, reality television provides a useful parallel for understanding the odd relationship between audience, truth, and fiction in travel narratives. Lemi Baruh writes that “Accounts of the rising popularity of reality television cite voyeurism as an important reason for its success among viewers. . . . television viewers themselves perceive reality programs to be both exhibitionistic and voyeuristic.” From “Publicized Intimacies on Reality
Strangely, even as *Typee*’s salacious plot points captivated audiences and ignited controversy, the narrative’s ability to impart factual information remained central to its place in the market. The *University Magazine* noted, for instance, “The main interest of Mr. Melville’s work hangs on his personal narrative, but its value as a contribution to knowledge arises from his minute account of this tribe, their characters, usages, and mode of life.” Even after almost two centuries of close inquisition into its veracity, *Typee*’s scientific credibility remains surprisingly intact, as evidenced by the work of Emanuel Dreschel. In 2008, he notes that *Typee* and *Omoo* “are of interest not only for their historical and ethnographic information at large . . . but also for their historical sociolinguistic data, as they concern especially language contact in the early colonial Pacific.”

Melville needed *Typee* to seem true; its value in the market, both from an entertainment and educational perspective, rested on its identity as a travel narrative and its ability to impart useful information in an interesting narrative.

A solution to the scandal that threatened to engulf Melville’s career miraculously appeared when the author’s long-lost sidekick, Richard Tobias Greene—the famed Toby of *Typee*—dramatically resurfaced from his never-to-be-heard-from-again island disappearance. Greene verified his shared adventures with Melville in a piece that appeared in the *Commercial Advertiser* on July 1, 1846 and that quickly spread across the United States. By August, Toby’s testimony reached Britain in the *Athenaeum*, which had issued the very first notice of *Typee* a

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81 Melville’s uncomplimentary treatment of missionaries in the South Pacific also provoked furor from devout reviewers. See Parker, 236-260.


few months prior. Greene’s conveniently timed, attention-grabbing reemergence smelled suspicious to reviewers, who doubted his story and his identity. In the end, Toby’s corroboration, however suspect, was all that Melville needed. The Athenaeum reviewer comments that

The real Toby had turned up (in print at least) a live and uneaten man . . . There is a kind of ‘handy-dandy’ in this mode of presenting the matter—a sort of illogical evidence—a species of affirming in a circle—which increases the puzzle. We do not undertake to light our readers through the mystery. All we can say as to the authenticity of Mr. Herman Melville’s narrative is what we have said before—it deserves to be true. . . . We vouch for the verisimilitude—but not the verity. In his subsequent career, Melville fashioned novels, short stories, and poems after his real-life experiences, but he never returned to the travel narrative proper. He also never matched the acclaim or success he achieved with his two first books, Typee and its sequel, Omoo. Not so Bayard Taylor, who continued to write travel accounts to resounding success and who built a

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84 Greene did not contest Melville’s fictional four-month timeline, which renders his own affirmation highly suspect—a layering of fiction upon fiction to achieve non-fiction credibility. See Parker, 431-448.


87 Parker 431-448.
career on travel that was supplemented—not replaced—by his aspirations to write fiction.\textsuperscript{88} In Melville’s lifetime, roughly sixteen thousand and thirteen thousand copies of \textit{Typee} and \textit{Omoo} sold in Britain and the United States. His next closest sales were \textit{White-Jacket} at almost six thousand. \textit{Moby Dick}, first published in 1851, garnered only about three thousand, seven hundred sales.\textsuperscript{89} Bayard Taylor, on the other hand, followed his career-making \textit{Library of American Books} turn, \textit{Views A-Foot}, with the stunning success of \textit{El Dorado; or, Adventures in the Path of Empire}, a travel narrative that demolished Melville and Richard Henry Dana Jr.’s numbers. \textit{El Dorado} sold forty thousand copies in the United States and Britain within \textit{two weeks} of its publication in 1850.\textsuperscript{90} In contrast to Taylor’s carefully orchestrated career, Melville’s single-minded devotion to fiction appears stubbornly tone deaf to the realities of the antebellum print market. The now-canonical writer dissipated the initial success of his travel narratives by turning exclusively to authoring the fiction for which he is famous today.

Duyckinck filled the \textit{Library of American Books} with travel narratives like \textit{Typee} and \textit{Views A-Foot} because he needed the volumes to sell, but the activist-editor had loftier goals than mere profitability in mind with his revolutionary publisher’s series. In the face of continued British and European dominance of the cultural landscape, the \textit{Library’s} first-person citizen-travellers gave voice to an increasingly self-aware, autonomous United States asserting its will to self-determination. Travel authors wrote from the perspective of a young nation eschewing its

\textsuperscript{88} Like Melville, Taylor attempted a turn to fiction and poetry, but, unlike Melville, he always “devoted a large portion of his time to wandering over the world; and he produced some ten volumes of travel narratives . . . he also published during this same period ten other books of fiction and verse; but it was through the travel and subsequent lecture tours that Taylor became famous.” Wermuth, 19.


European antecedents for a first-person, decolonized accounting of the natural world. As John L. O’Sullivan writes in the first volume of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, in order for the United States to achieve autonomy, “All history has to be rewritten . . . All old subjects of thought and all new questions arising, connected more or less directly with human existence, have to be taken up again and re-examined.” Travel writers served as the key innovators of O’Sullivan’s mission. Their reportage on even familiar foreign ground claimed a new perspective and situated the United States as the wellspring of democratic invention from which their fresh observations arose.

**Library Americans Abroad: Personifying a Nation**

Audiences on both sides of the Atlantic understood that travel writers produced more than straightforward reporting; they always colored their observational performance—the very act of description itself—with national affect in contrast to the lands through which they ventured. Reading a travel narrative reveals two different locations at once: the exotic places that the author visits and the native realm of the author’s home. The first *Athenaeum* review of *Typee* observes positively, for instance, “Mr. Melville’s manner is New World all over,” highlighting the “New World” as the formative backdrop that fuels the exciting new author’s style. Thus, when Ezra Greenspan notes that:

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91 When Evert Duyckinck and his brother George relaunched *The Literary World* in 1847, they advertised a section called “Out of Way Places of Europe, a series of articles well worthy of being distinguished from the usual letters of Foreign Travellers. The writer keeps out of the way as well of John Murray as he does of the public highway.” Keeping “out of the way” of John Murray rejects his popular, British produced travel guides for an original, American-driven itinerary and perspective. “New Volume of the Literary World,” advertising pamphlet, January 1, 1849. Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.


93 “Narrative of a Four Months’ Residence among the Natives of a Valley of the Marquesas Islands: or a Peep at Polynesian Life,” *The Athenaeum* 956 (Feb. 21, 1846): 189.
Melville and Taylor were to succeed so well in entertaining their audience with their energetic, vivid accounts of distant places, as recorded through fresh, young eyes, that to a considerable degree both men were quickly to become identified by their earliest works and with that genre.\textsuperscript{94} it’s important to note that nineteenth-century readers would identify Taylor and Melville’s “fresh young eyes” not just with the travelling authors, but with the energetic, fledgling democratic nation itself.

Accordingly, in his introduction to Bayard Taylor’s \textit{Views A-Foot}, Nathaniel Willis positions his young protégé as an exemplary citizen abroad, molding him after a young Benjamin Franklin: a frugal, industrious, former printer’s apprentice. Willis lauds Taylor’s journey as “a fine instance of character and energy. The book, which records the difficulties and struggles of a printer’s apprentice . . . must be interesting to Americans. The pride of the country is in its self-made men.”\textsuperscript{95} Biographer Paul Wermuth also notes of \textit{View A-Foot} that, “the spectacle of a young American who left for Europe with such supreme confidence and without much money showed the superiority of the American fiber.”\textsuperscript{96} A reviewer in the British \textit{Spectator} agrees that Taylor’s narrative may “be assumed to illustrate . . . the aspiring energy of the American mind.”\textsuperscript{97} Besides representing the nation, Taylor filled his text with “a pervasive patriotism . . . [that] frequently alluded to the superiority of American institutions, customs, and people.”\textsuperscript{98} In a series that externally applied the imprimatur of the nation to each cover (\textit{“Library of American

\textsuperscript{94} Greenspan 686. \\
\textsuperscript{95} Taylor, \textit{Views A-Foot}, vi. \\
\textsuperscript{96} Wermuth 37. \\
\textsuperscript{97} “J. B. Taylor’s Views A-Foot in Europe,” \textit{The Spectator} 20 (Jan. 30, 1847): 111. \\
\textsuperscript{98} Wermouth 35.}
Books”), the travel writer went even further: he or she embedded the characteristics and superiority of the United States directly into the internal workings of the text itself.

While Bayard Taylor charmed British and American reviewers, Joel Tyler Headley adopted such an aggressively patriotic and populist stance in Letters from Italy that he incited a transatlantic maelstrom and divided his notices along strictly national lines. Stateside reviews fêted the third volume in the Library for its American perspective. British reviewers reviled his anti-elitist, rough-hewn facade, which antagonized their sense of literary propriety. Duyckinck took delight in Headley’s impertinent tweaking of the British print establishment, writing his author, “By the way, your book is extensively noticed in England. . . . You are grilled, roasted, and barbecued in London . . . Shall I give this fire a stir?” He comments later in the same letter, “I wish I could hear you laugh at all this.”99 The British Examiner took particular offense at Letters from Italy’s lowbrow discourse. The reviewer snidely noted, “This is a very droll book; a perfect picture of young America swaggering about Italian towns, with its hat exceedingly on one side, its hands in its coat pockets, and snatches of an entirely unknown tongue on its lips.”100 In a description that uncannily anticipates Walt Whitman’s jaunty1855 frontispiece and the assertively democratic Leaves of Grass, the Examiner positions Headley’s text as the incarnation of the upstart commoner United States, exemplifying travel narratives’—and travel protagonists’—parallel identification with the author’s land of origin. The review stung Headley, who wrote Duyckinck that “The Examiner goes into me like a coal coat,” and “If I had dreamt the English papers would have taken so much notice of my book I should have gone over my letters with more care. Hang ‘em. Those

99 Evert Duyckinck to Joel T. Headley, September 6, 1845, Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.

English critics are lynx eyed.” Duyckinck made the best of the poor notices by relishing Headley’s shrill English reception; their agitated response indicated Letters from Italy’s ability to oppose British cultural dominance while it celebrated and asserted the unique voice of the nascent nation.

In contrast to British response, stateside reviewers hailed Letters from Italy precisely because it achieved an original American aesthetic. Rufus Wilmot Griswold observed that the text “retains all its freshness and distinctiveness, and observes with native intelligence.” The New York Evening Gazette stressed that it was Headley’s American voice that leant the travelogue, and the Library of American Books, value:

to those who have enjoyed the privilege of passing over the same ground and moving amid similar occurrences, [these letters] are very valuable. They are truly American . . . we are glad to see foreign countries described in domestic phrase, and to enjoy the description the more by means of the comparisons and illustrations of an intelligent countryman. If the selections of the publishers continue to be made with the same taste and discrimination, they will do much towards forming an American Literature.

Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine (New York) similarly finds that Headley’s “description of Rome is the best we have ever seen not excepting those found in the most successful Journals of English travellers in Italy. The impression, on reading parts of it, is, that Italy has never before been described” (emphasis in the original). The stress applied to “Italy” by the reviewer underscores Headley’s achievement. In concert with John L. O’Sullivan’s desire for an American literature that would revise extant forms of knowledge, Headley’s travel account makes even the well-worn topic of Italy, reported upon by masses of visitors, appear completely new—“never before

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102 Rufus Griswold, Prose Writers of America (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1849) 540.
seen”—with his American perspective. For better or worse (depending on the reviewer’s point of view), the travel writers in the *Library of American Books* produced not just educational and entertaining non-fiction that would sell, but an intrinsically identifiable literature of the United States.

True to Duyckinck’s mission to promote American authorship, Headley’s appearance in the *Library of American Books* launched his now much forgotten career as an astonishingly prolific travel writer and author of patriotic histories. Before his *Library* debut, Headley had achieved only two desultory publications. The first was an anonymous 1844 translation (from German) of a travel account by Charles Sealsfield, *North and South, or Scenes and Adventures in Mexico*. Duyckinck helmed Headley’s second publication the same year, when he edited the author’s travel correspondence, titled it *Italy and the Italians in a series of letters*, and issued it as the lead in an early attempt at a nationalist series with publisher I.S. Platt.\(^{105}\) That project never gained traction; as a result, Headley’s book garnered miniscule distribution. The undeterred Duyckinck remained stubbornly faithful to his author and to his nationalist project—a persistence that paid off the very next year with the launch of both the *Library of American Books* and what was to become Headley’s wildly productive career.

Joel Tyler Headley never abandoned the populist nationalism he articulated in *Letters from Italy*; it became the bedrock of a formula that powered his four-decade contribution to American culture—a contribution that began with the *Library of American Books* and spanned Headley’s entire lifetime. As Duyckinck prepared to issue the newly configured *Library of American Books* with Wiley and Putnam, Headley expanded his original travel text and renamed

it *Letters from Italy*. Duyckinck issued it as volume three of the *Library*.\(^{106}\) Headley followed quickly with a second 1845 offering, *The Alps and the Rhine* (volume number ten), after which he maintained a frenetic output for almost the rest of the nineteenth century.\(^{107}\) In 1846, Headley issued *Napoleon and His Marshals*—it went through twenty-four editions in the next five years—and, in 1847, *General Washington and his Generals* (both with Baker and Scribner), two explosively successful titles that were reprinted every year, in several different versions, for almost his entire life. His authorial voice may have tweaked British reviewers, but in 1849, Rufus Griswold presciently called him “one of the most promising of the youthful writers today.”\(^{108}\) In all, Headley produced more than fifty books, the majority of which remained in print and were issued in fresh editions for decades after their first appearance. He finished his last volume in 1891, just a few years before his death.

In contrast to Headley, Taylor, and Melville’s extraordinary *Library* debuts, Horatio Bridge seems little more than an also-ran failure for Duyckinck’s author-making machine. Bridge’s *Journal of an African Cruiser* achieved enough success to set the *Library* on firm footing and please Duyckinck, and Putnam reissued the *Journal* in 1853 as part of *Putnam’s Popular Library*.\(^{109}\) Nonetheless, after his 1845 debut, Bridge didn’t publish another title until

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106 Direct evidence remains scarce as to why Headley’s book was third in the Wiley and Putnam series when it was first in Platt’s. Further research into Headley’s papers might provide an answer. I suspect that either Bridge’s narrative was ready before Headley’s expanded edition, or Duyckinck favored Africa over Italy as a first subject, then chose a mix of forms (travel and anthology) for his first two volumes rather than back-to-back travel titles.

107 A careful perusal of WorldCat discovers over fifty titles attributed to Headley; at least half appear to be original. The others represent a continuous, highly active repurposing and reissuing of his existing content under different titles and formats. Besides his repurposed content, many of his original titles remained in print, with new editions issued almost every year, for almost the entire century.

108 Griswold 540.

109 A search of WorldCat indicates that Putnam heavily weighted this series with travel narratives issued in 1852 and 1853, including: Eduard Jerrman’s *Pictures from St. Petersburg*, Sherard Osborns’s *Stray Leaves from an Arctic Journal*, Cora Montgomery’s *Eagle Pass, or, Life On the Border*, Thomas Hodd’s *Up the Rhine*, Frederick
1893, his *Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Bridge’s two solitary books forlornly bookend Joel Tyler Headley’s more than forty years and fifty volumes of authorial productivity, a contrast that appears to undercut Duyckinck’s editorial wisdom in designating *Journal of an African Cruiser* to lead the *Library of American Books*.

**Double-Dealing Authorship in *Journal of an African Cruiser***

A closer look at *Journal of an African Cruiser* reveals Horatio Bridge as something of a red herring for scholars tracing the *Library of American Books*’ author-making prowess. Rather than supporting Bridge, Duyckinck short-changed his first-position contributor in favor of promoting the already established Nathaniel Hawthorne. Contrary to the veteran writer’s wishes, when the *Journal* appeared, its title page credited Hawthorne by name as editor, but kept Bridge anonymous, acknowledging him only as “an officer of the U.S. Navy.”\(^{110}\) Hawthorne had intended to launch his great friend Bridge with the volume, perhaps in repayment for his guaranteeing *Twice-Told Tales* against loss, which had enabled its publication in 1837.\(^{111}\) In spite of his aspirations for his friend, Hawthorne knew that Bridge’s neophyte status might move the book’s publication back in the series. When Duyckinck accepted the *Journal*, Hawthorne wrote excitedly:

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\(^{110}\) Bridge, *Journal*. When Putnam republished the book in 1853, he included both Hawthorne and Bridge on the title page.

\(^{111}\) Early in their collaboration, Hawthorne considered the value his more-established name might lend the text in conjunction with Bridge’s. He wrote to Bridge in March 1843 that “I doubt not that Harpers, or somebody else, will be glad to publish it . . . My name shall appear as editor in order to give it what little vogue may be derived from thence, and its own merits will do the rest.” Hawthorne changed his mind as the publication date approached, deciding that Bridge should appear as the sole author. Bridge, *Recollections*, 97.
Dear Bridge,—I am happy to announce that your book is accepted. . . . Few new authors make their bows to the public under such favorable auspices; but you always were a lucky devil. . . . I don’t know when it is to come out—probably soon; although I suppose they will wish the American series to be led by some already popular names.

Hawthorne anticipates that Bridge will make an acknowledged “bow to the public” as the author of the *Journal* once the series begins with “some already popular names.” In pulling his title-page bait and switch, Duyckinck accomplished that plan exactly. He put *Journal of an African Cruiser*, a highly coveted travel narrative, in the first position and also led with an “already popular” name: Hawthorne himself.

By the time the *Library* launched, Nathaniel Hawthorne was the obvious senior player around whom the editor might build a cadre of American authors. He was the most broadly recognized writer in Duyckinck’s stable, and he was also a well-established mouthpiece for the Young America movement. John L. O’Sullivan had spent years promoting Hawthorne in the pages of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. As Robert Sampson notes, the magazine vigorously defended America’s national character and literature from foreign attacks, opened its columns to new authors now counted among the classics, and sought to establish some critical standards for the appreciation and development of American literature, [but] the *Democratic Review* is best known, aside from politics, for its association with Hawthorne.

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112 Bridge, *Journal*, 100.

113 Direct evidence for Duyckinck’s decision is scarce. He may have intentionally ignored Hawthorne, or he may have simply assumed that Hawthorne’s editorial role shaped the book so much that he was essentially the author. Duyckinck associated the volume so completely with Hawthorne that in an 1846 diary entry he muses upon “N Hawthorn’s African Cruiser (sic)” with nary a mention of Bridge’s involvement. (Diary entry, July 18, 1846, Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library).

114 Scholnick 128.

115 Sampson 135.
Most tellingly, Hawthorne’s short story “Toll-Gatherers Day” appeared in the first volume of the periodical, which officially launched the literary nationalist movement. Hawthorne’s inclusion in the seminal issue denotes his position as authorial representative of the Young Americans; it was a natural outgrowth of that designation that he would also anchor the *Library of American Books*.

One year after the series launched with *Journal of an African Cruiser* credited to Hawthorne, Wiley and Putnam published *Mosses from an Old Manse* as volumes seventeen and eighteen in the *Library*. Its pages offered readers twenty-three short stories by Hawthorne that had already appeared in print, mostly in the *Democratic Review*.\(^{116}\) In tandem with his attribution for the *Journal*, Hawthorne had supplied the *Library* with a travel book (à la Melville, Headley, and Taylor) and an anthology of previously published work that collected his scattered stories into durable form (à la Simms, Fuller, Hall, and Kirkland). Taken together, these offerings execute, on Hawthorne’s behalf, Duyckinck’s two-pronged strategy to wield travel and anthology to beget American authorship in the reprint-flooded market of the antebellum United States. Hawthorne pivots between both forms, the utility player of Duyckinck’s literary nationalist project and the exemplary recipient of the editor’s author-making largesse.\(^{117}\)

Although Duyckinck promoted Nathaniel Hawthorne by name on the book’s title page, Horatio Bridge’s role, even as an anonymous author, was important enough that his designation as “an officer of the U.S. Navy” appeared in larger type above Hawthorne’s name. Bridge had written *Journal of an African Cruiser* from diaries he kept during an eighteen-month sojourn as a purser for a group of war ships patrolling the west coast of Africa. The ships guarded against

\(^{116}\) Revealed by a search of the contents of *The Democratic Review*.

\(^{117}\) Meredith McGill and Michael Winship credit Ticknor and Fields’s efforts in the 1850s for establishing Hawthorne as an author, but Duyckinck and John L. O’Sullivan played a critical initial role consolidating Hawthorne’s reputation in the 1840s.
illegal slavers and supplied protection to the settlements of former U.S. slaves attached to the American Colonization Society in Liberia. The title page’s bold-faced credit to “an Officer of the U.S. Navy” usefully proclaimed the narrative’s national frame and implied the book’s authority as a report by a military official. Such formality suggested that the book’s author would avoid artistic inclination in favor of meticulous observation, a message Bridge reinforced in his preface, when he owned to a “lack of literary practice and constructive skill” and claimed that he composed his book almost directly from his consecutive diary entries “rather than a rearrangement on artistic principles.” On the surface, Bridge modestly excused his lack of literary talent; his real claim lurked beneath that humility: Bridge presented his book as “evidence . . . as to the condition and prospects” of the colonies. That evidence wouldn’t be credible, or even relevant, if it he entwined it in a novel or if it appeared to be suspiciously embellished by artistic ambitions. In order to fulfill its purpose, *Journal of an African Cruiser* prioritized the recital of scientific observation and first-person reporting common to the travel narrative.

**A Travel Narrative Launches American Literature**

True to Duyckinck’s vision, Horatio Bridge’s travelogue auspiciously launched the *Library of American Books.* Upon the *Journal’s* appearance, the *New York Courier* enthusiastically endorsed it and the *Library* together, noting approvingly that Bridge’s narrative

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118 Bridge, *Journal*, vi.

119 Bridge, *Journal*, v.

120 Consistent with their response to travel narratives generally, reviewers read Bridge as a personification of the nation. A review in the English *Spectator* notes, “indeed, in that species of judgment which springs conjointly from manners and morals, the journal is rather a favourable specimen of American character,” while the *Athenaeum* promised that, “This is a diary, by an American, of considerable interest.” “Journal of an African Cruiser,” *Spectator*, 712 and “Journal of an African Cruiser,” *Athenaeum* (Sep. 6, 1845): 932.
as “the first number is worthy of its place.”

The United States and Democratic Review opined that, “from the comparative novelty of the subject, its home interest and simple, sincere style in which it is written, [it] cannot fail of proving widely attractive.”

Duyckinck notified Hawthorne of the Journal’s equally successful reception overseas, writing triumphantly that “the English notices are bounteous in praise. No American book in a long time has been so well noticed.”

The English Spectator declared, “indeed, in that species of judgment which springs conjointly from manners and morals, the journal is rather a favourable specimen of American character,” acknowledging the travel author’s portrayal of a representative national personality. The trusty Athenaeum promised that, “This is a diary, by an American, of considerable interest.”

Putnam wrote Duyckinck to request more copies of the Journal and affirmed “the American series goes well here—particularly the Cruiser.”

Wiley and Putnam arranged for a second print run just a few months after the May launch.

In addition to its sheer marketability, the inaugural volume of the Library had to match Duyckinck’s vision of what American literature should be—and what it needed to accomplish as a building block of the nation. According to the Young Americans, such a literature must promote democracy and assert the United States’ authority abroad, but, just as importantly, it

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123 Bridge, Recollections, 106.


126 Evert Duyckinck to Nathaniel Hawthorne, October 2, 1845. Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.
must assuage internal differences and construct the still-nascent nation as a unified whole.  

Travellers like Headley, Melville, and Taylor (and later in this dissertation Josiah Gregg, John Russell Bartlett, and Susan Shelby Magoffin) projected a nationalized, authoritative presence into foreign realms while they also usefully imagined “home” for their readers as a coherent nation.  

In addition, Duyckinck’s geographically diverse Library—whose authorial mix included Westerners Kirkland and Hall and Southerner Simms—demonstrated that a coherent body of literature, and therefore a coherent nation, might be drawn from the loosely associated, disparate regions of the United States.

Bridge’s book negotiated an even more precarious line. Journal of an African Cruiser stood carefully balanced between the pro-slavery and abolition movements, offering conciliation for the sectionalism that already threatened, by the 1840s, to rend the nation. Peter Brancaccio notes that the “Young Americans hated slavery but wanted to preserve the Union by not alienating slave holders.”  

Bridge’s Journal attempted just such a fine negotiation, providing a positive, albeit measured, view of Liberian colonization while avoiding strident declarations against slavery itself. Bridge implies the degradation and horrors of human bondage—he’s no apologist—but he largely addresses slavery in careful retrospective, as an historical condition from which the impressive former-slave colonists triumphantly emerge. Bridge’s factual

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127 See Edward Widmere, 3-26 and 93-124.

128 I find Edmundo O’Gorman’s classic work The Invention of America (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1961), useful here. While O’Gorman discusses the invention of America qua America as a European visionary construct of the fifteenth century, I would argue that the literary nationalists were attempting a similar, albeit conscious, move: to imagine the United States as whole, and therefore to make it true. As O’Gorman notes, “the being—not the existence—of things is nothing but the meaning or significance which they are given within the overall framework of the picture of reality accepted as true at some given historical moment” (41).


130 Brancaccio 33.
moderation was a key factor in the volume’s attractiveness for the Library; Duyckinck writes Hawthorne on August 13, 1845 that the Journal “has the rare fortune, I believe, of pleasing both north and south on the subject.” Critics did not fail to comment upon this aspect of Bridge’s work. The Spectator summarizes the Journal’s mediating, neutral position:

The Journal of an African Cruiser is not only fresh in its subject but informing in its matter, especially in relation to the experiment of Liberia. It has the further advantage of giving us an American view of the slave-trade and the Negro character, without the prejudices of the Southern planter or the fanaticisms of the abolitionist. As the initial volume of the Library of American Books, the Journal of an African Cruiser establishes the middle-ground ethos of the Library, inaugurating an American literature meant to assuage, rather than exacerbate, national differences.

The Democratic Experiment in Journal of an African Cruiser

Horatio Bridge’s complex examination of the Liberian colonies attempts to salve antebellum torsion within the already-established United States, while it simultaneously projects that strained democracy abroad as an unparalleled opportunity for social and political actualization. In promoting democracy, Bridge keeps company with his Library of American Books peers and the literary nationalists. He visualizes the African settlements as a democratic proving ground, a social experiment projected beyond the nation that will verify the exceptionalism of liberal republicanism. His state of travel provides a medium from which a rudimentary society might be both extended from the nation and observed in embryo.

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131 Evert Duyckinck to Nathaniel Hawthorne, August 13, 1845. Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.

132 “Journal,” Spectator, 712-713.

133 In discussing Sarah Josepha Hale’s novel, Liberia, Susan Ryan usefully observes that “the departure of blacks from the United States results in two strong nations on the (white) model rather than a racially and regionally
Bridge’s credibility remained principal to the social-scientific labor of his mission. He described the progress of the settlement, the condition of its plantations, his attendance at state dinners with colonist dignitaries, and his military actions into the interior. Hawthorne had admonished him that the practical information he gathered must be central in his account. “You must have as much as possible to say about the African trade,” Hawthorne advised his protégé, including “its nature, the mode of carrying it on, the character of the persons engaged in it, etc.” Bridge offered his reader the benefit that he had been to Liberia before, so his analysis “enjoyed the advantage of comparing Liberia, as he now saw it, with a personal observation of its condition three years before, and could therefore mark its onward or retreating footsteps.” In regards to the promise of the colonies’ success and democracy’s efficacy, he could therefore claim, “to have spoken so much of the truth.”

The power of democracy, in Bridge’s rendering, lies in its capability to edify even the lowliest subject; he speaks in glowing terms of the colonists who were once degraded and abused but who are now free and impressively civilized. Bridge’s patriotic text, although highly liberal in its treatment of the black colonists, also implies a secondary, disquieting argument: slavery under democracy is a preferable beginning to free life as a native; it is the former slaves’ status as Americans—even as former American slaves—that elevates the colonists far above their native brethren. The most important factor in the success of the African settlers in Journey of an divided (and possibly disintegrating) United States.” “Errand into Africa: Colonization and Nation Building in Sarah J. Hale’s Liberia,” New England Quarterly, 68.4 (Dec. 1, 1995): 565-566.


135 Bridge, Recollections, 98-99.

136 Bridge, Journal, vi.
African Cruiser is what they bring with them—their cultural indoctrination into democracy and their ability to spread its principles abroad.

One evening during his journey, Bridge takes time from his official duties for a walk on the beach, where he picks up shells to send home to an unnamed, unmet woman. This interlude couches the relationship between the United States and the colonies in terms of an anonymous, but nonetheless affectionate, romantic attachment:

I strolled along the shore, picking up the small shells, which the waves had thrown in abundance upon the sand. In the eye of a conchologist, they would have been of little value, as all of them were common, and none possessed more than a single valve. But the purple blush of the interior pleased me; and what is more, I was gathering these trifles for a lady whom I have never seen, yet whom I trust that I may venture to count among my friends. I know that she will be pleased with the poor offering and its giver; for each of these shells is linked with a thought that flew over the sea—from the sunset shore of Africa to a fireside in New England—and retuned thence to the wanderer, bringing grateful fancies, reminiscences, and hopes. It was a smiling half-hour.137

In this whimsical daydream, Bridge (or perhaps his editor, Hawthorne) symbolizes the imaginative connection between the United States and the colonies via a transatlantic exchange of seashells and the ties of sentimental affection. The shells, subject to the ocean’s currents, have been “thrown in abundance upon the sand,” like the Liberian settlers transported by the tides of fate first into slavery and then across the ocean to Africa. Like the former slaves who come from the least esteemed strata of American society, Bridge’s beach findings are common objects with only a mundane “single valve.” At first glance, the colonizers and shells appear indistinguishable from one another and unremarkable to the discerning collector.

Bridge’s emphasis on the banality of his collection ties it to the potential consequences of democracy, which renders its subjects common, as shells in “abundance,” whose rare qualities have been leveled to their lowest shared denominator. Travellers to the United States frequently sniff at egalitarian American society; Daniel Heller notes, for instance, that “drawn as they were

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137 Bridge, Journal, 97.
from the well-to-do who alone could afford a transatlantic tour, many Europeans arrived already primed to despise American’s vulgar social mixing and their pretentious but primitive civilization.”138 The famously irascible Fanny Trollope critiques democratic republicanism, observing that “the social system of Mr. Jefferson, if carried into effect, would make of mankind an amalgamated mass of grating atoms.”139 Similarly, but more charitably, French political philosopher and traveller Alexis de Tocqueville remarks upon the overriding “equality of conditions” that he observes between individuals and groups in the United States.140 Bridge’s mass of single valve shells recalls Tocqueville’s “equality of conditions” and Trollope’s “unallogamated mass of atoms” that describe democracy.

Bridge, like Tocqueville, makes a virtue of the leveling effects of democracy. Instead of viewing the former-slave colonizers as the most common, and therefore the least interesting, of all subjects, Bridge argues instead that it is in fact their blackness, or the “purplish-blush” of the shells, that renders them particularly remarkable and beautiful. Throughout his text, Bridge depicts the colonists as universally uplifted—as made much less than common—by their freedom. In so doing, he draws a parallel between the extraordinary founding citizens of the United States and the talents of the Liberians who strive to establish a free democracy in Africa. In particular, Bridge describes governor Joseph Jenkins Roberts (soon to become Liberia’s first president) in glowing terms:

The Governor is certainly no ordinary person. In every situation, as judge, ruler, and private gentleman, he sustains himself creditably. . . . His deportment is dignified, quiet, and sensible. He has been tried in war as well as in peace, has seen a good share of fighting, and has invariably been cool, brave, and successful. He is a native of Virginia,


139 Fanny Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (London: Whittaker and Treacher, 1832) 159.

and came from thence in 1828. The friends of Colonization can hardly adduce a stronger argument in favor of their enterprise, than that it has redeemed such a man as Governor Roberts from servitude, and afforded him the opportunity (which was all he needed) of displaying his high natural gifts.¹⁴¹

The governor is a United States native, not African-born; he hails from Thomas Jefferson’s home state of Virginia, an inference that ties Roberts, in the sagacious execution of his duties, to that famous founding father as well as to George Washington, the original first president. Roberts isn’t unusual. Bridge finds examples of human achievement everywhere amongst the former slaves; they are the formerly ordinary shells transformed in his narrative to the abundant extraordinary.¹⁴² The colonists provide proof of the Young America argument that the benevolent spread of freedom and American democracy will uplift all those fortunate enough to reside under its umbrella.

In contrast to his positive impression of the colonists, Bridge’s negative judgment of the natives establishes that an origin in the United States critically differentiates the two populations. That origin provides the former slaves with absolute social and intellectual advantages. Thus, while Bridge champions a drastic refiguring of common racist attitudes towards the black colonists, admonishing his readers that, “when a white man sets his foot on the shore of Africa, he finds it necessary to throw off his former prejudices,” his argument does not extend to native Africans. He refers to them as “rude and wretched,” and hypothesizes that the chasm between the two groups is nothing short of impassable.¹⁴³ “Amalgamation is scarcely more difficult between the white and colored races in America,” he writes, “than it is in Africa, between the ‘black-

¹⁴¹ Bridge, Journal, 49.

¹⁴² For instance, he also speaks glowingly of a Colonel Hicks on page 96 of the Journal.

¹⁴³ Bridge, Journal, 164 and 60.
white’ colonist and the unadulterated native.” Bridge’s descriptor “black-white” indicates that the former black slaves have been beneficially “whitened” by being born and raised in the United States. Bridge overlooks the inference of violent miscegenation—and therefore whitening—contained in his dual-race descriptor. In Bridge’s telling, the colonists have mutated from their lowly native state to a more privileged birth that engenders enlightenment and privilege. The troubling implication in Bridge’s text is that no matter the horrors and iniquities of slavery, its former subjects nonetheless have the distinct advantage of having been born American.

*Journal of an African Cruiser* works to satisfy both pro-slavery and abolitionist readers, who might see their positions reflected in and rationalized in its pages. Bridge’s construct, while glossing over the horrors of slavery in the United States, envisions the former slaves as perfect vehicles to carry democracy abroad and to demonstrate that even the most “common” individual becomes capable of self-government and human enlightenment when provided the chance to live under the auspices of democracy. *Journal of an American Cruiser* thus fulfills the mission of the Young Americans to produce a literature that is explicitly “democratic” in nature, that will assuage rather than exacerbate national tensions, and that identifies its subject matter and author as explicitly American.

**Conclusion**

Less than three years after the launch of *Journal of an African Cruiser*, the *Library of American Books* ended its run in 1847 with its final publication, *The Supernaturalism of New England* by John Greenleaf Whittier. Duyckinck and Wiley and Putman published only twenty-seven titles under the auspices of the *Library*. The final tally must have fallen well short of Duyckinck’s aspirations, especially in comparison to the seventy-six titles in John Murray’s

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Home and Colonial Library or the Harper Brothers’ one hundred eighty-seven titles in its Murray Family Library rip-off. By the beginning of 1847, Wiley and Putnam were soon to part ways; it’s possible their support for the project waned as a result. Although the editor and his publishers valiantly attempted to break the stranglehold cheap reprints held on the American market, it’s also possible that the cost of paying American authors wasn’t adequately offset by incoming Library revenue. In order to achieve profitability, the Library of American Books would have borne an unusually high benchmark for sales in comparison to a reprint driven series like the Harper’s Family Library.

Nonetheless, despite its disappointing run, the Library did overcome the barriers of the antebellum book market to launch the influential careers of an impressive array of American authors. Most of those authors published travel books; many became canonical mainstays. As Ezra Greenspan notes, the Library “marked nothing less than the coming of age of American literary culture;” this chapter demonstrates that that coming of age was even more extensive than previously recognized—and that it relied primarily on the travel narrative to achieve its full flowering. Furthermore, the Library represented only a single piece of Duyckinck’s sustained, life-long effort to promote American authors and literature; correspondingly, the travel genre was not only a cornerstone of the Library of American Books, but remained prominent in all of Duyckinck’s labors.

In the 1850s, the editor and his brother George embarked on their monumental, canonical effort, the Cyclopedia of American Literature. Library of American Books alumnae and travel writers Joel Tyler Headley, Bayard Taylor, George Barrell Cheever, and, of course, Herman Melville, all received entries. A wealth of travellers besides Library authors also populates the

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145 I thank Ezra Greenspan for this observation.

146 Greenspan 678.
Cyclopedia; explorer-writer John Lloyd Stephens, for instance, and archeologist, explorer, and author E.G. Squier both garner significant treatment by the Duyckinks. Horatio Bridge does not. He remains embargoed, appearing only as an aside in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s extensive Cyclopedia section; Duyckinck continues to award the Young America author almost all the credit for the book that launched the transformation of American authorship in the early nineteenth century.
Chapter II
The Destiny of Empires: The Transnational Democracy of Alexis de Tocqueville and Josiah Gregg

The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s masterwork, *Democracy in America*, appeared in France in 1835. Two years later, American political agitator John L. O’Sullivan reviewed Tocqueville in the inaugural issue of *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, the same number that famously launched the literary nationalist movement.¹ The periodical anointed Josiah Gregg seven years later with a favorable review for his newly minted *Commerce of the Prairies or the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader, During Eight Expeditions across the Great Western Prairies and a Residence of Nearly Nine Years in Northern Mexico.*² Today, Tocqueville’s political and sociological study of the United States remains so dominant in the public imagination as to be almost synonymous with American democracy itself.³ Gregg’s text, obscure in comparison to Tocqueville’s ubiquity, resides in the narrower purview of the historian. Celebrated as the seminal narrative of nineteenth-century Santa Fe Trail travel, *Commerce of the Prairies* wins praise as an insightful record of the early nineteenth-century U.S.-Mexico borderlands.⁴

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² “Commerce of the Prairies.” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (June 1844): 639-646.

³ Mark P. Lagon notes, for instance, “Observers of American society and politics often suggest that the Frenchman’s *Democracy in America*, written more than 160 years ago, identifies the key elements of American national character today.” “Tocqueville on American Character,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 30.1 (Winter 2001: 45.

This chapter takes its cue from Tocqueville and Gregg’s mutual *Democratic Review* appearance to draw a close parallel between these seemingly dissimilar works. That parallel begins with a reassessment of *Democracy in America* as a travel narrative and *Commerce of the Prairies* as a Tocqueville-esque social and political study of the borderlands and American democracy. Reassigning Tocqueville’s political masterwork and Gregg’s seminal travel narrative to the same genre underscores the significance of travel narratives in the intellectual marketplace of the early nineteenth century. It also invites further consideration of how writers, editors, and publishers wielded travel narratives in service to the most urgent political debate of the era, which pitted the international urge for populist, democratic reform against the deep conservatism of entrenched aristocracy. Finally, the U.S. publication history of *Democracy in America* and *Commerce of the Prairies* reveals each volume’s heretofore-unexamined ties to the Young America literary nationalist movement, highlighting travel narratives’ essential role in the effort to promote democracy and consolidate the young republic into an autonomous, powerful nation.

Although the literary nationalists wielded travel accounts as tools of democratic propaganda, those same narratives betray the leaking mortar behind the brave nationalist storefront. The Young Americans championed *Democracy in America* and *Commerce of the Prairies*, but both Tocqueville and Gregg undercut nationalist idealism in ways unnoticed by scholars and critics yet deeply embedded in their assessments of the United States and democracy. Rather than a betrayal of Enlightenment values, these contentious moments reflect the apprehension that underlay democratic revolution and its still-unproven viability. Tocqueville neatly excises his complications from his primary text, but not from his correspondence and private essays, which challenge *Democracy in America*’s overriding premise that the United States’ success is predicated upon isolation from Europe and freedom from the weight of
historical obligations.⁵ For Tocqueville, this unburdening is essential to the young republic’s ability to speed forward into an ever more progressive future. In contrast, Gregg’s critique lies directly within his published narrative in plain though unobserved view. The Santa Fe Trail explorer questions the ability of a democratic nation to answer external threat or undertake effective, coordinated action. Gregg thus undermines the possibility that a feasible government might arise from the loosely federated states of the young republic. This chapter ends with close readings of these anecdotes in order to illuminate the way that concerns about history, print culture, and democratic efficacy haunted the literary nationalist movement and the international debate over democracy.

_Democracy in America as a Travel Narrative_

The mere title _Democracy in America_ qualifies Tocqueville’s work for an endorsement in the inaugural pages of John L. O’Sullivan’s democratic magazine. What is less obvious is that, like _Commerce of the Prairies, Democracy in America_ is a travel journal. Not only did O’Sullivan and his contemporaries perceive _Democracy in America_ as a travel narrative, for them, the designation was self-evident. In contrast, modern scholars (with good reason) approach Tocqueville’s text first as a seminal work of political science.⁶ Biographers like George Wilson Pierson and Leo Damrosch naturally build their narratives around Tocqueville’s itinerary, but they don’t consider _Democracy in America_ as a travel account.⁷ Tocqueville scholar Sheldon S.

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⁵ Frederick Brown notes that Tocqueville sees the United States as “a republic as nearly unencumbered by history as the virgin forests were undisturbed by human design.” In Alexis de Tocqueville, _Letters from America_, Edited by Frederick Brown (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) vii.

⁶ I don’t mean to suggest that antebellum audiences didn’t appreciate the political nature of _Democracy in America_, but rather that they would assume that political considerations were part and parcel of any travel book.

⁷ George Wilson Pierson, _Tocqueville in America_, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1938) and Leo Damrosch, _Tocqueville’s Discovery of America_ (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2010).
Wolin brilliantly posits the Frenchman’s state of travel as a classical “theoria,” a journey of the body that opens a concurrent, symbolic journey in the mind. For Wolin, it is Tocqueville’s departure from his familiar surroundings that triggers the revolutionary political turn of his intellect. Even in this extraordinary analysis, however, Tocqueville’s textual product manifests more of a cerebral journey than a physical one.

Viewing Democracy in America from inside its print culture milieu strips the metaphysical trappings from Tocqueville’s journey and drops it squarely amidst the jostling masses of conventional tourism: when the Frenchman booked his transatlantic passage, he partook in nothing more precocious than a fad for seeing America. An 1839 article in the Democratic Review comments on the “geometrically progressing increase of the numbers of English travelers to see Niagara and Democracy.” Tocqueville played his part by joining crowds of tourists (not just the English) who visited the United States to witness the nation’s massive social and political experiment thrillingly set against wildly sublime landscapes. Sarah Searight observes, “The Grand Tour was still fashionable . . . but otherwise the main fields of interest to the gentleman traveller were America and the Middle East . . . [which] offered a scenic grandeur as well as political philosophy and an element of discovery.” Helen Heinemen notes the resultant textual outpouring from such trips, observing that, “journeys to the brave new world of America came to assume an importance similar to that of the ritualistic European grand tour for

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9 “The Last English Tourist in America” The United States Magazine and Democratic Review 6.21 (Sep. 1839): 255.

10 Tocqueville made sure to experience the political and the picturesque, traveling to the wilderness to find encounter the virgin forest and noble Indian while always recording the unique social structure of the United States based on a pervasive “equality of conditions” regardless of heredity or social class. Tocqueville, Democracy, 3.

the literate and curious . . . It sometimes seems that almost all eventually published some account of their peregrinations.”

One such person, the famous English seaman, gentleman traveller, and novelist Frederick Marryat, followed the fashion of writing about the United States with two travel narratives that damaged his reputation in the United States. In his introduction, Josiah Gregg publicly accused Marryat of plagiarizing word-for-word much of Gregg’s periodical work for *Travels and Adventures of Monsieur Violet*. Marryat published *Monsieur Violet* in 1843 as a non-fiction, United States travel adventure whose dependency on Gregg threatened to scoop the 1844 *Commerce of the Prairies*. The *Spectator* in Britain was dubious of Marryat’s account, but also described the book as a very Gregg-like publication, arguing that “*Monsieur Violet* seems to us a fiction, though professing to be a narrative of facts, and offering, besides the interest of a story and the exhibition of character and manners, information about unexplored countries, unknown tribes, and novelties in natural history.” Marryat also published a *Diary in America with Remarks on its Institutions* in 1839, which was critical of the United States’ republicanism; a pairing that puts his works directly at odds with *Commerce of the Prairies* and Alexis de

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13 Josiah Gregg was a victim of the lack of copyright protection afforded to periodicals in the United States. He claims that Marryat plagiarized his articles, noting that “I feel bound, in self-defense, to reclaim in a single case, at least, the *waifs* of my own pen, which have been dignified with a place in the pages of a contemporary writer. During the years 1841 and 1842, I contributed a number of letters upon the history and condition of the Santa Fé trade, etc., to the Galveston ‘Daily Advertiser’ and the ‘Arkansas Intelligencer,’ under the signatures of ‘J.G.’ and ‘G.,” portions of which I have occasion to insert in the present volumes. In Captain Marryat’s recent work, entitled ‘Monsieur Violet,’ I was not a little annoyed (when I presume I ought to have been flattered) to find large portions of this correspondence copied, much of it *verbatim*, without the slightest intimation of acknowledgment whatever, of the source from where they were procured” (Gregg, *Commerce*, 3-4).

Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. Marryat accordingly noted in its pages that, “the press was constantly pouring out works upon the new world.”

Although reviewers largely regarded Tocqueville as the best foreign writer on America, he was only one tourist among the hoards who, like Marryat, published travel accounts that examined the society and government of the United States. A typical review in *Dublin University Magazine* exclaimed of *Democracy in America*: “Of all the multitudinous works on America . . . It is, without doubt, the ablest and the best of all.” Early nineteenth-century readers understood that Tocqueville’s extraordinary political analysis arose as a direct consequence of his travel. British publishing power-house John Murray III’s periodical *The Quarterly*, for instance, praised Tocqueville’s work, promising that it was “written in the very purest spirit of philosophy,” while underscoring its value as a travel narrative, effusing that “we feel, therefore, highly grateful to M. De Tocqueville for having acted towards us on this occasion the part of a travelling tutor. He has not only shown us the country, but explained to us the reasons why it exists in its present state.” Finally, the *North American Review* introduces its review of *Democracy in America* with a long discourse about the damaging effects of negative travel books, positioning Tocqueville as a refreshing counter-weight to those critical accounts of the United States. Then, like almost everyone else, the *North American Review* praises the

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16 Daniel Feller notes that, “All these travelers came to observe and report. To Europeans the United States a half-century after its founding was still a strange and exotic place—a new world in the making, a daring departure form all known societies past and present.” Martineau, ix.

17 “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America” *The Dublin University Magazine* 16.95 (Nov. 1840): 544.

Frenchman’s objectivity and discernment. The reviewer finds Tocqueville’s accomplishment particularly laudable due to the genre in which he writes, because,

The number of men, who are able to lay aside the paltry prejudices of party—who are not mislead by superficial appearances,—who can separate what is permanent and essential from what is momentary,—who can discern great principles under a thousand varying forms of development, is exceedingly small; in no one effort perhaps is their talent more severely put to the test, than in writing a book of travels.19

In an era that had yet to define “political science” or conceive of it as a discrete field, readers understood that Democracy in America arose directly out of the travel genre.

Understanding Tocqueville’s pedestrian-seeming roots as a travel writer doesn’t negate his political import, Sidney S. Wolin’s theoretical argument, or any other modern account of the masterwork; rather, placing the seminal Democracy in America amidst the era’s travel narratives begins to reveal the broad significance of a genre that encompasses a work of such lasting import. Sociological study and political inquiry arose naturally from the prerequisite of travel and tourism; the era’s readers and writers understood each as part and parcel of the other. In other words, early nineteenth-century travel books were political texts. As such, they naturally played a critical role in the most urgent political discourse of the age: the debate surrounding the promises and perils of democracy and its challenge to traditional aristocracy. Tocqueville didn’t just write about the U.S. system of government, he, and other travel writers like him, held a clear place in that global contest. Thus, the democratically-inclined London Review proclaimed the Frenchman’s laudable impartiality: “Not a trace of prejudice, or so much as a previous leaning whether to the side of democracy or aristocracy shows itself in his work. . . . he holds the balance

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straight with all the impassibility of a mere scientific observer,” while providing his final, largely positive assessment of democracy and choosing sides in the international fray.

United States Tourism and The International Democratic Quandary

The battle over democracy played out in the pages of travel books about the United States and in the pages of the periodicals that responded to them. While travellers’ and readers’ fascination with the young republic flowed partly from a thirst for novelty, pressing concerns about Europe and the Americas—which wavered uncertainly and often violently between democratic reform and aristocratic conservatism—underlay the tenor of most foreigner’s visits. These texts weren’t just European; for instance, Lorenzo de Zavala, one of the principle architects of Mexico’s democratic constitution, explored the United States prior to Tocqueville’s visit. He hoped to apply his observations to Mexico’s own democratic test. John-Michael Rivera observes that Zavala, “through a travel narrative that reads like an ethnography of democratic mores and governance . . . attempts to render a detailed portrait of the United States for a newly constituted Mexican people.”

Robert Sampson notes that in the 1830s and 40s, the U.S. “was then the world’s revolutionary experiment” of democracy. The United States afforded travellers a proving ground for both sides of the argument, as the London Review observes in its Tocqueville article: “America is usually cited by the two great parties which divide Europe, as an argument for or against democracy. Democrats have sought to prove by it that we ought to be

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22 Sampson 26.
democrats; aristocrats, that we should cleave to aristocracy, and withstand the democratic spirit.”

The Edinburgh Review similarly observes in its notice of Democracy in America, “For many years, every book of travels in America had been a party pamphlet, or had at least fallen among partisans, and been pressed into the service of one party or of the other.”

Visitors sought to divine their nation’s political future in the crystal ball of the United States. The opinions they expressed served as a barometer for their concerns about the emergence of democracy in their own country. This was particularly true of Democracy in America, which, according to Tocqueville’s biographer George Wilson Pierson, was received in France as “a bible of political precepts and a prophecy of change.”

While the vast majority of reviewers praised the Frenchman for maintaining scientific objectivity in the midst of a heated, partisan debate that stretch across Europe, a shrill letter-writer to the British Magazine calls Tocqueville “an agent of evil” for his positive views of democracy, and argues that, “Democracy, as it is treated of by M. de Tocqueville, means nothing else than the spirit of disobedience, or that presumption and arrogance which has been raised in the breasts of the ignorant.”

The issue for “R.B.D.” wasn’t the practice of democracy in the United States, but whether British aristocracy would fall to an egalitarian form of government. Books by foreign tourists and reactions to those books addressed by proxy the anxious futures of the writer or respondent’s country of origin.

Positive or negative, serious or spurious, all travel accounts about the United States entered the international fracas over democracy. The most famous of the negative accounts,

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Fanny Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, excoriates the culture and social habits of the United States, marking a common example of a travelogue “in which,” according to John L. O’Sullivan, “the gravest interests of society are habitually discussed with the flippancy of the worst newspapers.” Trollope’s travelogue precedes Tocqueville by four years. Its titular emphasis on *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, like Frederick Marryat’s *Diary in America with Remarks on its Institutions*, evokes the same scholarly tradition of *Democracy in America*, but uses it to skewer the practice of democracy. John L. O’Sullivan notes that, “the difference between M. de Tocqueville and our common heard of travellers, is, that when he speaks of principles of government, he knows what he is speaking of.” While it’s possible to brush off Trollope as deserving O’Sullivan’s scorn (and many reviewers have brushed her off, then or since), there was an alternative to the firebrand democratic editor’s response to such works. John Murray III’s *Quarterly Review* positively notices Trollope, exulting that “this is exactly the title-page we have long wished to see, and we rejoice to say that . . . it is handled by an English lady of sense and acuteness.” The emphasis in the original on “lady” underscores Trollope’s aristocratic credentials, which, in the *Quarterly Review’s* eyes, particularly authorize her to perceive the defects of American populism. The notice further espouses,

> We have had, at least, enough of late years of the politics of the United States, and have been sickened over and over again by the preposterous praises of those republican institutions which are to eclipse, in the national consequences, all the glories of Europe in war, in letters, and in all the graces of life. We should pass over such things with the transient hopeless sort of shrug of the shoulders with which we dismiss the periodical

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27 “European Views” 92.

28 For instance, the *Knickerbocker* complains that Marryat “has felt himself called upon to give us a lick with the rough side of his tongue” in an account filled with “covert or open satire.” “*A Diary in America,*” *The Knickerbocker* 14.3 (Sep. 1839): 280.

29 “European Views” 94.
nonsense of a radical newspaper paragraph, were it not that America and her institutions are held up, not only for admiration in this country, but very often for imitation.30

The Quarterly Review accepts Trollope as a reliable observer of the United States, rather than as a disaffected, irritable, and superficial tourist (and woman, to boot), as many of her negative reviewers painted her. Positive notices like the Quarterly Review’s wield Domestic Manners of the Americans in favor of aristocracy in the international political debate, while her negative reviewers just as opportunistically attempted to discredit her account and bolster the case for democracy.

In the 1830s and 40s, a wave of negative British travellers like Fanny Trollope, Basil Hall, and Frederick Marryat contested the democratic experiment and poked a satirical pen at their host nation’s egalitarian culture.31 Foreign and national publishers issued such accounts continuously, and they sold well on both sides of the Atlantic: politics notwithstanding, vitriol was a good marketing hook. Like many travel writers, Fanny Trollope found herself famous overnight upon the publication of her narrative, which went through four editions in a single year in both England and the United States and quickly became one of a type.32 The North American Review notes in 1838 that, “Abuse, caricature, and condemnation, have become a condiment almost essential, to make a book of travels relish.”33 For his part, O’Sullivan speculates that Tocqueville received little initial notice in the United States because Democracy in America “is not enlivened by any admixture of that attractive sauce piquant of scandal and abuse, which has


31 Joel Tyler Headley toyed with this trend when he asserted his populist American persona in Letters from Italy, which tweaked British sensibilities and won the admiration of his home audience.

32 Tim Worth, “‘An Extraordinary Species of Tyranny’: Fanny Trollope and the Domestic Manners of the Americans,” Symbiosis 5.1: 17.

secured for so many trashy productions a notoriety, with which the whole country has rung.”³⁴ In a fifty-page article whose length suggests the extent of those attacks, The Edinburgh Review protested in solidarity with the U.S. and democracy. That piece, “The Americans and Their Detractors” addresses four travel texts: Francis Trollope’s Domestic Manners of the Americans, Godfrey Vigne’s Six Months in America, Gore Ouseley’s Remarks on the Statistics and Political Institutions of the United States, and, Napoleon’s exiled nephew, Achille Murat’s Esquisse Morale et Politics des Etas-Unis de l’ Amérique—all published in the first half 1832.³⁵ The Edinburgh Review remained a stalwart ally throughout the decade, responding to Frederick Marryat’s 1839 Diary in America with Remarks on its Institutions by observing that “sundry generalizations of human nature and democracy, are interspersed amongst the anecdotes,” but that, “gossip does not easily become philosophy.”³⁶ Nonetheless, the magnet of scandal drew readers on both sides of the Atlantic. The anti-democrats gained wide distribution, generated controversy, and garnered sales in the propaganda war that played out in the pages of travel narratives and their reviews.

Launching Literary Nationalism with Travel Narratives

The first issue of The Democratic Review defiantly inaugurated the literary nationalist movement in defiance of lingering British influence in its former colonies; as part of that well-coordinated launch, John L. O’Sullivan noticed Tocqueville and simultaneously marshaled a group of travel accounts by foreigners sympathetic to the tenets of democracy. In his review,³⁴ “European Views,” 91. Tocqueville consciously avoided the trend, noting in his introduction that, “I would rather hinder my work’s chance of success than add my name to the list of travellers who repay the generous hospitality of their hosts with embarrassment and chagrin.” Democracy, 16.


O’Sullivan focused almost exclusively on the Frenchman’s extraordinary text, but also carefully presented Tocqueville as one member of a larger field of like-minded observers. O’Sullivan promised that the periodical would eventually address

Beaumont, Chevalier, Grund, and last though not least, Miss Martineau. We propose, in this and our following numbers, to take some notice of these publications; beginning with that of M. de Tocqueville, entitled Democracy in the United States [sic], decidedly the most remarkable and really valuable work that has yet appeared upon this country from the hand of a foreigner.37

Each author O’Sullivan mentioned in tandem with Tocqueville was either a famous traveller or an expatriate whose American sojourns produced travel narratives that supported the principles of the literary nationalists. O’Sullivan provided these authors as a strategic counter-point to travellers like Hall, Trollope, and Marryat who infused the market with biting royalist skepticism.

A brief examination of O’Sullivan’s list—Beaumont, Chevalier, Grund, and Martineau—illustrates exactly where the editor intended to situate Democracy in America in the print market. He first mentions Gustave de Beaumont, Tocqueville’s close friend and travelling companion. After their stateside visit, Beaumont published a genre-bending investigative study and novelesque critique of American race relations, Marie, or Slavery in the United States. Beaumont’s anti-slavery text countered pro-slavery, anti-democratic works like Achille Murat’s Esquisse Morale et Politics des Etas-Unis de l’ Amérique, which was noticed in The Edinburgh Review’s attack on negative travel accounts about the U.S. Next, O’Sullivan references Frenchman Michel Chevalier, who, like Tocqueville and Beaumont, travelled under commission from the French government. The duo’s official responsibilities sent them to investigate prisons; Chevalier examined the banking system. Like his compatriots, Chevalier used his sanctioned

37 “European Views” 91.
purpose to facilitate his true intentions. Upon his return to France, he published Society, manners and politics in the United States: being a series of letters on North America. Chevalier’s 1834 study pre-dates Tocqueville by one year and, like all travel writers, predicates sociological observation on the act of travel. Next, O’Sullivan catalogues Francis Joseph Grund, a German native who moved to the United States as an expatriate journalist, politician, and editor. He published his Jacksonian study of democracy, The Americans in Their Moral, Social, and Political Relations in 1837, and Aristocracy in America, Notes from the Sketch Book of a German Nobleman, in 1839. Finally, O’Sullivan alludes to Harriet Martineau, the most prominent and successful author of his grouping, and one who certainly eclipsed Tocqueville’s renown when they separately embarked for the United States.

Martineau was still in the U.S. anticipating the completion of her first American study when Democracy in America launched in France in 1835. She, like Tocqueville, was one of a type: her biographer Susan Hoecker-Drysdale comments that, “like all Europeans, Martineau was fascinated with the American experiment in politics and government.” O’Sullivan characterizes Martineau as an “English traveller” in a second Tocqueville review, keeping the

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38 Jeremy Jennings notes that Society, manners and politics was “composed of a series of thirty-four letters, written while he was traveling around the country.” “Democracy before Tocqueville: Michel Chevalier’s America,” The Review of Politics 68.3 (Summer 2006): 399.


40 David Feller notes that Martineau was a victim of the lack of foreign copyright protection in the U.S., a situation that made her famous, but resulted in no compensation for her work. “Before landing,” Feller explains, “Martineau was already well known in America, where much of her work had been reprinted (usually without payment or permission, a sore point with all British authors). Her fame . . . put incognito travel out of the question” (xiii).

41 Howecker-Drysdale 54.
association between the two close. Martineau journeyed for two years throughout the United States, and Hoecker-Dysdale notes that the Englishwoman travelled “close to 10,000 miles . . . talking and interviewing people of all ages, classes, races, religions, and political parties.”

Martineau’s *Society in America* appeared in 1837, and the related *Retrospect of Western Travel* followed in 1838. According to Tim Worth, an early publisher urged Martineau to “Trollopize” her work to boost sales, placing her in the same publishing category as her irritable counterpart; Martineau, like Tocqueville, declined to spice up her work.

Martineau’s two three-volume sets on the United States were so important that Caroline Roberts notes that they “are considered to have led to the founding of modern sociology,” a fact that underscores Martineau’s significance as an early social scientist and puts her on par with Tocqueville’s status as a founder of the field of political science. O’Sullivan’s endorsement of Martineau, like his praise for Tocqueville, indicates his larger strategy to promote travel narratives in service of his literary nationalist mission. It also indicates the extent to which the emergence of the travel-based fields of political and social science was deeply entangled in the simultaneous emergence of democracy in the early nineteenth century.

**Josiah Gregg in The United States Magazine and Democratic Review**

Seven years after the *Democratic Review* first noticed Tocqueville and mentioned Martineau, a review of Gregg’s 1844 *Commerce of the Prairies* appeared in the magazine.

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43 Howecker-Drysdale 53.

44 Worth 18.

Robert Scholnick notes that “an informal board” vetted all submissions to the periodical “to be sure they conformed to the ideological stance of the magazine. *The Democratic Review* is such a compelling and important site precisely because of the ideological consistency of its several parts.”46 The magazine’s single-minded devotion to literary nationalism and liberal democracy invites analysis as to how Gregg’s work served O’Sullivan’s missionary zeal. Certainly a book mapping territory coveted by the United States fit the priorities of the Young Americans, who promoted democracy and westward expansion.47 The *Commerce of the Prairies* review opens with a direct explanation, exclaiming

> The title of this book commended it at once to our favor. It presented to our mind’s eye the picture of the vast prairie ocean which bounds, with its eastern shore, a portion of our border, awakening to the life and bustle of a maturing civilization. . . . The very suggestion of commerce upon the prairies, made us fancy at once that we beheld their broad surface intersected in every direction with railroads and canals, and planted with cities, and towns, and villages.48

Gregg’s very title evoked the golden promise of civilization’s spread across the western wilds, driven by the inevitable, but peaceful, mechanism of trade. Thus, while Tocqueville witnessed the growth of democracy within the nation proper, Josiah Gregg enacted the Frenchman’s sequel, crossing the frontier in advance of the nation that would surely follow.

These connections draw a conceptual association between *Democracy in America* and *Commerce of the Prairies*, while Tocqueville’s identification as a travel writer strengthens the potential relationship between the two texts. Certainly each was amenable to the Young Americans, who can be envisioned happily leafing through the books once they became available

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46 Scholnick 128.

47 Edward Widmere notes “‘Manifest Destiny’ expressed the social and intellectual aspirations of a generation who felt posed at the threshold of a new historical era. . . . [the Young Americans] dared to think it the culmination of world republicanism” (16).

48 “‘Commerce of the Prairies.’ *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (June, 1844): 639.
to the public. However, it is the backroom machinations that brought both books to the U.S. market that finally reveals the direct connection between Gregg, Tocqueville, and the literary nationalists. The reviews in O’Sullivan’s periodical signify more than a happenstance mention, among many other notices, of two topically relevant works. *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, Democracy in America, and Commerce of the Prairies* shared a publisher.

**The Langley Publishing House and Literary Nationalism**

Like Tocqueville and Gregg’s *Democratic Review* notices, the fact of their mutual publisher denotes more than a casual choice among the dozens of firms active in New York’s burgeoning print market. J. and H. G. Langley conspicuously supported liberal politics; they matched the ideological fervor of O’Sullivan and their joint venture, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review.* Henry Langley in particular kept a close devotion to O’Sullivan’s brand of print activism. After the two men began issuing the *Democratic Review* together in 1841, Langley joined his editor again in 1844 as publisher of *The New York Morning News,* an intellectual and political offshoot of the monthly *Democratic Review* offered as a daily paper dedicated to advancing the democratic cause. Evert Duyckinck joined as its powerful literary editor. Upon its launch, *The Morning News* garnered three thousand subscribers in its first week. As Theodore Pease Cook remarked thirty-two years later, the paper “was successful

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49 Information on the Langleys is scarce; except for his first initial, brother J. is completely anonymous. Henry appears to be the more active partner. By 1845, the firm began publishing only under the name “Henry G. Langley,” perhaps indicating that J. left the business. In terms of politics, Robert Sampson notes that John L. O’Sullivan called Henry Langley “the only Democrat I know in the trade” of publishing. Letter to George Bancroft, April 16, 1844, in Sampson, 163.

50 Sampson 164-166 and 204.

51 Clapp 34
from the beginning, not only as a business enterprise, but as a political power.” While O’Sullivan manned the editorial helm, Langley acquired advertisers for the new daily; presumably their well-oiled partnership was just as symbiotic on the Democratic Review. The men were true partners in business and in politics, so much so that Langley wrote fiery notices in the Democratic Review in response to negative British criticism of American authors.

Langley’s personal commitment to the Democratic Review and its cause went so deep that he tolerated financial loss for almost the entire tenure of O’Sullivan’s editorship. In an 1845 “Prospectus for the New Year of the Democratic Review,” the publisher entreats delinquent subscribers to step up their payments in order to offset the “large pecuniary sacrifices” that had sustained the magazine “through seasons when zeal for the principles to which it was devoted could alone afford a motive for its continuance at so much unrequited expenditure of both money, time and intellectual effort.” Langley pleads on behalf of the periodical’s mission, arguing that “this Review has ever taken an active, and, it is believed, not ineffective part, in the long and keenly contested battles of opinion, by which the country has been . . . deeply agitated.” Although a backroom player, Henry Langley, like O’Sullivan and the editor Evert Duyckinck, wielded his vocational pursuits in service to deeply held political beliefs. To be published by Langley meant something more than the culmination of a business deal. Just as likely, political activism drove the relationship.

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52 Thomas Pease Cook, The Life and Public Services of Hon. Samuel J. Tilden, Democratic Nominee for President of the United States (New York: Appleton, 1876) 44.

53 Widmere 89.

54 The United States was still feeling the effects of the panic of 1837, which plunged the country into a desperate recession that lasted well into the next decade.

Langley’s mere presence infuses his firm’s acquisition of Tocqueville’s U.S. business with politics; he procured *Democracy in America* after the Frenchman’s original stateside publishers failed in 1839. Dearborn and the partners Adlard and Sanders had jointly issued Tocqueville’s first U.S. edition in 1838 shortly after O’Sullivan’s review. Their timing hints that the editor’s notice played a role in the American version’s appearance. The book was popular enough to require the printing of three editions in two years before the Langleys took over in 1840. The firm immediately became the first U.S. publishers of the second volume of *Democracy in America*, whose front matter announces that the brothers will shortly release a “new and improved” first volume. That appeared in 1841, just after O’Sullivan moved the *Democratic Review* to New York from Washington, D.C. and began issuing the magazine with the Langley’s backing. The transfer of Tocqueville’s work to the Langley publishing house marks more than a coincidental exchange of literary property from a failing firm to a solvent one. It reflects the Langley’s commitment to building a list centered on democratic values.

A look at the broader history of the Langley publishing enterprise highlights the firm’s nationalist-driven, list-building strategy. Beyond their involvement with Tocqueville and *The Democratic Review*, and before Wiley and Putnam issued *The Library of American Books* with power-editor Evert Duyckinck, the smaller Langleys supported literary nationalist authors as a general rule. As Edward Widmere notes, besides “liberal political works . . . [they] issued the novels of allied writers like William Gilmore Simms (*The Life of Francis Marion*) and Cornelius

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56 A search of WorldCat shows that, after a productive few years as a publisher (1832-1838), both Adlard and George Dearborn completely fall out of the record in 1839. Sanders disappears from Adlard’s title pages even earlier.

57 An English edition, translated by Tocqueville’s friend Henry Reeve, was issued shortly after the publication of *Democracy in America* in France.

Mathews (The Motley Book),” two authors who would soon join Evert Duyckinck’s Library of American Books. In 1844, O’Sullivan also unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate the transfer of literary nationalist rising star Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Twice-Told Tales to Langley after it disappointing failed to sell out its second Boston edition. While the Langleys may have understood Tocqueville’s Democracy in America to be a good business investment—the first U.S. volume went through three editions in two years, and the second was poised for almost immediate publication when they took on the project—the firm also acquired Democracy in America because they viewed it as politically allied to the literary nationalist movement in the United States.

It is within this atmosphere of political activism and literary nationalism that the Langley house published Josiah Gregg’s Commerce of the Prairies in 1844, the same year O’Sullivan negotiated for Hawthorne’s rights and the democratically inclined firm issued William Gilmore Simms’s The Life of Francis Marion. Wiley and Putnam, who would launch the Library of American Books with Evert Duyckinck in one more year and who distributed the Democratic Review in England, partnered with Langley to issue Commerce of the Prairies in London. Henry Langley used the back matter of Simms’s Francis Marion to market a “Catalogue of Important Works” that placed Gregg in context with the rest of the firm’s list. The advertisement leads with a “new complete edition” of Tocqueville’s now two-volume set and—in an indication of the work’s wide distribution—includes mention of a special abridgment for the school market. The U.S. Congress-facilitated Madison Papers, touted as an “Important National Work,” follows

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59 Neither Simms nor Matthews’s book is actually a novel. The Life of Francis Marion is a popular history, and The Motley Book is a collection of short stories and sketches.

60 Widmere 75.

Tocqueville in the catalogue. O’Sullivan and his former partner Samuel Langtree had published the first edition of the *Madison Papers* from Washington, D.C. in 1840, but Langley apparently acquired those rights with the *Democratic Review* when O’Sullivan relocated to New York. *Commerce of the Prairies* comes third in the Langley House insert, firmly in the front of the over seventy-title list and in close proximity to two unquestionably nationalist texts. That placement, and the concurrent publication of *Commerce of the Prairies* by two publishing houses closely allied with the Young America movement (Langley in New York and Wiley and Putnam in London), suggests a prominent position for Gregg’s narrative in the literary nationalist endeavor.

The Young Americans secured that position for Gregg well in advance of *Commerce of the Prairies* going to press. Gregg didn’t merely present Henry Langley with a finished manuscript in the hopes that he would agree to publish it. By the time Gregg finished the work, *Commerce of the Prairies* had already been groomed for the Langley list. Young Americans had seized on the unfinished *Commerce of the Prairies*; they collaborated with Gregg to shape the final text, and they conspired to navigate it out of the hands of its already-committed publisher into Langley’s storefront in the swank Astor House Hotel.

**Maneuvering *Commerce of the Prairies* to Market**

Upon Gregg’s arrival in the bustling city, he knocked first at the Harper Brothers, New York’s largest publisher, but found them too busy to consider his manuscript. After their brush off, Gregg closed a deal with D. Appleton & Co. to publish his work.62 In short order (and perhaps under the direction of Appleton), Gregg contracted with a literary collaborator to polish his text, a Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro, “an Irish actor, linguist, and self-styled ‘Count’” who had

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62 According to Evert Duyckinck’s notes from 1843, Appleton was a member of the American Copyright Club. Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library.
recently published a travel narrative of his own. Jeffrey Barton notes that the dramatic Tasistro’s “specialty was tragic Shakespearean roles.” Because of his charm and erudition—and probably also due to his professional ability to work a crowd—the Irishman was in high demand as a guest in social and literary circles: his obituary notes that he was “a social lion” and an accomplished translator who “understood thoroughly eight different languages.” When Tasistro fell seriously ill in the 1870s, none other than Walt Whitman issued an appeal for “pecuniary assistance for a man of genius.” Edgar Allen Poe mentioned him in the second part of his “Autography” in Graham’s Magazine in 1841, and Tasistro reviewed an early edition of Poe’s eventual Library of American Books offering, Tales, in the New York Mirror in 1839. At least initially, Tasistro must have seemed like quite a prize for Gregg’s project.

Unfortunately, the partnership was a catastrophic mismatch from the start: the taciturn Gregg was a stickler for the plainspoken truth; Tasistro, who “was a brilliant talker, and had an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes,” felt bound only by the scruple to entertain. In 1894, John

63 Moorehead xxx. The book was Random Shots and Southern Breezes, an account of travels through the American South.


65 “A Remarkable Career: Death of Louis Fitzgerald Tasistro,” The Washington Post (May 5, 1886): 2. Tasistro was also tainted by the scandal of his divorce. In 1843 his wife Adelaide sued to dissolve their marriage, charging him with adultery. His offenses were egregious enough that the court awarded Adelaide alimony and child support for Louis junior, and ordered that Tasistro “is not, and shall not be, at liberty to marry any other person during the life-time of the said Adelaide Tasistro.” “L.F. Tasistro,” The New World 6.4 (Jan. 28, 1843): 121.


68 “A Remarkable Career” 2.
Bigelow reminisced that, “Gregg had about as little imagination as any man I ever knew, while Tasistro had such an excess of it that he had no difficulty in believing and affirming things that never happened.” The men despised each other, but when Gregg attempted to sever the relationship, the flamboyant Tasistro threatened to sue and refused to relinquish the manuscript. William Cullen Bryant, literary nationalist, close associate of John L. O’Sullivan, contributor to *The Democratic Review*, and the first president of the American Copyright Club, referred Gregg to a young lawyer and democrat, John Bigelow, to disentangle him from the mess.

Bigelow was an up-and-comer who practiced law but harbored literary ambitions in the nationalist vein. The twenty-seven-year-old would eventually helm Bryant’s *New York Evening Post*, serve as a United States diplomat, and write several successful histories of his own. In 1844, he was already well on his way to becoming a substantial player in the New York publishing scene and Young America movement. Just the year previous, Bigelow had prepared Benjamin Moore Norman’s *Rambles in Yucatan* for publication by the Langleys, so it was only natural that he undertake a collaboration with Gregg. Since 1841, he’d contributed regularly to O’Sullivan and Langley’s *Democratic Review* and would become its political editor in 1845, the same year Evert Duyckinck joined as literary editor. Late in 1844, after he had finished his work with Gregg, Bigelow helped launch the *New York Morning News* with O’Sullivan, Duyckinck, and Langley. Bigelow was third man on staff, with “full charge of the literary, drama, and music notes, and was assistant on political sections.” Gregg admired the paper, which was inseparable from its politics. He wrote to Bigelow, “This most valuable journal is not a stranger to me—I am

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70 It remains unclear how Gregg became acquainted with Bryant, but John Bigelow asserts that Bryant introduced the pair (Bigelow, “Josiah Gregg,” 12). Gregg arrived in the city with several letters of introduction; perhaps he made his way to Bryant through them.

71 Clapp 34.
a subscriber and receive it regularly; and I must say, in the spirit of frankness, not of flattery, that I know not of another periodical, conducted so nearly to my liking.” Bigelow and Gregg were perfectly suited for one another. The editor didn’t push his writer to embellish his text with untruths and exaggerations as Tasistro had, and the two men shared democratic political leanings. Unusually for Gregg, who was socially awkward and a notoriously prickly introvert, he and Bigelow became fast friends, spending their free time on weekend jaunts and continuing a friendly correspondence for years after Gregg returned to the frontier and their collaboration on *Commerce of the Prairies* came to an end.

The literary nationalists’ ties to Gregg’s text sink even deeper than Bigelow’s editorship or Langley’s backing indicates. As Bigelow prepared to guide the delicate negotiations with the volatile, voluble Tasistro, the men decided to call in arbitrators on each side of the dispute. Bigelow writes in his journal on March 21, 1844: “I have been for the past week endeavoring to help Gregg out of his difficulties with Tasistro. . . . G. selected for arbitrator—for that course was adopted—O’Sullivan.” None other than the firebrand editor of the *Democratic Review* intervened to extract Gregg from his contract with Tasistro. Gregg and Bigelow walked away from the negotiations with the manuscript back in hand and immediately set to work together.

In timing that suggests that Gregg also changed publishing houses as a result of Bigelow and O’Sullivan’s machinations, Gregg writes the same month that, “I engaged last December with Messrs D. Appleton & Co. to publish my work; but by mutual agreement, we cancelled the

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72 Josiah Gregg to John Bigelow, April 9, 1845. Gregg, *Letters*, 163.

73 From Bigelow’s manuscript diary, March 21, 1844. In Gregg, *Letters*, 142.

74 Some fifty years after *Commerce of the Prairies* appeared, controversy erupted over whether Bigelow had actually written, or substantively rewritten, most of Gregg’s text. Bigelow denied it, writing, “Whatever value his book possesses . . . it has, I think great and enduring value—was due to him and him only. My laundry work added no more value to the washing of it than the washing and ironing adds to the value of a new garment” (Bigelow, “Josiah Gregg,” 12).
contract, and I now closed a contract with Henry G. Langley to publish for me.”

Gregg’s happy association with O’Sullivan apparently stuck; a year later, the frontiersman writes Bigelow and refers to “our friend O’Sullivan,” saying that “In the ‘News’ O’Sullivan, in my humble conception fully sustains that exalted—that truly enviable character for candor, for honesty of purpose . . . to which fame has already accorded him so eminent a rank.”

In his falling out with Tasistro, Gregg gained a literary nationalist triumvirate of allies—Bigelow as editor, O’Sullivan as advocate, and Langley as publisher—who were willing to invest their efforts for the chance to edit and bring his manuscript to market. Although these interventions were motivated by political idealism, they were far from purely altruistic. The literary nationalists saw a fit between Gregg’s text and their politics, but, like all publishers of travel accounts in the antebellum era, they also saw a market opportunity. Langley hoped for a profit, and Gregg paid Bigelow $200 for his efforts and promised him a cut of his proceeds from sales. It was Bigelow’s biggest paycheck to date as either a lawyer or an editor.

Paul Horgan notes that Commerce of the Prairies experienced “sturdy success,” enjoying five reprintings in ten years, as well as an English edition and a German translation. Unfortunately, Langley suffered bankruptcy the year after Gregg’s publication, perhaps from too fervent a devotion to the Democratic Review, which nonetheless survived Langley’s demise under new business management. Due to his publisher’s difficulties, Gregg never realized

75 Diary entry for March, 1844. In Letters, 140.
76 Ibid.
77 Clapp 29.
78 Horgan 46.
79 O’Sullivan would leave his editorial post a year later. Max Moorehead notes that in “1846 the Langley brothers went into bankruptcy, and the stereotype plates along with unpaid royalties went into the hands of the receivers” (xxxi).
much profit from his endeavor, although Horgan observes that the “reviewers were agreeable.”  

At least one certainly was. As the final clincher in the circle of literary nationalist patronage, it was Josiah Gregg’s editorial collaborator, John Bigelow, who wrote the favorable notice for *Commerce of the Prairies* and placed it in the *Democratic Review*.

**Gregg as Scientist- Traveller**

Gregg’s title promised democratic expansiveness, and, like Tocqueville and Horatio Bridge, Gregg travelled to a foreign realm and reported on its politics, culture, and natural history for his audience back home. Thus, while readers might have enjoyed the “spirit of adventure with which his very agreeable record abounds,” Bigelow’s review finds lasting value in Gregg’s extensive analysis of Santa Fe culture, politics, and natural history.  

*Commerce of the Prairies*, in other words, emerged from the same social-science tradition as Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. Accordingly, Bigelow emphasized Gregg’s credentials as a trustworthy observer in his notice, just as Tocqueville’s reviewers praised him:

> We say reliable, because, in the first place, the work is throughout marked by a cautiousness of expression and an indisposition to exaggerate or overstate, which at once commands our utmost confidence in the author’s fidelity. In the next place, Mr. Gregg’s statements are entitled to special consideration at this time, because he has, probably, a larger experience in this trade than any other living writer.

Gregg also lays out his educational purpose in his introduction, claiming that “not even an attempt has before been made to present any full account of the origin of the Santa Fe Trade and modes of conducting it; nor of the early history and present condition of the people of New

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81 “Commerce of the Prairies,” *Democratic Review*, 640.

82 Bigelow 639.
Mexico; nor of the Indian tribes by which the wild and unreclaimed regions of that department are inhabited. . . [these facts] are now published for the first time,” in what Gregg referred to as his “natural history of the Prairies.”

Gregg’s work provides an intellectual study of the borderlands from a multi-disciplinary point of view. Paul Horgan writes that the adventurer “was a scientist, a writer, an encyclopedist of a New World; and he never took a trading trip that did not also serve him . . . as a scientific expedition, for he kept notes and diaries and took observations and recorded phenomena” everywhere he went. Like Charles Darwin, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Lloyd Stephens, and even Fanny Trollope, Gregg sits firmly in the tradition of early-nineteenth century travellers who used their voyages to produce practical, scientific knowledge, just as Nathaniel Hawthorne had advised his friend Horatio Bridge to do from the shores of Liberia.

Travel remained inextricable from the examination that these authors performed, and their encounter with newness inspired them to undertake a comparative evaluation of their surroundings and their origins, to participate in theoretical introspection and sociological study. Sheldon Wolin observes that Tocqueville’s journey provided “an opportunity for the release of the theoretical imagination through an encounter with strangeness.” Tocqueville himself comments on this strangeness in a letter home, remarking upon his arrival in the United States that, “Here we are in New York. From a Frenchman’s perspective, it looks disarmingly weird.” For his part, Gregg remarks on the “optical illusions” caused by the “rarefied and transparent

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83 Gregg, *Commerce*, 2.

84 Horgan, 29.


atmosphere of these elevated plains” that impact his vision and imbue his surroundings with a sense of the unfamiliar. The dislocation of travel unsettles familiar norms, inspires comparison, and marks the travel narrative as a natural vehicle for the contemplation of political philosophy and scientific inquiry in the early nineteenth century.

**Projecting Democracy to the Frontier**

Like Horatio Bridge in *Journal of an African Cruiser*, Gregg and Tocqueville’s texts don’t merely examine their immediate surroundings. They each also project the democratic experiment to the frontier and subject it to scientific contemplation. Liberia served as Bridge’s laboratory, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands stand as Gregg’s, while for the European Tocqueville, the entire United States represented the extreme edge of developed civilization. Ewa Atanassow notes that for the Frenchman, travelling west “would be as if travelling in time, an opportunity to witness the continuum of stages in the development of human societies.” Bridge, Gregg, and Tocqueville used their state of travel to examine democracy in vitro in order to assess its viability and potential for increase. The literary nationalists posed this increase as both inevitable and morally imperative. As Robert Sampson notes, O’Sullivan’s vision of expansion was a “romantic, idealized view [that] led him to rely on a vague evolutionary process through which the peoples of these areas would voluntarily seek annexation to the Union.” In his introduction, Tocqueville similarly notes that, “The gradual development of the equality of conditions is therefore a providential fact. It has the essential characteristics of one: it is universal, durable,

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87 Gregg 64.


89 Sampson 201.
and daily proves itself to be beyond the reach of man’s powers.”\textsuperscript{90} O’Sullivan’s belief and Tocqueville’s statement echo the Enlightenment conviction that democracy is the highest form of social and political evolution, and that human progress will lead to democracy’s natural emergence.

Like the democratically infused literature that O’Sullivan calls for in the inaugural issue of the \textit{Democratic Review}, Tocqueville and Gregg’s works are not just passive vessels for the authors’ democratic philosophy. Rather, \textit{Democracy in America} and \textit{Commerce of the Prairies} exemplify the Young America conviction that democratic literature is itself a catalytic agent, whose circulation not only promotes democracy, but actively builds it. In his review, O’Sullivan argues that \textit{Democracy in America} establishes that “the ultimate ascendancy of the democratic principle is inevitable.”\textsuperscript{91} A few words later, O’Sullivan goes a step further. He emphasizes the active role that Tocqueville’s travel narrative and socio-political text plays in the advancement of democracy, arguing explicitly that, “To aid in this is the object of the present work.”\textsuperscript{92} Bigelow characterizes Gregg’s \textit{Commerce of the Prairies} as a similar agent of increase when the mere mention of Gregg’s title inspires presentiments of a frontier magically crisscrossed with the infrastructure of empire.

Regardless of how O’Sullivan and his literary nationalist contemporaries read Gregg and Tocqueville, however, these authors embedded the insecurity of the new nation into their writing, revealing national expansion as a threatened and threatening project. Although both \textit{Commerce of the Prairies} and \textit{Democracy in America} appear to celebrate the burgeoning United States, close readings of each author disclose an uncannily similar thread of apprehension that underlies

\textsuperscript{90} Tocqueville, \textit{Democracy}, 6.

\textsuperscript{91} “European Views” 93.

\textsuperscript{92} “European Views” 93.
both of their visions of the new republic. These moments belie traditional readings of their texts as straightforward celebrations of American exceptionalism and reveal them not only as tools of empire, but as exposés that, regardless of the nationalist’s unifying rhetoric, lay bare the rickety foundation from which that expansion precariously issued.

**Tocqueville’s Democratic Complications**

In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville pictures the United States as a self-contained unit, circumscribed by its particular (short) history, an insular case study for the rise of a liberal, democratic society freed from the weight of ancestral and aristocratic obligations to family, place, and origins. Frederick Brown explains that Tocqueville used his commission to study American prisons for the French government to “enable him to tour the New World under official auspices and observe a republic as nearly unencumbered by history as the virgin forests were undisturbed by human design.” 93 According to Wolin, Tocqueville’s journey to the United States pictured “a better form of life in which truth is enclosed by a different organization of social space.” 94 The concept of the United States as a nation unencumbered by neighboring powers or limiting historical obligations serves as a crucial foundation of Tocqueville’s argument and identifies a key difference between the new nation and its European counterparts. Tocqueville envisions the U.S. on its own vast, empty continent, and posits that location as a crucial premise to the democratic success he observes. For the Frenchman, it is as if the citizens of the United States have freed themselves from the weight of the past and can therefore move towards modernity at an ever increasing, frenetic, pace.

93 Frederick Brown vii.

94 Wolin 38.
In spite of Tocqueville’s attempt to construct the United States as an idealized, dehistoricized (but not uncomplicated) utopia his conception of democracy cannot escape the entanglements of a larger global context or the threat of involvement from external, potentially corrupting influences. This portion of the chapter explores two episodes from Tocqueville’s private writings that undercut his assessment of the United States in *Democracy in America*, and instead reveal a nation deeply embedded in international affairs, threatened on the global stage, and weighted by and unable to escape British cultural influence. This analysis takes as evidence for its claim two particular encounters Tocqueville and his companion Gustave de Beaumont have during their sojourn in the United States. Tocqueville largely elides these two events from *Democracy in America*, but they exist in his private accounts of their voyage. The first incident is contained in a personal essay called *A Fortnight in the Wilderness*, the second in both Beaumont and Tocqueville’s letters home; the events are eerily similar.95

In *Fortnight in the Wilderness*, Beaumont and Tocqueville take a detour from their journey in order to encounter the expansive raw wilderness of the American frontier, which in 1831 lay just beyond Saginaw, Michigan.96 The men set out on horseback, believing that they’re alone amidst the vast wilderness. They experience a fright when they find that a single, well-armed Indian has been running silently on foot just at their horses’ haunches, easily matching

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95 Ewa Atanassow argues for the significance of the essay, stating that “‘Fortnight in the Wilderness is the initial articulation and the groundwork of a comprehensive survey of the meaning of civilization. . . . to pose fundamental questions about the nature of man, the conditions for progress, and the direction of history. These ultimate questions, first explored in the travel story, find their intellectual and rhetorical elaboration in *Democracy in America*’” (22).

96 Leo Damrosch notes, “Tocqueville and Beaumont were determined to see the true American wilderness about which they had so often dreamed,” and that “it was Indians and the trackless forest that fired [Tocqueville’s] imagination, and Beaumont was equally enthusiastic. *Tocqueville’s Discovery of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2010): 66 and 69.
their pace while also remaining completely unobserved.\footnote{Damrosch writes that the Indian “perfectly fulfilled their idea of the noble savage,” (70).} The closely following warrior suggests Tocqueville’s inability to observe threatening complexities that loom in his environment, implying the possibility that unseen complications may just as well compromise his assessment of the United States. After a moment’s pause and stare-down on the trail, the Indian breaks into a smile, which a relieved Tocqueville interprets as a friendly effort to diffuse the threat of ambush implied by warrior’s surprise presence. While Tocqueville reads the Indian’s nonverbal communication as a peace offering, the Indian’s grin also mocks the Frenchmen’s oblivious ineffectiveness, a reaction later echoed in Gregg’s own encounters with Native Americans on the frontier. The bumbling oversight of the Frenchmen suggests that unseen danger lurks at the edges of the expansive nation, threatening its security and autonomy as it overreaches its boundaries.

In spite of his rosy optimism about the warrior’s demeanor, at some level Tocqueville senses that his interpretive ability might prove disastrously inadequate; the Indian’s grin turns out to be not quite reassuring enough for the French travellers. The discomfited European companions decide to leave the Indian behind. Not only do the greenhorns learn that the warrior is impossible to escape, the threat he embodies disconcertingly multiplies as they attempt to dodge it. Tocqueville recounts,

\begin{quotation}
We stopped, he stopped. We went on again, he went on again . . . The Indian broke into a double; I saw him sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left of my horse, leaping over the bushes and landing again noiselessly. . . . The sight of this unchanging figure, who, sometimes lost in the darkness of the forest, sometimes appearing in broad daylight, seemed to hover at our side, ended by getting on our nerves.\footnote{Tocqueville, \textit{Fortnight}, 41.}
\end{quotation}

In spite of their best efforts, the men cannot shake their uninvited companion, who lurks at will by their side. The “unchanging figure” never alters, in spite of the Frenchman’s efforts to
speed ahead, implying that the United State’s own history likewise undercuts the frenetic pace of progress than Tocqueville observes as he travels. The term “he broke into a double” implies both that the Indian increased his speed to keep pace with the men’s horses, and also that he seems to split into multiple identical figures that spectrally surround the men as they move through the forest, enveloping them in constant danger that flickers in and out of view. Whether he/they are seen in “broad daylight” or obscured from view by the “darkness of the forest,” the “noiseless” and sometimes invisible Indian figure/s haunt Beaumont and Tocqueville’s progress and cannot be avoided.

Shortly, Beaumont, Tocqueville, and the Indian come upon an American settler who gestures in sign language to the tireless warrior. The frontiersman tells Beaumont and Tocqueville that the Indian returns from a council with the British, an observation that immediately escalates the danger posed by him. He no longer represents an isolated although potentially deadly threat to the Frenchmen; the frontiersman reveals the Indian as the advance guard of looming international military incursion against the United States. The warrior carries a new rifle, the latest in sharp-shooting technology, which was a gift from his British hosts in exchange for an Indian alliance against the Americans. The Indian also carries two birds that he’s expertly killed with one clean shot through each small head, a marker of his belletristic prowess that he trades to Tocqueville and Beaumont. The Frenchmen leave the scene burdened with the birds, material evidence of the palpable threat of Indian and British violence against the United States. The encounter with the warrior serves as a potent reminder of the fraught position of the young nation, which, in spite of its nationalist protests, is not isolated at all, but still dangerously subject to imperial longings that extend across the Atlantic into the New World.
The second incident that unsettles Tocqueville’s sanguine view of the United States contains remarkably similar elements to Beaumont and Tocqueville’s earlier encounter with the Indian, although it occurs in a vastly different setting. Like all travellers, Tocqueville and Beaumont eagerly partake in a visit to the well-trodden tourist attraction of Niagara Falls, an essential stop on any fashionable itinerary. En route, the companions meet up with other travellers, including an Englishman, Godfrey Vigne, and a gregarious English spinster named Miss Clemens; both take a shine to the Frenchmen. Tocqueville likes Vigne, but remarks that Miss Clemens is “the dearest soul on earth, but surpassingly tedious . . . if she were twenty, she would be winsome, but she’s at least forty, which makes her ridiculous.” The three men decide to ditch the pesky Miss Clemens, whose constant presence, like the Indian warrior, gets on their nerves.

Beaumont recounts the scene in a letter to his father, in a description that is both comic and eerily reminiscent of the Frenchmen’s failed avoidance of the Indian. The men attempt to slink out of their hotel for a day of sightseeing without the flirtatious and persistent Miss Clemens. As is her habit, she appears on cue and moves to join their excursion. The three men pretend not to notice her cheerful greeting, and pick up their pace to a brisk walk, thinking to leave behind the middle aged, skirt-encumbered spinster. Like the Indian, however, Miss Clemens is not so easy to shake. The men gradually wind up their pace until they are running, flat out, from the Englishwoman:

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99 Leo Damrosch comments that “It was obligatory for travelers to see Niagara Falls and, if possible, to have a life-transforming experience there” (89).

100 Tocqueville and Beaumont mention this incident in their letters home; their visit to Niagara Falls does not appear in Democracy in America in such detail.

We really looked like prey pursued by an ardent bloodhound: we were all out of breath, we leapt over barriers like stags . . . But our fair Englishwoman, like a pack of dogs expecting their reward in meat from the hunt, easily cleared every obstacle; after an hour or more, despite all our efforts, we had no more than fifty steps on her.\footnote{Beaumont in Tocqueville, \textit{Letters}, 169.}

Juxtaposing Tocqueville and Beaumont’s encounters with the Englishwoman and the Indian shifts the anecdote of Miss Clemens from simple comedy to imply an uncanny connection to the Indian that gives the Niagara Falls event a more sinister reading. Like the Indian, Miss Clemens splits from her singular pursuit into a bloodthirsty pack of hounds that flit around the running men, threatening to bring them down. As in the case with the Indian, that threat is posed by the English.

While Miss Clemens serves as the focus of the Frenchman’s attention, their companion Godfrey Vigne is the national “split double” of the spinster, representing, like the Indian in the forest, an unperceived amplification of the presence of a foreign threat/irritation that surrounds the travelers in spite of their best attempts to deny its existence. Like the Indian, Vigne runs silently, unshakably, and parallel to Beaumont and Tocqueville. He is also their print culture double; like the Frenchmen, Vigne writes a narrative of his travels, \textit{Six Months in America}.\footnote{Vigne briefly mentions the Frenchmen in his travel account, remarking that, “I had lately enjoyed the agreeable society of two French gentlemen, who were traveling for the French government.” \textit{Six Months in America} (Philadelphia: Thomas T. Ash, 1833): 200.} He stands on the opposite side of the democratic divide from Tocqueville; Vigne’s account is one of four roasted by the \textit{Edinburgh Review} in its 1832 lengthy notice, “Americans and their Detractors.”\footnote{Leo Damrosch points out that Vigne’s travel account is less than flattering, “filled with scorn for American manners” (84). The \textit{Edinburgh Review} also noted Vigne’s unfavorable response to the United States in “Americans and their Detractors.”} Tocqueville’s experience of democracy in America cannot escape the weight of British criticism as a skeptic of democratic increase follows right as his heels and an aging
spinster, a personification of England, engages in relentless pursuit of the fleeing men, refusing to leave them alone.

Later, as Tocqueville and Beaumont part ways at last with Miss Clemens, she burdens the Frenchmen with gifts, much to their dismay. She presents to Beaumont a very good work on the art of perspective, a lovely album containing a poem of Thomas Moore, various biographical sketches of great Englishmen, and some very tender, remarkably well-turned verses of her own composition . . . Tocqueville as well was obliged to accept a rather pretty Christmas-gift book.105 Miss Clemens materializes the continued English presence in the United States with the print culture artifacts she presents to Beaumont and Tocqueville, a physical manifestation of an unwanted but unavoidable cultural and historical exchange between not just France and the United States, but France, the United States, and an ageing, out of date, England. Like the literary nationalists responding to the reprint driven market, Tocqueville and Beaumont cannot escape British influence or British print culture. Thus, while Democracy in America presents the United States as a nascent, powerful nation (and is lauded for its seemingly prescient foretelling of American global dominance), the personal accounts of Tocqueville and Beaumont unsettle this construction, and rehistoricize the cultural, political, and military position of the United States in the early nineteenth century as both deeply indebted to and threatened by the English empire.

Josiah Gregg’s Quixotic Democracy

Josiah Gregg spent his childhood on the Missouri frontier, in his words “cradled and educated upon the Indian border.”106 As the future explorer grew to adulthood, a persistent,


106 Gregg, Commerce, 3.
debilitating illness drew him deep into the borderlands in a last ditch effort to restore his health. Gregg joined his first caravan as a failing invalid. Soon after its departure, he miraculously improved, grabbed his gun, saddled his horse, and embarked on a life of rugged adventure. Even after years on the frontier, a return to civilization always incapacitated Gregg with mysterious wasting; his personal vitality depended on wilderness living. In 1844, he published *Commerce of the Prairies or the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader, During Eight Expeditions across the Great Western Prairies and a Residence of Nearly Nine Years in Northern Mexico*. Gregg’s use of the noun “Commerce” in his title and his corresponding titular identification as a “Santa Fe Trader” reinforce his mercantile objectives and designate Gregg as a commercial agent of U.S. imperialism.107 “Commerce” also denotes “exchange” more broadly, and encompasses all of Gregg’s interactions on the trail as he enacts a social, scientific, and political exchange of knowledge about the borderlands. *Commerce of the Prairies* provided the most thorough, reliable information for those following Gregg down the trail, and many travellers packed *Commerce of the Prairies* as an essential guide, following Gregg’s words as they followed his footsteps from Missouri into New Mexico. Because it was so widely used, *Commerce of the Prairies* became the foundational text for all Santa Fe Trail narratives that followed.

Like all travellers, Gregg didn’t just observe his immediate surroundings; his journey provided an opportunity to contemplate home. Gregg used life on the Trail as an imaginative laboratory for his own Tocquevillian *theoria*, a personal voyage and political examination of democracy even more extreme than Sidney Wolin assigns the Frenchman. Where Tocqueville’s isolated United States proved to be an imaginative fantasy, Gregg’s caravan existed unmoored from place or nation, an experimental subject insulated by the broad, extra-national expanse of

107 He certainly matches Mary Louise Pratt’s assessment of travel writers in *Imperial Eyes*.
the frontier. *Commerce of the Prairies* enacted a sequel to *Democracy in America*, following Tocqueville’s directive that “in the West it was possible to observe democracy pushed to its ultimate limit.”\(^{108}\) Gregg achieved that ultimate limit; he leapt off where Tocqueville ended, into a space so untainted that for a stretch of fifty miles, “nor was there a road, not even a trail, anywhere across the famous plain, extending between the Arkansas and Cimarron rivers . . . this dreaded desert.”\(^{109}\) Gregg’s caravan placed the Enlightenment model of social evolution in extrema, left an unregulated, isolated social body to its own devices, and tested whether it would naturally resort to democracy as its governing principle. It did. Yet, instead of affirming the Enlightenment paradigm, Gregg’s results challenged Young American faith in the superiority of democracy and the inevitable ascendancy of the United States.

Gregg’s shocking critique lies in plain view in *Commerce of the Prairies*, yet publishers, reviewers, and all subsequent scholars—perhaps lulled by the seemingly obvious expansionism of the text—have overlooked Gregg’s biting satire. Where Tocqueville sees the opportunity for unfettered development in the idealized state of isolation he posits for the U.S., Gregg only finds peril. Indeterminacy riddles the unformed landscape of his *theoria*: quicksand erodes stable ground, thunderstorms obscure vision, rivers flow and then unexpectedly run dry, meandering buffalo trails confound forward motion, itinerant game and Indians illogically appear and disappear from the limited horizon, and travellers are “frequently led astray by the deceptive glimmer of the mirage, or false ponds, as those treacherous oases of the desert are called.”\(^{110}\) The caravan bumbles, loses its way, and flounders through mud, while mirages and misperceptions

\(^{108}\) Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 29.

\(^{109}\) Gregg, *Commerce*, 45.

\(^{110}\) Gregg, *Commerce*, 13.
plague the group with false alarms and false promises of succor. It is on this uncertain, vertiginous ground—an unstable foundation at best—that Gregg places his democratic thought experiment.

Gregg sets the stage for an analysis of democracy by noting the caravan’s populist composition, observing “the heterogeneous appearance of our company, consisting of men from every class and grade . . . with a little sprinkling of the softer sex,” thus establishing the group as an experimental cross section of society.111 Paul Horgan confirms that “there were men of seven distinct nations,” including one Frenchman, two Germans, two Polish exiles, Indians, Mexicans, and Americans.112 The loosely organized, broadly representative group set out for a camp site called Council Grove, according to Gregg, “to assemble there for the purpose of entering into some kind of organization, for mutual security and defense during the remainder of the journey.”113 At the stop, the wagon train self-organizes into a nation in miniature, complete with its own government and defensive borders marked by the nightly watch and the tight formation of the wagons, circled to repel external threats.

According to Gregg, travellers mythologize Council Grove as the former gathering place for somber Indian councils; in contrast, Gregg satirizes caravan members’ electioneering, and, by association, the practice of democracy it resembles. Left to its own devices on the vast, unregulated frontier, the group’s unhindered social evolution spawns a cooperative democracy, confirming the Enlightenment hypothesis of its inevitable rise. However, the democracy Gregg witnesses fall far short of an Enlightenment ideal. Instead of a grand moment of social awakening, the caravan’s democracy erupts into a flurry of petty politics:

111 Gregg, Commerce, 29.

112 Horgan, 149.

113 Gregg, Commerce, 23.
we there held a ‘grand council,’ at which the respective claims of the different ‘aspirants to office’ were considered, leaders selected, and a system of government agreed upon,—as is the standing custom of these promiscuous caravans. One would have supposed that electioneering and ‘party spirit’ would hardly have penetrated so far into the wilderness: but so it was. Even in our little community we had our ‘office-seekers’ and their ‘political adherents,’ as earnest and as devoted as any of the modern school of politicians in the midst of civilization. After a great deal of bickering and wordy warfare, however, all the ‘candidates’ found it expedient to decline, and a gentleman by the name of Stanley, without seeking, or even desiring the ‘office,’ was unanimously proclaimed ‘Captain of the Caravan.’\(^{114}\)

At the end of the day, all of the candidates back out. Instead of progressing—either forward on the trail or forward on the spectrum of human evolution—the election fracas offers stagnation, proving to be nothing but a monumental waste of time. Gregg’s scare quotes lace the passage with sarcasm but also draw a parallel between the Council Grove election and politicking in the United States. By underscoring the frontier event’s absurdity and mocking its sense of self-importance, Gregg applies the same air of disdain to democracy generally. The Council Grove caravan doesn’t evolve to a higher plain of social consciousness; it devolves into confusion and impotence. Democracy “even in our little community,” “penetrated so far into the wilderness,” isn’t something to be desired, but it is something that cannot be escaped.

Once the group chooses its captain, Gregg examines the caravan’s organization in a thinly veiled, biting critique of the decentralized government of the United States:

Truly, there is not a better school for testing a man’s temper, than the command of a promiscuous caravan of independent traders. The rank of captain is, of course, but little more than nominal. Every proprietor of a two-horse wagon is apt to assume as much authority as the commander himself, and to issue his orders without the least consultation at head-quarters. . . . [The Captain] is expected to keep order while few are disposed to obey . . . and when he attempts to remonstrate he only renders himself ridiculous, being entirely without power to enforce his commands.\(^{115}\)

\(^{114}\) Gregg, *Commerce*, 27.

\(^{115}\) Gregg, *Commerce*, 53.
The “nominal” captaincy recalls the democratically elected President of the United States, who attains a position of authority vested with little actual power. The caravan assigns equal influence to all its members, including minor “two-horse” traders, just as the constitution protects states rights. The “promiscuous caravan of independent traders” is patriotically and democratically autonomous, but also uncontrollable, undisciplined, and easily diverted; like the federated states, each trader operates independently of the rest, often to cross-purposes and never under the direction of the captain or central government. Gregg notes that the caravaners are constantly darting off after false alarms, and he reflects these cross-purposes in sound. Instead of recording harmonious democracy, the disorganized caravan exists in a cacophony of indistinct shouts and “clamorous confusion.”

After one needless warning, Gregg comments that such commotion hadn’t been heard since “Don Quixote had his famous adventure with the fulling-mills,” identifying not only his caravan, but the entire practice of democracy as a delusional parody. Gregg’s metaphors comically expose the inability of a loosely federated, democratic group of individual interests to undertake productive action. The potentially disastrous consequences of this laissez-faire structure become abundantly clear as Gregg’s narrative moves from farce to drama and back to farce again when Indians surround the caravan.

In a culminating moment, the incessant false alarms that have distracted the travellers like so many Keystone Cops finally morph into an actual threat:

> a band of Indian warriors on horseback suddenly appeared before us from behind the ravine—an impossible array of death-dealing savages! There was no merriment in this! It was a genuine alarm—a tangible reality. . . . a van-guard of a ‘countless host,’ who were by this time pouring over the opposite ridge, and galloping directly toward us.

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116 Gregg, Commerce, 31.

117 Gregg, Commerce, 51.

118 Gregg, Commerce, 47.
As the Indians wheel into a tight formation at the wagons’ perimeter, the caravan responds with characteristic disarray:

A great portion of the men were unprepared for the emergency. Scores of guns were ‘empty,’ . . . Here was one calling for balls – another for powder – a third for flints . . . while a timorous ‘greenhorn’ would perhaps cry out, ‘Here, take my gun, you can outshoot me!’ The more daring bolted off to encounter the enemy at once.  

After an extended delay in which the scattered travellers presented easy marks for the Indians, the company determines that it would be “expedient” (an ironic choice of words), to force the swarming natives away. The caravan finally draws into a battle line. Now full of martial bluster and focused at last, a single, clarion bugle cry lifts into the air, and the traders rush the natives with their entire military might on display. The charge elicits a completely unexpected reaction. Gregg notes that the Indians “seemed far more delighted than frightened with this strange parade and music.” Instead of responding with either battle or retreat, the Indians laugh. Their chief, apparently secure in his force’s superiority, approaches the traders alone, cockily smoking a peace pipe. The incident ends with good cheer and trading, but the democratic caravan’s failure to muster a real threat against their potential enemies suggests that the trading group, and the United States, persists only at the capricious forbearance of their neighbors, rather than as a result of any actual national strength or moral imperative.

*Commerce of the Prairies,* championed by the Young Americans and used by travelers as a guide through the wilderness and a template for their own travel narratives, contains a scathing critique of the efficacy of democracy and the ability of a democratic nation to project power at

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120 Gregg, *Commerce*, 48.

121 Although Paul Horgan does not read this incident as an allegory for the United States, he does agree that the scene “could be regarded as an ironic comedy of the social life of the frontier” (154).
all. Yet, Gregg was a steadfast democrat who eagerly read O’Sullivan and Bigelow’s blatantly partisan *New York Morning News*. Rather than revealing a covert, anti-democratic bias, Gregg’s quixotic satire demonstrates the fundamentally insecure position of the United States in the early nineteenth century, buffeted as it was by the threat of international intrusion across its borders and deep into its print market. The bravura shouts about Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism rested atop a fractured internal reality and continuous external threat to the future of the nation, insecurity revealed in even the most boosterish travel accounts about the United States.

**Conclusion**

Even from the frontier, Josiah Gregg perhaps understood the print market as well as Nathaniel Hawthorne did. The explorer wanted nothing more than to write a travel narrative and thus become an author, as he put it, to “justify my appearance for once in the capacity of a bookmaker.” In 1894, John Bigelow recalled Gregg’s zeal for his author-making project, remembering that

> he had a vague notion, not unnatural to a frontier man of reflection, that there is no fame so enduring as authorship; nor any way in which a man may multiply himself so many times by the forces of other men as by writing a book. His whole soul, therefore, was completely absorbed in the work upon which we were engaged, as if it involved the destiny of empires.

As Gregg toiled night and day for months on end in his New York hotel, he didn’t just imagine that grand affairs were at play in his effort to polish *Commerce of the Prairies* to his exacting personal standards. In the early nineteenth century, publishers, editors, and authors of travel books engaged in a high-stakes game of empire, politics, and nation building that stretched

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122 Gregg, *Commerce*, 3

across the globe. The right to authorship, which conveyed the power to influence the terms of
that debate from a particular agenda, remained a critical issue for the literary nationalists, who
fought to assert a United States perspective on the national and international stage.

On the one hand, travel books promoted imperial desire and conquest, as Mary Louise
Pratt establishes in *Imperial Eyes*. The U.S.-Mexico War erupted only two years after Gregg’s
appearance as an author, a conflict that resulted in a United States land grab of fifty percent of
Mexico’s national territory. On the other hand, *Democracy in America, Commerce of the
Prairies*, and the era’s myriad travel accounts played an essential, catalytic role in the raging
international debate over the fate of government and society at the most fundamental level.
Would the history of civilization in Europe and the Americas, at this pivotal moment, continue
its radical, unprecedented turn towards individual rights and Enlightenment values, or would
(and should) the power of the state and aristocracy prevail? The correct solution, and the path
forward, remained fraught with peril and impossible to divine.

In many quarters, the prospects for democracy looked grim. The results of the earth-
shattering French Revolution, which continued to roil Tocqueville’s nation decades later, started
with liberal idealism but sunk to a bloody, cataclysmic conclusion. Mexico suffered constant
devastating political turmoil for more than twenty years after its revolutionary independence.
The United States served as the flashpoint for a critical, existential debate about the future of
human civilization. The nascent nation perched on the New World frontier and represented (to
Tocqueville and his fellow Europeans, at least) not only the western edge of civilization, but also
a brave new frontier of political and social reform. Travellers to the United States and its
outposts (including Bridge’s Liberian colonies and Gregg’s borderlands) accordingly viewed the
United States as a democratic experiment in embryo; they examined its initial conditions, and
nervously scrutinized the viability of its future.
Chapter III

Manifest Democracy:
John Russell Bartlett, the Ethnology of Travel, and Literary Nationalism

On April 24, 1851, John Russell Bartlett recorded the United States and Mexico’s cooperative effort to initiate a new border between the post-war nations. Bartlett—bookseller, publisher, author, and co-founder of the American Ethnological Society—traveled to the borderlands as the newly appointed head of the United States portion of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary Commission. He published an account of his frontier adventures titled *Personal Narrative of Explorations & Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua: Connected with the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission During the Years 1850, ’51, ’52 and ’53*. In its pages, Bartlett describes the critical moment of boundary inception: “The Astronomers were now directed to determine the point referred to by astronomical observation. On the 10th of April, Lieut. Whipple informed me that Mr. Salazar and himself had agreed upon a point of the Rio Grande, the result of nearly five hundred observations on eleven stars.”

This brief passage reveals Bartlett’s vision of democratic collaboration in the borderlands, wherein the American representative (Lieutenant Whipple) and his Mexican counterpart (Mr. Salazar) work diligently together—500 hundred observations on eleven stars!—to establish a point of transnational accord.

While portions of Bartlett’s *Personal Narrative* certainly contain familiar, problematic racial and social constructs of borderland populations, Bartlett’s liberal worldview emerges in remarkable moments of egalitarian cooperation between Mexicans and Americans in his published text. Like many travellers before him, Bartlett viewed the borderlands with an

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ethnological eye. In Bartlett’s case, his scientific framework derived from actual personal experience: in the early 1840s, Bartlett co-founded the American Ethnological Society and spent years actively involved in the growth of the discipline, supporting his explorer-protégés with professional advice and research material from his bookstore, and actively promoting their publications from his urban base in New York. Like Henry Langley, Evert Duyckinck, and John L. O’Sullivan, Bartlett’s zeal for promoting American science and letters drove his vocational choices: Bartlett’s business interest in his antiquarian bookshop and his personal interest in ethnology merged into a consistent literary and political pursuit. When the opportunity to lead the Boundary Commission arose, Bartlett leapt at the chance for a reputation-making sojourn to the borderlands that would move him from desk to field to conduct his own research and make a substantial contribution, not from the back rooms of the patron, but from the front lines as an explorer, producer of knowledge, and author of his own travel narrative.²

The multi-national, self-governing Boundary Commission functioned as a sociological laboratory for Bartlett, just as Josiah Gregg’s Santa Fe Trail caravan served the trader in *Commerce of the Prairies*. Like Gregg’s group of traders, Bartlett’s Commission travelled across territory distant from governmental control by either Mexico or the United States, although Bartlett’s terrain was even more nationally vertiginous. He advanced over an extra-national no-man’s land that hovered, mirage-like, between the two countries, a vague borderland without a defining line of separation. The war annihilated existing borders and profoundly reconfigured both nations; at the conclusion of hostilities, the U.S. greedily pressed its advantage and

² Bartlett writes of the opportunity: “Although my life and pursuits had always been of a sedentary character I always had a great desire for travel, and particularly for exploring unknown regions. I had, also, ever felt a deep interest in the Indians and was glad of an opportunity to be thrown among the wild tribes of the interior. I saw too, that there would be a wide field for new explorations & that if the government would permit these, I would prefer the office of Commissioner to that of any other.” John Russell Bartlett, *Autobiography of John Russell Bartlett* (Providence: John Carter Brown Library, 2006) 37.
appropriated almost fifty percent of Mexico. The Commission bore responsibility for drawing a new national existence out of the post-war waste of the frontier. Just as the United States offered Tocqueville the specter of time travel has he moved west, the war-torn borderlands offered Bartlett an imaginary throwback to an original, extra-national moment of social evolution. Unlike the cynical Josiah Gregg, the optimistic scientist-bookseller couldn’t help but project his idealistic social liberalism onto his experience of the borderlands. As the Boundary Commission labored to redelinate the United States and Mexico, Bartlett progressed on his own theoria, envisioning a simultaneous redefinition of Mexican and American society, whereby an allied egalitarian democracy springs spontaneously from the sands of the borderlands, and the natural rights of Enlightenment philosophy are assumed equally by all.

Bartlett’s 1851 description of Whipple and Salazar’s boundary measurement offers a window into the ethnologist’s theoretical reckoning by staging a particularly democratic distribution of power amongst the three actors in the scene. As the leader of the U.S. Commission, Bartlett remains oddly inactive during this critical, nationally inscriptive event. He writes himself as a stand-in for a decentralized, relatively weak national government, as Salazar and Whipple are directed to take action in the passive voice—as Bartlett writes: “the astronomers were now directed.” This grammatical construct makes it impossible to locate, or centralize, the source of the command, which may or may not have issued from Bartlett. Once power is delegated downwards, just as it is delegated to the populace in a democracy, Whipple and Salazar take over. The astronomers comfortably assume authority, carry out their duties, collaboratively make a decision, and merely “inform” the sidelined Bartlett after the fact. This anecdote reveals Bartlett’s positivist brand of Enlightenment-based liberalism from which he derives a radical, perhaps naïve, optimism that democracy, as the highest expression of human
social evolution, will inevitably germinate even between Mexicans and Americans on the frontier. For Bartlett, as the Commission defines the point of the new boundary, it also enacts the point of a new beginning for democratic sympathy between Mexico and the United States.

This moment, while never free from indictment by the U.S. conquest of Mexico, complicates standard appraisals of Manifest Destiny as only an aggressive, power-based doctrine. Instead, Bartlett provides an Enlightenment-inflected nuance to democratic expansion that ties him directly to the Young America movement. A plethora of scholars like Amy Kaplan, Shelly Streeby, Matthew Frye Jacobsen, Emma Pérez, and John-Michael Rivera rightfully challenge even the most enlightened romanticism of American exceptionalism, revealing Manifest Destiny’s essential self-serving pragmatism. This paradox blemishes even Bartlett’s egalitarianism; this chapter does not deny those contradictions or intend to glorify the imperialism of the United States. Rather, from within the context of the global debate on democracy and the British infiltration of the U.S. print market, this investigation seeks to complicate the trajectory by which Manifest Destiny is typically understood. The impetus west unquestionably relied upon an imperial projection of power by the United States into Mexico and against Native Americans. In the early nineteenth century, it also manifested a decolonial turn away, geographically and intellectually, from Europe in favor of Pan-American conviviality and democratic commonality. U.S. aggression permanently marred that purpose, but the anti-war Bartlett carried his idealistic, Enlightenment philosophy with him even to the post-war frontier.

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4 See, for instance, Jay Sexton.
This chapter concludes by exploring a remarkable scene of frontier justice depicted in Bartlett’s *Personal Narrative* that exemplifies the ethnologist’s unique aspirations for the spread of social liberalism in the borderlands, a position that reflects the Young Americans’ (doomed) faith in the spontaneous eruption of democracy across the frontier.

By the time Bartlett received his assignment as Boundary Commissioner, he’d spent a decade deeply involved in—and even directing—the significant literary, historical, and ethnological movements of his era. The surprising tie between the Whig explorer and the Democratic literary nationalists reveals the synchronous emergence of American science and literature out of same antebellum nationalist stew. In particular, this chapter brings to light the previously undisclosed connection between Bartlett and the influential literary-nationalist editor Evert Duyckinck, a friendship that establishes the close affinity between literary nationalism and American Ethnology in the period. Ethnologists’ fieldwork reinforced the aims of the Young Americans, who sought an intellectual foundation on which to build a uniquely national culture independent of European influence. American explorers served as the shock troops for this endeavor, publishing reports from the frontier that sparked sensational interest in the Americas. These wildly popular travel narratives served as examples of American literature in their own right, and also motivated a turn in United States towards the newly independent Mexico in defiance of British domination of the American intellectual marketplace. Ultimately, this chapter reveals that the nationalism of the early nineteenth-century United States includes a decolonial rejection of European influence that covets the borderlands of the west as an alternate territory—

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complete with an alternate antiquarian history—on which a chronicle of the nation might be written in New World terms.

The Contradictions of Manifest Destiny

Ironically, the very person most identified with the phrase “Manifest Destiny”—an association that sullies his democratic credentials in many scholar’s eyes—also poses the most useful embodiment of the doctrine’s complex trajectories: the rabble-rousing visionary of the United States Magazine and Democratic Review, John L. O’Sullivan. As Edward Widmere notes, “Contrary to much academic thinking, many of the original Young Americans were profoundly troubled by the Mexican War and what it represented.”\(^6\) O’Sullivan, as editor of both the Democratic Review and New York Morning News, obstreperously held the Young America position, ardently favoring expansion but stridently opposing hostilities with Mexico.\(^7\) While “O’Sullivan’s romantic conception of democracy deployed it as an unstoppable force,” according to Robert Sampson, war “was not O’Sullivan’s preferred choice for realizing these romantic ideals.”\(^8\) Thus, in the article in which he first uses the term “Manifest Destiny,” O’Sullivan roundly criticizes the U.S. government for bungling the annexation of Texas, arguing that better diplomacy would have meant

Mexico and ourselves united by closer ties than ever; of mutual friendship and mutual support in resistance to the intrusion of European interference in the affairs of the

\(^6\) Edward L. Widmere, Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999).

\(^7\) Besides Edward Widmere and Robert Sampson, Robert Scholnick also notes the pacifist leanings of the Democratic Review (Scholnick, “Extermination and Democracy,” 127).

American republics. All this might have been, we little doubt, already secured, had counsels less violent, less rude, less one-sided . . . presided.\textsuperscript{9}

O’Sullivan’s Manifest Destiny included in its proprietary gaze an attraction for friendly alliance with Mexico, which had only twenty years previously defeated Spain and won independence from its own European oppressor.

Instead of expansion by military conquest, O’Sullivan and the Young Americans advocated for the gradual acquisition of territory by democratic means: first a popular vote in the territory for independence from Mexico, followed by a vote for annexation into the United States.\textsuperscript{10} O’Sullivan took no risks with his democratic vision: He expected the influx of settlers from the United States to rig the results. Thus, he wrote about the still-Mexican California that, “The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it . . . over which it will be idle for Mexico to dream of dominion.”\textsuperscript{11} O’Sullivan’s proprietary vision exhibited a hypocritical disregard for Mexican sovereignty, but was also pacifist at its center and rooted in the broader struggle to throw off the shackles of European dominance. He drew Manifest Destiny as both imperial and protectionist, and included Mexico as both adversary and ally in the effort.

O’Sullivan and the nationalists’ covetousness extended beyond physical territory to an all-inclusive embrace of the ancient history of Mexico as an alternative national legacy that


\textsuperscript{10} As this was the Texas model, and those events erupted into violence, it’s not clear why O’Sullivan would think that Mexico would concede territory to the United States so easily, even if the United States acted with more diplomatic restraint.

\textsuperscript{11} O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” 7.
would individualize the United States in opposition to Europe. This overarching aspiration brought the field of American ethnology directly into alliance with literary nationalism. The travel narratives of U.S. explorers revealed the antiquarian legacy of the Americas to the surrounding world, providing an historical, imaginative foundation for the development of a national literature and culture in the United States that had continental origins. In their effort to distance the U.S. from Europe and foster democracy, the literary nationalists resist their own colonial history while imperially adopting another. The turn towards Mexico and the fascination with Mexican pre-history has its roots in the very foundation of literary nationalism.

**Antiquarian America and Literary Nationalism**

John L. O’Sullivan famously inaugurated the literary nationalist movement with the first issue of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (Henry Langley became publisher in 1841; Evert Duyckinck and John Bigelow joined in 1845 as the magazine’s literary and political editors). The Young Americans didn’t invent the cause célèbre of literary nationalism; rather, their movement partook in general societal unrest about the state of American letters and a desire to assert United States autonomy against lingering British control, especially in the print market. As Robert Scholnick observes, Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered “The American Scholar” just two months prior to the first appearance of the *Democratic Review*. O’Sullivan sounded the terms of an already current debate. “We have no national literature,” fumed the editor in the first pages of the *Democratic Review*. “We depend almost wholly on Europe, and

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12 This stance is of course problematic, since its proponents and United States’ social and political institutions are not actually descended from classical American civilizations.

particularly England, to think and write for us, or at least to furnish materials and models after which we shall mould our own humble attempts. . . . The vital principle of an American national literature must be democracy. Our minds are enslaved to the past and present literature of England.”14 Following O’Sullivan’s fervent introduction, the content of the tightly coordinated first issue of the Democratic Review included a short story by literary nationalist darling Nathaniel Hawthorne, a poem by Young America stalwart William Cullen Bryant, a profile of Senate expansionist Thomas Hart Benton, and O’Sullivan’s review of Alexis de Tocqueville, which strategically marshaled the travellers Beaumont, Chevalier, Grund, and Martineau to the magazine’s democratic cause. In constructing its neat unity of national increase, democracy, and American literature, the inaugural number of the Democratic Review also contained an article titled “Mexican Antiquities.”15

As Robert Scholnick notes, an informal board vetted submissions to the magazine to ensure their philosophical consistency with the Young America movement; the seemingly eclectic pieces of the periodical actually formed a coherent ideological whole.16 John Michael Rivera argues that, “Because of O’Sullivan’s reign over the Democratic Review, the Mexican nation would become crucial to the construction of the American national imagination in the nineteenth century.”17 Thus, when the inaugural issue of the United States Magazine and Democratic Review simultaneously calls for the creation of an American literature and pages later in “Mexican Antiquities” claims an ancient, original history for the Americas, readers


15 I’m indebted to Robert Scholnick for his analysis of the first issue of the magazine in “Extermination and Democracy: O’Sullivan, the Democratic Review, and Empire,” 132.

16 Scholnick 128.

17 Rivera, Mexican America, 60.
understood the two as part and parcel of the same argument. Rivera particularly discusses the specter of Mexican-American citizenship that hovered over the acquisitive nation, but this chapter argues that O’Sullivan’s vision included a broad cultural interest as well. Meredith McGill notes that, “Reprising the complaints of authors such as Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne, critics have sustained the image of a young nation bereft not only of a national literature, but also of the romantic associations—the picturesque ruins and storied places—that would make such a literature possible.” The early nineteenth-century ethnological and print culture emphasis on Mexican antiquities repudiated this absence by laboring to establish both the romance and historical primacy of the Americas in relation to Europe. It is in this spirit that the anonymous author of “Mexican Antiquities” denies the derivative appellation “New World” for the hemisphere, claiming instead a history of civilization more ancient and advanced than Europe’s:

The continent of America has, by common consent, received and retained the appellation of the New World. Applied to the discovery of the Genoese navigator, this distinction may be appropriate; but, as is indicated by the title of this article, it ceases to be correct when predicated on the country itself. . . . These interesting ruins . . . present singularly striking analogies with the oldest remains of Phoenician arts and Egyptian architecture.

John Russell Bartlett, ethnologist and expert importer of books on antiquities, whose shelves housed volumes on Phoenicia, Egypt, and the Americas (and much more), and who fostered the careers of some of the era’s most prominent explorers of the Americas, served as an agent for the argument that American ruins equaled those of Europe’s storied past. The bookseller-scientist embodies the multi-disciplinary crux of the literary nationalist movement,

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18 McGill 20.

which pivoted equally between literature and archaeology in its endeavor to institute a national
culture of the United States.

**John Russell Bartlett, Literary Patron and Entrepreneur**

Just as Evert Duyckinck fostered the careers of such luminaries as Herman Melville,
Bayard Taylor, Joel Tyler Headley, Margaret Fuller, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Russell
Bartlett mentored some of the most influential ethnological and archeological writers of his day.
Bartlett was half-owner with Charles Welford in the 1840s of the famous New York antiquarian
bookstore Bartlett and Welford, which not only purveyed rare books, but also acted as a
publisher and promoter to a select group of authors.\(^{20}\) In 1842, about a year after he opened the
bookshop, Bartlett founded the American Ethnological Society with his great friend Albert
Gallatin. According to Robert Gunn, the men intended for the society to “contribute to ethnology
as a field that had implications for the definition of national character” of the United States, a
concern that corresponds to the drive of the literary nationalists to construct a field of American
letters that would help unify and define the spirit of the nation.\(^ {21}\) Gallatin and Bartlett also
revitalized the defunct New York Historical Society, of which they considered Ethnology a
branch.

In these roles, Bartlett came into contact with almost every anthropologist, antiquarian, or
ethnologist who lived in or visited New York. Any knowledgeable traveller or intellectual felt
compelled to visit the celebrated bookstore that housed over six thousand, five hundred

\(^ {20}\) Incongruously, one of those authors was Clement Clarke Moore, who published his only collection of
poems, titled *Poems*, in 1844 with Bartlett and Welford. Moore included his already famous “’Twas the Night
Before Christmas” in the volume.

Circle* 41.3 (June 2010): 161.
individual scholarly tomes, every volume of which would be nearly impossible for Bartlett’s customers to find anywhere else.\textsuperscript{22} The sheer extent of the collection, which put so many rare books in one public place available for browsing, had to be mind-boggling upon first encounter. Large public lending libraries did not yet exist in the early half of the century; the Astor Library, which would seed the New York Public Library upon John Bigelow’s intervention at the end of the century, didn’t open its doors until 1854, and even then its books didn’t circulate.\textsuperscript{23} The New York Historical Society had a small library.\textsuperscript{24} In its time, Bartlett and Welford was a one-of-a-kind clearinghouse for information on the farthest reaches of the globe, ancient and modern. The generous owners sold books, but also ran Bartlett and Welford as part research center, part lending library, and part scholarly salon. As Bartlett comments:

\begin{quote}
B & W were the first to keep a large stock of choice old books in every department of literature, hence our establishment was the resort of literary men not only from New York, but from all parts of the country. FitzGreen Halleck and Fenimore Cooper were daily visitors, and would sometimes remain for hours, generally in conversation. . . . There was scarcely a literary or scientific man in the city who did not pay frequent visits to our store, and the same class of men generally made us an early call on visiting the city to see what there was new among books.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The storefront in the Astor House Hotel hosted a daily parade of the who’s who of New York intelligentsia. Travellers and leading intellectuals stopped by for essential networking with the shop owners or other high-profile customers, and to use Bartlett and Welford’s well-stocked shelves as an essential source of inspiration or information. In many cases, Bartlett took his customers in hand, guided their research, and used his connections to promote their careers.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} “Bartlett and Welford’s Catalogue,” [1844] Hathi Trust.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Clapp 295-305.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Bartlett, \textit{Autobiography}, 24.
\end{itemize}
One of those visitors held a place amongst the most famous travel writers of the day. John Lloyd Stephens was an ardent Democrat and expansionist who would, in a few years, attend the founding meeting of the American Ethnological Society with John Russell Bartlett and Albert Gallatin. Stephens infused his wildly popular books with the American flair favored by the most prominent literary nationalist travel writers of the day. *The Athenaeum* anointed the neophyte Herman Melville with the highest praise when it wrote of *Typee* in 1846 that, “Mr. Melville’s manner is New World all over; and we need merely advert to the name of Stephens, the foremost among American pilgrims, to explain our epithet.” Richard Preston observes that, “as a narrator describing foreign places, Stephens projects a certain Yankee insouciance.”

His *Travels in Egypt, Arabia, Petraea, and the Holy Land*, published in 1837, sold twenty-one thousand copies in the United States in two years. Bartlett proclaimed that “no book on travels ever awakened a deeper interest in New York than Mr. Stephen’s [sic]” book. Although the author was largely unknown at the time of his first publication in 1837 (like Nathaniel Willis and Bayard Taylor, Stephens had seeded the market by submitting a few travel letters to the *Atlantic Monthly*), his project was one of the few picked up by the fiscally conservative Harper Brothers in the year that the American economy disastrously crashed.

Already known to his adoring public as the “American Traveller,” Stephens found himself home in New York, idle and casting about for a new project. He naturally gravitated to

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30 Exman, 94-95.
Bartlett and Welford for inspiration. He met Bartlett at his bookstore office in the Astor House Hotel, and, according to Bartlett, the bookseller-ethnologist suggested to Stephens, “Why do you not undertake the exploration of Yucatán and Central America? Here is a field . . . that is quite unexplored, where there are numerous objects of interest in ruined cities, temples, and other works of art.”

Stephens had never heard of the sites, so Bartlett invited him to his house, where he had a newly imported “beautiful work in folio” from Paris with images of the mysterious Yucatán remains. The illustrations captivated Stephens, so the knowledgeable Bartlett referred the travel writer to several more informative books about the Americas as well to specific references about the antique ruins. According to Bartlett, Stephens relied on the bookseller’s expertise, and “called on me several times afterwards to talk about the countries in question and manifested a desire to visit them.”

When the archeologist embarked on his historic journey, Bartlett noted that, “Mr. Stephens took all my books relating to the country with him. The result of his journey is before the world.” That result was *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatán*, which burst into the print market in 1841, selling twenty thousand copies in five months in the United States alone. In Britain, John Murray III couldn’t keep enough of the books on the shelves. Exman notes that Stephens’s two-volume set and the Harpers’ two publishers series, *The School District Library* and *The Home Library*, probably “represented most of the accounts receivable” for the publishing house that year.

Although Stephens maintained a well-established and profitable relationship with the Harpers, the “American Traveller” esteemed his bookseller/counselor enough to give Bartlett and

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34 Exman 147.
Welford rights to a special edition of his second Yucatán book. The opportunistic Harpers didn’t sit idly by as Stephens returned to New York from a second Central American voyage; they demanded a sequel posthaste. Eugene Exman relates that upon the explorer’s arrival, all four brothers took the unprecedented step of visiting Stephens en masse to “urge that he lose not a moment before beginning his book.” Henry Langley had just announced a similar upcoming volume. The Harpers wanted to head off the competition and line their pockets with revenue from their sure-fire profit center (Stephen’s use of “Incidents” in all his titles was becoming something of a trademark).

At some point in this process, Bartlett and Welford gained entry into the Stephens publishing machine, winning the right to issue a deluxe version of the Yucatán engravings by Stephens’s partner, the now-renowned illustrator Frederick Catherwood. The always price-sensitive Harpers, who aimed for the mass market, most likely happily turned over the risky special market opportunity to Bartlett and Welford. The antiquarian bookseller-publishers sought to protect their risk by signing up three hundred subscribers prior to undertaking the extravagant project. They offered a series of five engravings a month, printed by letterpress in imperial folio that stretched to a majestic twenty- by twenty-eight-inch page. The five-dollar-a-month subscription over twenty installments brought the total cost to one hundred dollars for one hundred luxurious illustrations. In contrast, the Harpers offered Stephens’s full text and Catherwood’s illustrations in two volumes of diminutive octavo (6” X 9”) for five dollars total.  

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35 Exman 170.
36 I glean all of my information about the Bartlett plan from this archival find: “Bartlett & Welford Propose to Publish By Subscription, A Work, To Be Entitled Monumental Antiquities of America, by John L. Stephens” (New York, May 1843), (subscription advertisement and circular). Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
37 Exman 171.
Bartlett pulled out all the stops for the project, leveraging his position with the New York Historical Society to present the proposal to its membership and secure their endorsement by official resolution. He duly quoted the Society in his advertisement, which read in part:

“Resolved, that the publication of these fuller illustrations is eminently deserving of the favor and support of the American public, and that we confidently recommend it as an object of national pride.” Bartlett and Welford’s venture never got off the ground, but the Harper’s edition did, and continued Stephens’s extraordinary run. His two works on Central America were eagerly consumed and universally hailed as objects of “national pride,” just as the official endorsement of the New York Historical Society anticipated. A reviewer in the *Knickerbocker* neatly tied Stephens’s ethnological pursuit to the realm of the literary, proclaiming, “his volumes on Yucatán will take their stand, at once, among the foremost achievements of American literature, not only in the estimation of his own countrymen, but in that of the whole enlightened world.”

John Lloyd Stephens wasn’t unique in Bartlett’s stable of patronage. Like Evert Duyckinck and his authors, the bookstore-ethnologist had a knack for picking the very best talent on the scientific-literary scene. The discerning benefactor’s eye soon settled on the American archeologist E. G. Squier, who would shortly become a sensation for his exploration and description of the ancient mounds of the Mississippi Valley. Squier was a literary man his entire life; besides authoring major publications centered on his research, he served as the editor of several regional periodicals, including one intended to create in its pages an anthology of American poetry. In 1861, in a dramatic crossover that made Squier a major figure in both the fields of ethnology and print, he became editor-in-chief of *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*.

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39 Squier was a literary man his entire life; besides authoring major publications centered on his research, he served as the editor of several regional periodicals, including one intended to create in its pages an anthology of American poetry. In 1861, in a dramatic crossover that made Squier a major figure in both the fields of ethnology and print, he became editor-in-chief of *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. 
scientist to meet the esteemed Albert Gallatin and present his findings before the group’s membership.⁴⁰ The experience impacted Squier’s career propitiously, as Michael Olien observes, “The American Ethnological Society of New York was especially important to Squier . . . After Gallatin’s death in 1849, Squier became the society’s most active member.”⁴¹ Bartlett and Welford published the archaeologist’s groundbreaking *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* in 1847, which was noted for setting new standards of scholarship in the field of archaeology.⁴² Ever the philanthropist to the nationalist cause, when Squier’s work caught the attention of the Smithsonian, Bartlett graciously shared publication rights with the newly minted institution.⁴³ According to Bartlett, “Mr. Squire’s labours . . . were considered of so much importance, and withal, being so purely American in its subject, that the Board of Trustees expressed a desire to print his work as the first volume of the Smithsonian contributions to Knowledge.”⁴⁴ Travel writer-explorers like John Lloyd Stephens and E. G. Squier made contributions to the field of knowledge that were explicitly American in nature, providing a conceptual link between the United States and the greater Americas and establishing an imaginative basis for the founding of a new culture derived from the ancient history of the continent.

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⁴² Olien 111.

⁴³ World Cat indicates the near-simultaneous publication of the Smithsonian and Bartlett and Welford editions. The emergence of an American institution sponsoring—and publishing in print—the pursuit of American knowledge emerges perfectly from the literary and scientific nationalist aims of the period.

John Russell Bartlett, Literary Nationalist

The fields of ethnology, history, and archaeology not only provided the foundation from which a national literature might arise in the early nineteenth-century United States, the travel narratives produced by explorer-authors stood as American literature and instruments of literary nationalism in their own right. The fields of literature, science, and history, in other words, were largely interchangeable pursuits in the antebellum era, separated by only fine lines of distinction. The various activities of Charles Welford and particularly John Russell Bartlett, who were deeply committed scientists and deeply committed literary nationalists, exemplify this tight entanglement of disciplines under the umbrella of nationalism. Besides his bookstore and leadership role in the Historical and Ethnological Societies, for instance, Bartlett hosted regular literary soirées at his home, which were eagerly attended by as many as sixty or seventy invitees, including a heady mix of politicians, historians, authors, scientists, and diplomats.45

The Bartlett and Welford bookstore, as a repository of public intellectual exchange in New York, exemplified the close relationship between science and literature as it attracted visitors beyond the realm of ethnologists, travellers, and archeologists to its shelves. The store quickly became the gravitational center for literary personages in the city, who would drop by to browse the inventory or to enjoy conversation and convivial company. Some of the store’s regular patrons included, besides James Fenimore Cooper and the poet Fitz-Greene Halleck, historian George Bancroft and literary nationalists William Cullen Bryant and Edgar Allan Poe.46 Poe and Bartlett became such good friends that Poe often attended the after-hours gatherings in

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45 Bartlett, Autobiography, 33-34.

Bartlett’s home. The power-editor Evert Duyckinck also attended Bartlett’s literary events, and mentions a visit to the shop in his diary, commenting that “in want of a book to while away an hour or two this morning . . . picked up at Welford’s a volume.” It happened to be a travel account of Pacific voyages by a Russian naval commander that Duyckinck compared favorably to Herman Melville’s travel narrative, *Typee*.

Even the geographical location of Bartlett’s shop situates him in close proximity to the literary nationalists: Bartlett and Welford received customers at 7 Astor House in New York, apparently right next door to the publisher J. and H. G. Langley at 8 Astor House. The Langley's published John L. O’Sullivan’s *Democratic Review*, Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, and Josiah Gregg’s *Commerce of the Prairies* from their offices in the luxurious new hotel. A letter from Duyckinck to Library of American Books author William Gilmore Simms reinforces the likelihood of at least a friendly connection between the Langley's and Bartlett’s antiquarian bookshop. Duyckinck writes Simms that a book “has been transferred to Bartlett and Welford who will send it to you through Langley.” It’s easy to imagine nationalist agitator John L. O’Sullivan or the more understated Duyckinck checking in on the

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49 Bartlett and Welford’s address is published; my knowledge of the location of J. and H. G. Langley is based upon title pages that list the firm’s address. See, for instance, the fourth edition of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* published by “Henry G. Langley 8 Astor House, New York” in 1846, or their second edition of Josiah Gregg’s *Commerce of the Prairies*, published by “J. and H. G. Langley 8 Astor House New York” in 1845.

50 It seems impossible that the scholarly Josiah Gregg (who relied on outside sources for background for *Commerce of the Prairies*) wouldn’t have visited his publisher, the Langley's, and then popped next door to Bartlett and Welford when he was in New York. So far, however, I’ve been unable to discover any direct evidence of such a visit.

Democratic Review at the Langley’s and then dropping by the bustling bookstore for a conversation amongst friends or a browse through the impressive inventory.

The union between literary nationalism and American ethnology is perhaps most strikingly apparent in the life-long collaboration, correspondence, and friendship shared by influential editor and litterateur Evert Duyckinck and ethnologist-bookseller John Russell Bartlett, as indicated by unpublished letters housed in the Duyckinck Family Papers at the New York Public Library. The significance of these letters has never been critically mined.\(^52\) The collection includes twenty-three different missives written by Bartlett to Duyckinck that span approximately twenty years. The letters include invitations to Bartlett’s home, indications of a decades-long literary collaboration (Bartlett even boasts that he’s secured President Zachary Taylor as a subscriber for Duyckinck’s *Literary World*), evidence that the men contributed to each other’s publishing projects, and a shared mutual passion for promoting American literature and culture. Bartlett’s business partner Charles Welford also enjoyed a lifelong friendship with Duyckinck. One letter from Welford contains an apology that he hasn’t provided material for Duyckinck’s early literary magazine *Arcturus*. In another, Englishman Welford writes during a trip to London: “I have delivered your and Mr. Matthews parcels, but as yet have been too busy to see any literary men.” The truant Welford then moves from his neglected duties to a friendly chat about the desultory theatre scene in the city.\(^53\)

Bartlett, Welford, and Duyckinck were close personal acquaintances and also colleagues in their various nationalist endeavors: they participated together in several influential


organizations whose mutual aims were the advancement of United States’ science and letters. Early in the decade, when Albert Gallatin and Bartlett rejuvenated the largely defunct New York Historical Society, Duyckinck and Welford joined as active members—invitations to Society events pepper Duyckinck’s memorabilia in the New York Public Library. Gallatin served as president of both the American Ethnological Society and the New York Historical Society, while Bartlett served as corresponding secretary of each. The two men founded the Ethnological Society as an offshoot of the Historical Society to address issues not directly covered by its charter, and the two groups remained almost inseparable during the 1840s. For his part, Duyckinck published articles for the Ethnological Society in his periodical, *The Literary World*, including papers from Bartlett protégé E.G. Squier. In 1849, Duyckinck finally officially joined Gallatin, Bartlett, and Welford in the American Ethnological Society. As the Society’s corresponding secretary, Bartlett’s wrote Duyckinck in December, “the American Ethnological Society has elected you one of its members” —a previously unrevealed fact that demonstrates the broad scope of intellectual pursuits that concerned the literary nationalist editor. Duyckinck’s involvement in scientific and historical endeavors paints only one side of the alliance between literary nationalism and the broad antiquarian fields of the day, however. John Russell Bartlett and Charles Welford also crossed disciplinary lines into the realm of the purest of literary nationalist activities: the debate over international copyright protection for foreign authors in the United States.

54 Tax 105.


John Russell Bartlett and the Push for Copyright Reform

In tandem with Duyckinck, Charles Welford and John Russell Bartlett extended their own scientific and historical predilections to include literary nationalism of the most straightforward order: membership in the American Copyright Club, a detail confirmed by Duyckinck’s minutes from Club meetings. As recording secretary of the Copyright Club, Duyckinck was counterpart to Bartlett’s same role at the Historical and Ethnological Societies. The fact of Bartlett and Welford’s membership has never been published, but the editor’s precise records indicate that the group elected John Russell Bartlett an associate member on January 3, 1844, only a few months after the Club’s inception. He became a full member just two weeks later. Charles Welford’s name appears on the membership rolls from the group’s first meeting. The bookshop duo felt serious enough about copyright to back their stance in public, issuing Thomas Adamson’s pro-copyright “Reply to ‘Considerations and Arguments, providing in the Inexpediency of An International Copyright Law, by John Campbell’” under the Bartlett and Welford imprint in 1844. Bartlett’s activities with the Club seem to indicate a boundary-defying crossover, not just in the field of American letters from science to literature, but in politics. The Democratic Review, the Young Americans, and Evert Duyckinck all espoused principles of the radical Democratic order. John Russell Bartlett was a Whig conservative enough to secure his place on the Boundary Commission through his political connections and, later in life, to become the politically appointed Secretary of State of Rhode Island. While scholars typically consider literary nationalism and copyright reform the particular bailiwick of


the Democrats, Bartlett, in his literary advocacy, crossed intellectual disciplines and political
aisles to ally with the nationalists in their call for copyright reform.

The American Copyright Club was more than a group of like-minded intellectuals who
informally gathered to discuss arcane legalisms—it would be difficult to overstate the
importance that international copyright held for the literary nationalists, and they agitated
vocally, passionately, and publicly for change. To join the Copyright Club was to take a stance
on a hotly debated issue. The matter was far from one-sided, as Meredith McGill establishes.59
Opponents of copyright protection, anticipating modern arguments regarding intellectual
property rights, adamantly believed in protecting the flow of information from Britain. In their
minds, a cheap literature equaled widely available literature; this best served the interest of
democracy by educating the populace and providing universal access to information. The literary
nationalists of the Copyright Club, on the other hand, argued that the torrent of reprints
oppressed American thought and held the country dangerously in thrall to British cultural
production.

Bartlett’s membership in the organization increased his affinity and acquaintance with the
literary nationalists (if he didn’t already know them from his bookstore). Among others, the
ethnologist interacted with fellow members William Cullen Bryant, Park Benjamin, Cornelius
Matthews, publisher Daniel Appleton, travel writer and historian Joel T. Headley, and possibly
even William Gilmore Simms, if the southerner was visiting New York. Bartlett would have
also seen William J. A. Bradford, explorer and author of the 1846 Willey and Putnam title, Notes
on the Northwest, at the meetings. These activists believed international copyright protection was
critical to opening a market flooded with legally pirated British reprints whose sheer volume and

59 Meredith McGill, American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853 (Philadelphia:
cheap production costs overwhelmed American authors’ ability to find a publisher and be fairly compensated.

John Lloyd Stephens and his publisher, the Harper Brothers, provide a useful example of the market that American authors faced in the early nineteenth century. Stephens’s first travel narrative, like many travel accounts, overcame the barriers new American authors encountered in the market. *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* became one of only three profit centers for the Harpers in the aftermath of the crash of 1837. The Harper’s other two profitable business lines that year, *The School District Library* and *The Family Library*, depended for success on the cheap economies of reprinting foreign works, as did much of the rest of the Harper list. Eugene Exman notes, for instance, “more than 90 percent of approximately 234 titles in the 1833 catalogue were English reprints.” Scott Casper observes that the Harper’s enormously successful *Family Library* consisted almost entirely of pirated British authors (the hugely successful American travel narrative by Richard Henry Dana, *Two Years Before the Mast*, was a notable exception). In a frequently cited diary entry, an exasperated Duyckinck writes of a meeting with the opportunistic Harpers, who affirm that “the present system of publishing . . . was an exclusion of American authors.” The availability of cheap, unprotected content from overseas prevented American publishers from investing in American authors, a condition that effectively blocked the development of a national literature in the United States, and drastically impacted the earnings of British writers as diverse as Harriet Martineau and Charles Dickens.

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60 Exman 23.

61 Casper 129, 130.

British writer Frederick Marryat made a dramatic political reversal when he amiably consulted with the American Copyright Club on the hotbed issue of authorial compensation in the United States. Marryat seems an unlikely ally for the Young Americans: Josiah Gregg called out Marryat as a plagiarizing scoundrel for taking material verbatim from Gregg’s newspaper articles for *Travels and Adventures of Monsieur Violet*. Technically, Marryat was well within legal, if not ethical, bounds in pirating Gregg, since periodicals received no copyright protection in the United States. The Englishman had also written *Diary in America with Remarks on its Institutions*, which countered Tocqueville, satirically criticized the United States, and raised the bile of reviewers sympathetic to the democratic cause. Presumably, such a scurrilous author would find little welcome among the literary nationalists, nor would he want to. In spite of his offensive stance across the global democratic divide, the common denominator of authorial pay unified Marryat to the Young America cause.

In a letter to Park Benjamin (reproduced on page 146, below) that Evert Duyckinck tucked into his records of the American Copyright Club, the Englishman confirms the extreme difference in transatlantic authorial compensation. Marryat observes that he and fellow British powerhouse Edward Bulwer-Lytton (a Harper Brothers staple) receive one hundred pounds for each work published in the United States, but fifteen times that much in Britain. Marryat lists four titles of Bulwer’s that show a progressive growth over three years in his British earnings as his popularity increases, from four hundred pounds to fifteen hundred pounds per book. Bulwer’s fees from publishers in the U.S. remain stagnant at one hundred pounds per title, in spite of his snowballing sales. This stasis showcases the financial disadvantage British writers encountered in the U.S. market—and the advantage publishers gained. Marryat’s data also addresses the plight of American authors in their home country. He observes that Washington Irving receives

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63 Duyckinck, “Copyright Club Proceedings.”
the equivalent of fifty pounds per publication in America (a scandalous half of Bulwer and Marryat’s already paltry U.S. earnings), while Irving equals Marryat and Bulwer’s fifteen hundred pounds per book in Britain. Marryat also remarks, “Cooper, I do not know, but presume, same as Irving, Bulwer, and Marryat.” A note inserted at the bottom of the letter emphasizes that even at this extreme market disparity, Bulwer and Marryat, and even Cooper and Irving, remain privileged by their scant American earnings: “At present with exception of Bulwer, Marryat, and one or two more, the proof sheets are sent over by the Publisher who receives from 10L to 25L for their trouble from American Publishers.

Bulwer’s Letter to Park Benjamin

[addressed on back to Park Benjamin Esq.]  
Copy of Facts, regarding the Copyright Question, communicated in writing by Capt. Marryat

As Authors gain in reputation so do they obtain higher prices from Booksellers—W. Bulwer’s rise may Serve as a Criterion for all the rest—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pelham 400L -----------</th>
<th>American Publishers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disowned 800L ----------</td>
<td>100L for each work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devereux 1000L----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Clifford 1500L-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[publication dates 1828, 1829, 1829, 1830]

This is about the maximum received by the most esteemed authors.---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Washington Irving 1500L</th>
<th>Marryat 1500L</th>
<th>------ 50L in America &amp; 100L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James from L500 to 700L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessington L400 to 600L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James has always published at ½ profits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srattam[?] One time recd 800L but now less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper, I do not know, but presume, same as Irving, Bulwer, &amp; Marryat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ainsworth Author of Rookwood, supposed 500 to 600L but being pubd himself &amp; uncle cannot precisely say</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

At present with exception of Bulwer, Marryat, and one or two more, the proof sheets are sent over by the Publisher who receives from 10L to 25L for their trouble from American Publishers.
Bartlett’s membership in the American Copyright Club and Marryat’s cooperation don’t represent a shocking break with conservative politics so much as the men illustrate the broad attention copyright and literary nationalism inspired, reaching beyond the party lines it is often assumed to characterize. Activists from both sides of the political aisle switched allegiances in the contentious debate. Shockingly, John L. O’Sullivan broke with his Young America compatriots to oppose copyright reform. On the other hand, publisher Daniel Appleton was a Whig who joined the Copyright Club efforts, and he and Bartlett were far from alone. The publishers George Palmer Putnam and John Wiley held literary nationalist credentials beyond dispute. They defied the cheap economies of reprint publishing to valiantly finance Evert Duyckinck’s *Library of American Books*. Putnam agitated for copyright reform and authored his own 1845 nationalist text, *American Facts*, in order to “redress English slights to American Culture.”

Regardless of this activism, Wiley and Putnam remained devoted Whigs. In a head-spinning contradiction to their literary nationalism and partnership with Evert Duyckinck, the duo regularly published *The American Whig Review*. As its title suggests, the magazine stood as the political nemesis of the *Democratic Review*—and its literary editor Evert Duyckinck. The *Whig Review* supported conservative politics just as vociferously as John L. O’Sullivan defended the democratic cause in the pages of his periodical. Democrat Duyckinck and the Whigs John Wiley, George Palmer Putnam, John Russell Bartlett, and Daniel Appleton put aside their sectional differences to promote American letters in defiance of British occupation of the marketplace. Bartlett most likely felt at home at the Copyright Club due to the interchangeable nationalist concerns of American ethnology and American literature, both of which labored to

64 Widmere 103-104.

shed the provincial status of the United States and establish the nation as an independent, legitimate locus of literary and scientific cultural production.

**Appropriating Continental Antiquity**

In an 1847 address to both the New York Ethnological Society and the New York Historical Society—which Welford and Duyckinck probably attended—Bartlett presented a one hundred, sixty-one-page report on the “Progress of Ethnology.” His words reflected the nationalist desire to discover civilizations that would provide an antique history for the Americas. Bartlett opened his address by noting the “new impulse” that has “lately been given to the study of American Antiquities.” He also promises the happy result of those studies, which have shown “that we possess much that is interesting.” Bartlett then premieres E.G. Squier’s findings on the ancient mounds of the Mississippi Valley, which will not be published for another year. Bartlett discusses the thrilling discovery that the ruins “closely resembled in the character of their structures, ornaments and implements of war and husbandry, the races of Central America; if they were not indeed their progenitors or an offshoot from them.” American ethnologists began to build an association between North America, the United States, and the ancient history of the southern reaches of the continent, a connection that provides a romantic attachment to an ancient, civilized past that provides an alternative to classical European origins.

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66 John Russell Bartlett, “The progress of ethnology, an account of recent archaeological, philological and geographical researches in various parts of the globe, tending to elucidate the physical history of man” (New York: Printed for the American Ethnological Society, 1847) 1.

In the same year, prominent American explorer and Indian ethnographer Henry Rowe Schoolcraft also gave an address to the New York Historical Society promoting the study of the American continent and American ethnology. His famous research on American Indians already exerted influence on nationalist literary productions. Michael Marsden notes that Schoolcraft’s work was used as an important source for the creation of a truly American literature. . . . Schoolcraft offered a panoramic view of the American Indian, which was gladly accepted and used by American authors hungering for American materials and for international recognition.

Francis Parkman, author of The Oregon Trail, used Schoolcraft’s work as a reference and idolized him as he set off on his own historic journey. William Gilmore Simms admired the ethnographer and “gave serious thought to the American Indian as an appropriate subject for a truly national American literature,” while Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Henry David Thoreau used his work for research and inspiration.

In his speech before the American Ethnological Society, Schoolcraft ranged outside his expertise to claim the ancient civilizations of all the Americas for the nationalist cause. His fiery rhetoric cloaks his opinions in anti-Europeanism that mirrors the bluster of the literary nationalists and reiterates their decolonial sentiments. Schoolcraft refutes the notion that America

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68 It’s possible that Schoolcraft helped found the American Ethnological Society; according to Bartlett he attended the founding meeting. See also Zmago Šmitek, “Baraga, Schoolcraft and the Beginnings of American Ethnology,” European Review of Native American Studies 7.2 (Jan. 1, 1993): 39.


70 Marsden also notes that Schoolcraft’s “work has been heavily criticized,” and “the paradox of Schoolcraft’s life is that at the very same time he was recording the vanishing culture of the Chippewa Indians of the Algonquin Nation, he was helping to formulate government policies which would destroy that very culture and undermine their entire civilization.” Michael T. Marsden, “Henry Rowe Schoolcraft: A Reappraisal,” Old Northwest (1976): 164.

71 Marsden 170.
lacks an appropriately interesting antiquarian past and asserts cultural equivalency with Europe.

His language challenges the snide criticism commonly leveled at the United States:

It has been said, prematurely, in the arrogance of European criticism, that America has “no fallen columns” to examine—“no inscriptions to decypher.” We answer the assertion by pointing to the enigmatical walls of Palenque and Chi Chen Itza, and to the polished ruins of Cuzco, and the valley of Anahuac.72

Schoolcraft implicitly (and problematically) conflates the “United States” with “America” in his address, a neat geographical elision that allows him to claim the ruins of Mexico and Peru as cultural antecedents of the United States.

Schoolcraft’s claims aren’t unique to the field of ethnology: the imaginative appropriation of antiquarian Mexican culture appears, for instance, in popular, nineteenth-century literary works like George Lippard’s Legends of Mexico (1847) and ‘Bel of Prairie Eden (1848), Ned Buntline’s Magdalena (1846), and William Prescott’s wildly popular and romantic History of the Conquest of Mexico (1843). These works depict the Spanish as evil imperialists, demonize European-Mexicans, and glorify indigenous Mexicans and annex them into the U.S.

Author-ethnographer-explorer John Lloyd Stephens intends a similar appropriation when he excitedly “discovers” and purchases the archeological town of Copán (now in Belize) for fifty dollars.73 Stephens sought to create a popular commercial attraction but also intended to “found an institution to be the nucleus of a great national museum of American antiquities!” by moving the site, in its entirety, to New York.74 These attempts at appropriation evince a wide variety of familiar, legitimate problematics: derogatory racial representations, the gendering of conquest,


vulgar, touristy acquisition of exotic prizes, the hypocrisy of United States’ exceptionalism—to name just a few; however, as spurious as it may be, the urge to appropriate native Mexican heritage also has its roots in a commonly shared decolonial history and the impetus to define the United States in non-European terms.

The war for Mexican Independence and the decades after mark an often-overlooked period of conviviality and even common decolonial purpose between Mexico and the United States (and other American countries vying for political freedom). John-Michael Rivera observes that, “it was during these years that Mexico emerged as a nation by breaking away from more than three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule, [and] wrote a democratic constitution modeled on the liberal and federalist traditions of the Enlightenment.”

Five years before Alexis de Tocqueville finished *Democracy in America*, prominent Mexican politician and intellectual Lorenzo de Zavala published a detailed account of his travels through the United States that included a thorough examination of its democratic and political institutions. Like Tocqueville, Zavala writes “a utopian primer of liberal democratic mores” in the interest of furthering the practice of democracy in his own country. Nancy Vogeley observes that in the first three decades of the century “for a short time, the United States and Mexico came together fraternally; and . . . acknowledged their similar colonial pasts and a common American future.”

Vogeley reveals an extensive program by Philadelphia publisher Matthew Carey and book agent Thomas Robeson to smuggle political and Enlightenment texts into Mexico, a commerce of ideas that suggests common liberal cause between the two countries. She also observes that, although the

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United States had won its independence in 1783, “it was still casting about for political security and economic viability”\textsuperscript{78} in the 1830s, and looked for some of that security in alliances with its American neighbors. Although the inclination towards Mexico will always be problematized by U.S. aggression, this period nonetheless marks a moment of extraordinary potential, during which the U.S. national imaginary teetered towards a Pan-American, rather than European-American, identification.

In his address to the New York Historical Society, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft imagines the field of American ethnology as bound only by the outline of the entire continent, free from the divisions of national difference or such trifles as boundaries. His hemispheric perspective joins the North American Allegheny Mountains and tropical South American jungles into a single, continuous canvas:

> When we examine the American continent, with a view to its ancient occupancy, we perceive its surface scarified with moats and walls—its alluvial level plains and vallies bearing mounds, teocalli and pyramids. Its high interior altitudes, in the tropical regions, are covered with the ruins of temples and cities—and even in the temperate latitudes of the north, its barrows and mounds are now found to yield objects of exquisite sculpture, and many of its forests, beyond the Alleghenies, exhibit the regularity of antique garden beds and furrows, amid the heaviest forest trees.\textsuperscript{79}

On the one hand, Schoolcraft’s statement expresses an imperial negation of boundaries that claims the entire continent for the United States (similar to George Lippard’s brashly unsubtle \textit{Legends of Mexico} fantasy in which George Washington lays his unsheathed sword across a map to reach “from Labrador to Patagonia”).\textsuperscript{80} On the other hand, an alternate reading might consider this passage an expression of transnational allegiance that erases the lines of difference and gestures towards common purpose and belonging. No prominent U.S. citizen better reflected this

\textsuperscript{78} Vogeley 13.
\textsuperscript{79} Schoolcraft 8.
\textsuperscript{80} George Lippard, \textit{Legends of Mexico} (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1847) 16.

**Albert Gallatin’s Crusade for Peace**

By the time Bartlett and Gallatin met in the early 1840s, the dignified American statesman had played a pivotal role in United States politics and cultural life for almost fifty years. Gallatin served as the longest sitting Secretary of the Treasury in history under presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and acted as close advisor to both. He served as an elected congressman, financed the Louisiana Purchase, and negotiated the end of the War of 1812. Gallatin later worked as the U.S. minister to France, served in a diplomatic role to Russia, and then returned home to found New York University. American ethnology and particularly Native American language fascinated Gallatin, who published two major works under the auspices of the American Ethnological Society late in his life. Like many of the Young Americans, Gallatin supported United States expansion, but only through means of peaceful negotiation and treaty. The Democrat Gallatin argued against the annexation of Texas and adamantly opposed U.S. aggression against Mexico. In alliance with the great statesman, the Democratic Review and then the Langleys published a “Biographical Memoir of Albert Gallatin,” in 1843, calling its subject “one of the most able, useful and eminent of the great statesmen whose names adorn the annals of our country.”

Given the close friendship between John Russell Bartlett and Gallatin and Bartlett’s next-door proximity to the Langleys, it’s hard to imagine that Bartlett didn’t at least know about the article and pamphlet as they moved through the chain of production, if he didn’t actually assist in their preparation.

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Throughout the 1840s, Gallatin and Bartlett were close friends and collaborators, with Gallatin occupying the position of esteemed senior scholar and mentor to Bartlett’s role as rising junior student. As Bartlett himself describes, “With the venerable Albert Gallatin I became acquainted about the time I commenced the book business, and as our tastes were much alike for geographical research, antiquities, philology, etc. we became quite intimate.”82 The men shared evenings almost every week, working so closely that it was Bartlett who sat with Gallatin in 1847 to transcribe his singular pamphlet “Peace with Mexico.” As Bartlett describes, “This essay was written by me at Mr. Gallatin’s dictation; or, rather, I should say, I was his amanuensis, for he was so feeble that he wrote with difficulty.”83 Bartlett and Welford backed the missive with an ambitious publishing campaign that approaches mass-market significance: they printed ninety thousand copies to distribute in their attempt to sway public opinion away from war. Bartlett also notes that newspapers picked up “Peace with Mexico,” spreading the missive from region to region and increasing its national exposure.84 Coming from such an authority as Gallatin, Bartlett claimed that the pamphlet “did more than any thing towards effecting a peace” at the conclusion of the U.S.-Mexico War.85 Response to the pamphlet divided largely on party lines, but it nonetheless generated extensive debate.86

“Peace with Mexico” is an extraordinary document that provides a window into Gallatin and his protégé Bartlett’s attitudes towards Manifest Destiny an the southern neighbor of the

83 Bartlett, Autobiography, 27.
85 Bartlett, Autobiography, 27.
86 Beider 91-98.
United States—opinions that deeply inform Bartlett’s tenure on the Boundary Commission and his representation of that experience in print. In his pamphlet, Gallatin excoriated the United States for gross imperial impropriety against its neighbor. He claimed that the annexation of Texas was an act of war, that the U.S. invasion of Mexico was unprovoked, that Mexico responded rightly in its own defense, and that there is “a total absence of any argument that can justify the war in which we are now involved.” Finally, Gallatin argued that any claim the U.S. might make at the conclusion of hostilities to territory outside of Texas, especially a claim to any part of California, was “extravagant and unnecessary.” He declared that the United States should not take any territory other than Texas from Mexico, and that the U.S. should not even offer to purchase additional lands, because such a concession from Mexico at the moment of defeat would forever appear coerced and create ill feeling between the neighboring countries. In countering the justification for United States aggression, Gallatin resoundingly chastised his fellow citizens for hypocrisy (anticipating modern critics of U.S. imperialism) and challenged the foundational basis of American exceptionalism:

In the total absence of any argument that can justify the war in which we are now involved, resort has been made to a most extraordinary assertion. It is said, that the people of the United States have an hereditary superiority of race over the Mexicans, which gives them the right to subjugate and keep in bondage the inferior nation. This, it is also alleged, will be the means of enlightening the degraded Mexicans, of improving their social state, and of ultimately increasing the happiness of the masses.

Is it compatible with the principle of Democracy, which rejects every claim of individuals, to admit an hereditary superiority of races? You very properly deny, that the son can, independent of his own merit, derive any right or privilege whatever, from the merit or any other social superiority of his father. Can you for a moment suppose, that a

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88 Gallatin, 28 and 31.
very doubtful descent from men, who lived one thousand years ago, has transmitted to you a superiority over your fellow-men.\textsuperscript{89}

In these passages, Gallatin repudiates the discourse surrounding the “Mexican Question” as debated in the U.S. press, which justified imperial expansion by arguing that the ‘natural rights’ delivered by democracy excuse the hypocritical appropriation of another country’s territory and citizens.\textsuperscript{90} In contrast, Gallatin steeps his argument against the war’s justification with the tenets of democracy to deny a “hereditary superiority” of social standing between any people.\textsuperscript{91} Gallatin’s radical Enlightenment liberalism informed John Russell Bartlett’s own approach to Mexico and to his ethnological practice.\textsuperscript{92} It helps explain Bartlett’s conciliatory approach to his negotiations on the Boundary Commission, which has puzzled scholars and lead to charges of incompetence or excessive idealism in analyses of his tenure.\textsuperscript{93}

**Democracy and the Boundary Commission**

By the time Bartlett received his assignment as Boundary Commissioner, he’d spent a decade deeply involved in—and even directing—the major literary, historical, and ethnological movements of his era. He brought a complex set of attitudes to the frontier that included a

\textsuperscript{89} Gallatin, 28.

\textsuperscript{90} John-Michael Rivera argues that “‘Manifest Desiny’ and the ‘Mexican Question’ were defining modern moments in American geopolitics, a liminal period that would test the foundations of democracy and its territorial roots.” In Emergence, 59.

\textsuperscript{91} Galatin’s belief in a monogenetic theory of evolution, which supposes a single origin for humankind, also informed his Enlightenment approach to international relations and the field of ethnology. See Gunn, Literary Borderlands, 352 for a discussion of Gallatin’s philosophy; for a discussion of monogenetics, polygenetics, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century race theory, see Mason I. Lowace, “Science in Antebellum America,” A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debates in America, 1776-1865 (Princeton: Princeton University, 2003) 249-265.

\textsuperscript{92} Robert E. Bieder notes that “In his ethnological works Gallatin sought to uphold the ideals of the Enlightenment. . . . unity of mankind, progress, advancement of science, and freedom from tyranny.” In “Albert Gallatin and the Survival of Enlightenment Thought in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology” (91).

skepticism about the U.S.-Mexico War, a commitment to the spread of democracy by diplomacy, a progressive view of racial and societal equality, and a nationalist, de-colonial view of the priorities of American letters and science. He also eagerly sought to use his borderlands venture to make a significant, personal contribution to American Ethnology. On January 21, 1850, as Bartlett awaited confirmation of his appointment, he wrote confidentially to his literary colleague and friend Evert A. Duyckinck:

Am glad to hear that Ethnology flourishes, and regret that I cannot be with you. If I can carry out a scheme which is now on the carpet I shall be able to do more for American Ethnology, than has been done by any one, not even excepting Humboldt or Squire [sic]—But the accomplishment of my plan, does not depend on myself at the outset—when the next California Steamer arrives, the question will be decided.  

Even in Bartlett’s absence (in 1849, he moved his family to Rhode Island from New York), literary man Duyckinck remained involved enough in the American Ethnological Society to send Bartlett a positive report of its activities. In turn, Bartlett shared the exciting possibility of his commission with Duyckinck.

There’s no mistaking that Bartlett envisioned his opportunity on a grand literary and scientific scale: in his letter to Duyckinck, he compared the potential of his voyage to two enormously successful explorers. Iconic eighteenth-century traveller and prolific author Alexander Von Humboldt was famous for being the first European to explore and describe Latin America (he was also a close friend of Albert Gallatin’s; it’s very possible that Bartlett and Humboldt met at Gallatin’s New York home, if not amongst the volumes at Bartlett and Welford). Humboldt published his extensive scientific travel accounts for several decades in the early nineteenth century. “Squire” in Bartlett’s letter was of course the archaeologist and ethnographer E. G. Squier, whom Bartlett mentored to lasting fame. With his opportunity to

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explore the borderlands, Bartlett hoped to make a contribution to science and garner celebrity on par with Squier, Humboldt, and Stephens.

As an American ethnographer and literary nationalist ambitious for authorial and scientific recognition, Bartlett must accomplish more than merely bringing an account of his findings to print. To make an impact as a truly American author, he must also suffuse his text with the democratic principles vital to the literary nationalist movement and to his own liberal republicanism. This was not difficult for the idealistic Bartlett to do. His faith in democracy as the ultimate expression of social progress led him to author events in his *Personal Narrative* that reflect his philosophical beliefs and mirror the ambitions of the literary nationalists. As the boundary measurement begins, Bartlett’s oddly hands-off management of the process and the shared conviviality of Mr. Salazar and Lieutenant Whipple represent Bartlett’s vision that societal, political, and imperial differences become irrelevant with the practice of democracy. His flexibility about the boundary’s location, and his willingness to compromise with the Mexican Commission don’t necessarily reflect managerial incompetence as has often been assumed. Rather, Bartlett’s approach indicates Gallatin’s influence and Bartlett’s liberal view that only nominal lines of national difference separate the two countries, which remain in his mind united by their common humanity and revolutionary stance against Europe.

In the no-man’s territory between the United States and Mexico, where war had obliterated a national boundary that had yet to be redrawn, Bartlett found the perfect extra-national landscape in which his brand of spontaneous democracy might incubate and flower. According to his *Personal Narrative*, it did just that in January of 1851. In the vicinity of El Paso, a group of marauding desperados murder the U.S. Commission quartermaster at a fandango. Bartlett relates an extraordinary incident of democratically administered justice that
rises out of the otherwise lawless, ungoverned frontier. As the tale begins, the ethnographer inserts an unobtrusive footnote onto the bottom of his page. Significantly, it reveals that Bartlett is not actually present at the events he narrates. “I am indebted to a gentleman of high standing connected with the Commission for the particulars of the death of Mr. Clarke . . . He attended the trial of all,” writes Bartlett, concluding with, “I have received similar accounts. I do not think, therefore, there is any exaggeration in the narrative, but believe that what is stated is strictly true.”

Bartlett’s footnoted aside serves as a framing tale around the incident; nineteenth-century authors often used this device to create layers of distance between author, narrator, and “source” in order to impart an air of mystery and indeterminacy to a narrative. In so doing, Bartlett seems to be adopting Hawthorne’s advice to Horatio Bridge for the Journal of an African Cruiser, to “omit no heightening touches because they do not happen before your eyes. If they did not happen, they at least ought, which is all that concerns you.”

In a manner reminiscent of the order that sets Lieutenant Whipple and Mr. Salazar in motion to measure the U.S.-Mexico boundary, Bartlett’s footnote establishes the narration of this second event with the passive voice (“what is stated”). This construction obscures the original source of the tale, just as the original source of the order to the Commission astronomers becomes obscured by Bartlett’s earlier use of the same grammatical structure. Once again, Bartlett’s reliance on passive voice distances him from the events in question. His further claim that multiple, anonymous versions of the story exist (“I have received similar accounts”), introduces even greater variability into the witness statements that inform his tale. The

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95 Bartlett, Personal Narrative, 157.

96 E.g., Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Scarlet Letter, Edgar Allan Poe’s Arthur Gordon Pym, Henry James’ The Turn of the Screw.

97 Hawthorne to Bridge, May 3, 1843. In Bridge, Recollections, 92.
concluding clause of Bartlett’s footnote underscores the fact that as an absent witness, he cannot be certain of the truth at all. Thus, his assertion that he has no doubt that the account he relates is “strictly true” ironically rings false. Whether or not Bartlett fabricates this event is not necessarily important; rather, what matters is that the ambiguous footnote lends the story the air of a fable, and elevates it to the status of democratic allegory—to something, in Hawthorne’s choice of words, that “ought” to be true.

As Bartlett describes it, the town of Socorro, a formerly a quiet enclave of peaceful Mexican citizens, has been turned upside down by an influx of ruffians. Failed wagon trains, once bound for California, disband at Socorro and create a growing population of violent, vice-ridden outsiders. After several murders, town inhabitants and members of the Boundary Commission apply for peacekeeping assistance from a nearby U.S. fort, but the military commander refuses to intervene. The situation reaches a boiling point when Mr. Edward C. Clarke, the Assistant Quartermaster of the Commission, receives nine or ten mortal “deep wounds” from a bowie knife at a fandango. The Mexican alcalde of the village, “a weak and sickly imbecile, had transferred his authority to another even more timid and less reliable than himself” who was of no help in restoring calm. A failure of Mexican civil authority follows the equally ineffective and passive response from the U.S. military, suggesting the ultimate failure of each nation to meet their governmental obligations in the borderlands. It rests on the transnational Commission to solve the problem.

Where neither nation’s official representative proved capable of restoring order (indeed their inaction extended the duration of the emergency), the combined effort of the Commission quickly succeeds. “In about three hours a party of Mexicans and Americans were collected

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98 Bartlett, *Personal Narrative*, 158.
together” to search door to door for the perpetrators.\textsuperscript{99} The posse identifies three captured men as suspects, while a fourth man, named Young, remains at large. A spontaneous organization of transnational, democratic justice follows the arrest of the criminals. Bartlett relates that, “juries were summoned and sworn, a prosecuting attorney named, and counsel for the defense offered to the prisoners.”\textsuperscript{100} Every member of the audience and every participant, except for the defendants, arrive doubly armed, as everyone believes that the suspects’ cronies will attempt to free their comrades. Bartlett’s description of the heavily armed jury and audience illustrates an egalitarian, cooperative blending of nations, each capable of violence, but joining peaceably to enact justice. He writes,

> The fair but sunburnt complexion of the American portion of the jury, with their weapons resting against their shoulders, and pipes in their mouths, presented a striking contrast to the swarthy features of the Mexicans, muffled in checkered \textit{serapes}, holding their broad-brimmed glazed hats in their hands, and delicate cigarritos in their lips. The reckless, unconcerned appearance of the prisoners, whose unshaven faces and disheveled hair gave them the appearance of Italian bandits rather than of Americans or Englishmen; the grave and determined bearing of the bench; the varied costume and expression of the spectators and members of the Commission, clad in serapes, blankets, or overcoats, with their different weapons, and generally with long beards, made altogether one of the most remarkable groups which ever graced a court room.\textsuperscript{101}

Bartlett’s vignette features a perfectly balanced distribution of United States and Mexican representatives in the jury box and amongst the spectators, where they intermingle as social, political, and martial equals. The formation of the transnational jury is particularly significant: In his monumental study, \textit{Democracy in America}, Alexis de Tocqueville argues that juries are political manifestations of democratic power. According to the Frenchman, trail by jury “places actual control of society in the hands of the governed;” the ability of the democratic citizen to

\textsuperscript{99} Bartlett, \textit{Personal Narrative}, 159.

\textsuperscript{100} Bartlett, \textit{Personal Narrative}, 159.

\textsuperscript{101} Bartlett, \textit{Personal Narrative}, 161.
deliver a verdict places the full power of the state directly into the hands of the individual. In other words, “the jury system as it is understood in America seems to me a consequence of the dogma of popular sovereignty just as direct and just as extreme as universal suffrage.”

In the borderland, cross-cultural jury, Bartlett witnesses the spontaneous flowering of the most pure form of democracy and distribution of power to the people available. As Bartlett portrays the incident, both Mexicans and Americans exercise equivalent ability to project authority from the jury box. While the potential for violence looms in the scene, Bartlett describes the threat as largely at rest. Both Mexicans and Americans sit in positions of repose, with pipes and cigarritos in their mouths. Rather than resorting to vengeance by force—something that the heavily armed community is clearly capable of—the transnational population in the lawless borderlands forms the ultimate expression of civilized government by the people, a trial by jury.

The international currents at play in Bartlett’s moral fable reflect an anti-British, pro-Mexican sentiment that favors a hemispheric, rather than European, national identification. The Americans and Mexicans in Bartlett’s anecdote evince identical parts frontier roughness and refined restraint, an unusually even-handed depiction during an era that tended to negatively distort images of foreigners in print. In Bartlett’s scene, Mexicans and Americans are equally civilized, and equally in control—they are self-governed, as required of a democracy. The only barbaric figures are the criminals, who project the roguish air of Italian bandits of popular dime novels, but who turn out to be two Brits and an American. Extraordinarily, then, the murder of Mr. Clarke is not only a case of white-on-white violence, but the posse actually captures and

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102 Tocqueville, Democracy in America, 313 and 314.

103 John-Michael Rivera documents that “the racialization of the Mexican people coincided with the publication of more than 350 articles that dealt exclusively with the U.S.-Mexico War, and there were over twenty-five hundred references to it” (63). See also his complete chapter, “The ‘Mexican Question’ in U.S. Print Culture,” Mexican America, 51-81.
accuses white men, not Mexican stand-ins, for the crime.\textsuperscript{104} The entire episode writes against the grain of popular U.S. representations of the borderlands that typically put Mexicans and Americans at odds, and villainize Mexicans.

Furthermore, Bartlett reveals that the murderers were menial members of the Commission. The violent elements that must be policed in the Borderland wilderness originate not from the Mexican inhabitants, who might typically be represented as “uncivilized” or savage in the U.S. print market.\textsuperscript{105} Rather, the violent offenders travel to Socorro from the United States. As members on the Commission, Bartlett describes them as scurrilous hangers-on. The murder and outcome of the trial therefore suggest that the remnants of uncivil violence must be excised from the United States, not from Mexico, before post-War peace and justice might be restored. Most remarkably in Bartlett’s anecdote, Mexican nationals pass judgment on white criminals—an almost unheard of instance of power sharing and judicial equality that belies popular culture representations of frontier justice and race relations (the lynch mobs of John Rollin Ridge/Yellow Bird’s \textit{Joaquin Murieta} offer one contrast).

The jury sentences all three men to death by hanging; the Americans and Mexicans carry out the punishment that very afternoon. Soon after, the posse captures the fugitive Alexander Young—also an American—and tries and sentences him to death. As Young faces execution, “He exhorted those both younger and older than himself, to take warning from his example. They could see what gambling, swearing, drinking, and an ungovernable temper, with evil

\textsuperscript{104} Bartlett’s view writes against popular culture representations like \textit{Joaquin Murieta}, in which Mexican stand-ins are lynched for imagined crimes.

\textsuperscript{105} Caleb Cushing for instance, writes that of Mexico that “we look in vain for those enlightened popular masses, without possessing which, no country has the first elements of a free representative democracy.” “Mexico,” \textit{The United States Magazine and Democratic Review} 18.96 (Jun. 1846): 423.
associates, had brought him to.”¹⁰⁶ The “evil associates” in Andrew Young’s case are either American or British, suggesting the pernicious influence an excessive amount of exposure to British ruffians might exert on impressionable American minds—just as the American Copyright Club argued that British reprints would corrupt the American intellect. Ultimately, the forces of civilization in Bartlett’s courtroom drama come not from British sources, and not from the United States or Mexico alone, but specifically from the combined efforts of the Mexicans and United States’ citizens who serve together on the jury and in the posse.

Seven years before his adventure on the frontier, Bartlett diligently transcribed an admonition from Gallatin to the American people in “Peace with Mexico:” “Your mission is, to improve the state of the world, to be the ‘Model Republic,’ to show that men are capable of governing themselves, and that this simple and natural form of government is that also which confers most happiness on all.”¹⁰⁷ Bartlett takes Gallatin’s caution a step further: it is the Mexicans and Americans who demonstrate a liberal republic and model democratic principles amidst the wilds of the frontier, suggesting that the most “natural form” of human interaction lies in the practice of transnational cooperation and equality. As Bartlett writes at the conclusion of the trial, “Socorro now resumed its previous quiet and good order.”¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately for Bartlett, his Boundary Commission did not.

Bartlett’s optimistic tableau exists in a brief, shining moment that is quickly overcome by the political infighting and scandal that consume his commission tenure. Problems surfaced almost immediately in his efforts to organize his team and get them to the frontier; his difficulties only deepened once he arrived. The official map of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which

¹⁰⁶ Bartlett, *Personal Narrative*, 166.

¹⁰⁷ Gallatin 25.

served as the authenticating document of Bartlett’s mission, significantly misplaced both the Rio Grande and the city of El Paso. Bartlett entered an error-riddled landscape whose misrepresentations he scrambled to correct. His negotiation with Mexican Commission leader General Pedro Garcia Conde to place the new boundary—whose start Mr. Salazar and Lieutenant Whipple’s diligent observations determined—became highly contested, and the Commission ground to a standstill reminiscent of Gregg’s ineffective frontier caravan in *Commerce of the Prairies*.

Instead of celebrating the cooperative effort on the border, the American press claimed a land swindle by crafty Mexicans and ridiculed Bartlett as a dupe. He was vilified and accused of neglecting his official duties and allowing his ethnological curiosity to distract him into expensive, non-productive, time consuming detours into Mexico—a charge that has stuck with Bartlett throughout history, in spite of the fact that E.G. Squier and John Lloyd Stephens also both undertook the common practice of neglecting their appointed political posts in Central America to conduct the same type of work. A change in political administration from the Whigs to the Democrats exacerbated the attacks on Bartlett. Congress rescinded his funding and repressed his official report, squelching his grand plans to publish his full ethnological findings.

**Bartlett as Author**

Bartlett was finally left with only his *Personal Narrative* to publish, a daily record of his experiences and the cooperative effort of the Mexicans and Americans to determine a boundary between the two countries. The ethnographer packs his two-volume set with anecdotes and data, but it represents only a fraction of the information he collected and a mere segment of his ambitions for his project—it certainly didn’t reach the grandiose proportions of Humboldt’s
publications as Bartlett had originally anticipated in his letter to Evert Duyckinck. Even so, Bartlett entered, at least briefly, the annals of American literature. In November of 1853, the ethnographer sent an account of his *Personal Narrative* to Duyckinck in preparation for a review, probably in the *Literary World*: “I enclose you a memo giving the title of my book, with some account of the several journeys enacted in it. If you will take the trouble to look in at Mr. Apppleton’s you would see some of the wood cuts. . . . You may, if you please, add that the work is to be published in London, simultaneously with its offerance here.”¹⁰⁹ Before the notice could appear, a fire swept the offices of the *Literary World*. Never deterred for long from his literary nationalist mission, Duyckinck was shortly back at work on a new canonical endeavor.

In the 1850s, Duyckinck and his brother George undertook a massively ambitious project, the *Cyclopedia of American Literature*, which would document the biographies and works of prominent American authors. Bartlett contributed; he wrote to Duyckinck with suggestions for content and contacted his bibliophile friend, John Carter Brown for sources (Brown attempted to collect every book written on the Americas; Bartlett was soon to become librarian of the results of those efforts).¹¹⁰ By the time Charles Scribner published the two-volume *Cyclopedia* in 1856, it ran collectively to almost fifteen hundred pages of densely packed, small type. By its sheer bulk and comprehensiveness, the *Cyclopedia* staked a bold claim for the literal and metaphorical weight of American letters. Albert Gallatin, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, E.G. Squire, and John Lloyd Stephens all have entries in the *Cyclopedia*, as do Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Bayard Taylor, and Joel Tyler Headley. A year after Appleton published his *Personal Narrative*, John Russell Bartlett also received notice from Charles Scribner that he would be included; the


¹¹⁰ Bartlett and Brown became acquainted through Brown’s patronage of Bartlett and Welford.
official communiqué requests a biography from Bartlett for the volume. Bartlett’s response included a defense of his management of the Boundary Commission, which his old friend Duyckinck printed almost verbatim in the *Cyclopedia*, with a positive mention of his *Personal Narrative*. Bartlett concluded his biography, which he sent to Duyckinck on September 2, 1854, by modestly poking fun at himself, saying privately to the editor, “I have now given quite an account of myself.”  

Although Bartlett may have felt uncomfortably pretentious writing his own biography, his presence in the *Cyclopedia* remains scanty by comparison to his fellow ethnographers’ life-long lists of publications. Bartlett made it in, but only as a minor entry, underscoring the failure of his dreams to match or eclipse the most significant contributions in print to the field of American ethnology and letters.

**Conclusion**

John Russell Bartlett exemplifies the intersection of literary nationalism and the field of American Ethnology (which included archeology and antiquarianism) in the early nineteenth-century United States, a connection that fuels the rise of American letters in the period. His activity with the New York Historical Society, American Ethnological Society, and the American Copyright Club, his ownership of Bartlett and Welford, and, finally, his friendship with Evert Duyckinck, draw lines of association amongst the two movements that establish the intimate relationship between the fields of literature and science. Ethnological narratives, by their nature, are also travel accounts, and these accounts fueled a turn in the period towards Mexico and away from Europe. Bartlett’s *Personal Narrative*, along with the works of Josiah Gregg and Alexis de Tocqueville, exemplify the way in which explorer-authors imagined their authorship as

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a political endeavor that projected the democratic experiment onto the frontier. In the process, travel writers authored a nation, and a national literature, into existence.

In the end, the reported progress of Bartlett’s Commission looks much more like Josiah Gregg’s quixotic democracy of fools than the glowing model of progressive cooperation that Bartlett envisioned. The collapse of his project and his vilification in the popular press represent the failure of the nation to embrace his positivist view of the new border culture and the potential for Mexican and American allegiance. The suppression of his official report and reams of data marks the collapse of his attempt to exchange America’s European heritage with one equally antique but “home-grown” on the continent, sinking his dream of American, trans-national cooperation and a significant contribution to the field of American letters into the dust of the frontier.
Chapter IV

American Authorship and the Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin

From June 1846 to September 1847, a young bride named Susan Shelby Magoffin kept a lively account of her sixteen-month honeymoon down the Santa Fe Trail. Prior to her journey, Magoffin transcribed literary snippets into the front of her leather-bound journal, creating a commonplace album in its first fifty pages. Unlike many travellers, Magoffin apparently never intended to publish her diary. It stayed tucked away, a family heirloom, for almost eighty years. At most a handful of her family members read the handwritten diary; the only sure constituents of Magoffin’s early audience include her daughter, Jane Magoffin Taylor, and her granddaughter, Susan Shelby Taylor. The keepsake manuscript, produced amidst a booming nineteenth-century print market hungry for travel accounts, remained unknown until the twentieth century, when Magoffin’s grown daughter trusted the diary to historian Stella M. Drumm at the Missouri Historical Society. Drumm edited and published Magoffin’s frontier travel narrative with Yale University Press in 1926 as Down the Santa Fe Trail and Into Mexico, The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin in 1846-1847. The Missouri editor included only the first-person diary in her project; Magoffin’s commonplace pages remain unpublished. A 1962 edition includes a new introduction by Howard Lamar, but preserves Drumm’s version of the journal along with her extensive historical footnotes. All subsequent editions of Down the Santa Fe Trail reproduce Drumm’s definitive work, which has never been updated and which remains the only adaptation of Magoffin’s diary in print.¹

¹ In the following footnotes, when referring to Magoffin’s original manuscript, I specify either the “MS Commonplace” or “MS Diary” to indicate which part of the journal provides the source material; when I refer to the printed edition, I use “Print Diary.”
Magoffin’s private, unpublished journal might seem an odd choice to illustrate the pride of place travel narratives hold in the antebellum print market. Scholars routinely analyze only Drumm’s edited travel narrative, while Magoffin’s commonplace poetry and other elements of her original journal—its materiality, multi-temporal complexities, and print market context—remain almost universally overlooked. A close examination of Magoffin’s commonplace book reveals it as an historical archive that traces the fractured conditions of the nineteenth-century print market that Evert Duyckinck and his fellow literary nationalists labored against. The diarist’s subsequent rise from mere copyist of her commonplace collection to triumphant first person author of her travel narrative exemplifies the way that travel accounts circumvent the messy cacophony of the nineteenth-century market and enable the instantiation of American authorship. Tracing Magoffin’s authorial rise and final collapse as she travels outside the nation also places her narrative amidst the literary and ideological effort to export democracy and domesticity beyond the boundaries of the nation.

Magoffin’s narrative is overtly expansionist. Her trip commences on the eve of the U.S.-Mexico War; in an extraordinary moment that underscores Magoffin’s imperial narrative frame, the front line of U.S. troops overtakes her caravan and diverts it as a prelude to invasion. The American military then escorts the merchant train forward. Magoffin boasts in her diary’s pages that she is the first American woman to enter Santa Fe “under the ‘Star-spangled banner’ too, the first . . . who has come under such auspices.” Like the other American travel writers

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2 Her husband, Samuel Magoffin, personifies a proto-capitalist invading and exploiting subordinate Mexican markets (although I would argue that he partakes in an exchange that is much more mutual than one of subordination and dominance), and his brother James Magoffin is a wartime U.S. government agent operating in Mexican territory.

3 Print diary, 102. Many critics mistake this as a claim by Magoffin that she’s the first woman or the first white woman to cross the Santa Fe trail and/or enter Mexico. This is incorrect (she has a maid with her, for one thing). It’s important to understand the clear distinction that Magoffin makes: she’s the first woman to come under the American flag. She enters upon the crest of American occupation.
investigated in this study, Magoffin marks herself with the stamp of citizenship. She writes herself as a feminine representative of the imperial United States, locating her text as a national product that extends democratic domesticity to the very crest of the nation’s expanding edges.

In writing herself as a protagonist in the grand sweep of imperial increase, Magoffin unintentionally, but no less significantly, also writes herself as a living counterpoint to the print culture rhetoric of contemporary popular fiction and the periodical press in regards to the “Mexican Question.” She is not completely uncritical, but, on the whole, she is delightfully open to her new experiences and personifies a national citizen eager for cultural alliance with Mexico. She delights in the company of the Mexican dignitaries she meets; she rides her horse bravely out on the frontier, exploring the new territory with delight (and sometimes fear); she swaps recipes and dress patterns with Mexican ladies; and curiously absorbs all that she can from her adventure. At least initially, Magoffin is much more Bartlett than Gregg in her optimism and inclusive sentiments; by all accounts, and by reading her diary, Magoffin was an extraordinary person, full of determined grace and goodwill in the hardest of circumstances. In his 1847 Conquest of California and New Mexico, James Madison Cutts relates an anecdote about the intrepid young bride that, while most likely apocryphal, nonetheless captures her spirit (Magoffin does not include the scene in her diary):

Mr. Magoffin bore with him a young, rich and lovely bride, of the noblest blood of Kentucky, to this mart of his commerce. She had it not in her nature to know fear. Through all the alarms of the camp, toils of the march, and the privations of the army, this lady was found cheerful. She was the charm of the social circle of the encampment in hours of ease, and in times of danger, brave as the bravest. Nor was her courage untried, for it happened that the carriage, getting off the line of march of the army . . . was suddenly ridden up to by a squad of guerillas. Their further proceedings were instantly and timely stopped by the sight of a pair of pistols presented at them by a lovely woman.  

Magoffin’s travelogue is nothing if not a romance hitched to the wagon of Manifest Destiny that traces the development of her marriage and also—at least initially—a popular, romanticized narrative of American imperial expansion and authorship. That record, taken together with her commonplace collection, ultimately reveals the power of the travel narrative to institute authorship in the early nineteenth-century United States. Magoffin finds herself both authorially empowered by the act of travel and rendered vulnerable by her extraction from the nation; she transplants American domesticity onto foreign soil and then reveals the shaky foundation upon which that extension rests. After sixteen months of overland travel, Magoffin boards a ship to return to the United States, her optimistic spirit broken by the rigors of imperial increase and her authorial enterprise abandoned as she turns towards home. Her journal inscribes a doubled trajectory of authorship and Manifest Destiny that challenges the exceptionalist rhetoric of the nineteenth century. Her national narrative expands outwards, certainly, but then it collapses back upon itself, revealing the delicate nature of the imperial democratic project that relied upon both territorial acquisition and cultural production to achieve its aims.

The Commonplace Condition of Authorship

At the start of her journal, Magoffin participates in the nineteenth-century fad for copying poems and literary excerpts into a blank book for later rereading. Critics largely discount this portion of Magoffin’s notebook; Stella Drumm only notes that it contains poems, “mostly of

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5 Commonplace collecting has its origins in the Renaissance, when scholars would copy excerpts into an album for later, deeper study. David Hall notes that this practice began as a means for “information storage and retrieval,” and that commonplace books provide a “view into private reading” (132) habits of the complier. Robert Gross observes that commonplace books provided copyists with a “permanent record of . . . reading” (537) and provide a chance for intensive re-visiting of their favorite pieces, especially in the early nineteenth-century, which was an era of limited book ownership, when readers relied heavily on borrowing for material.
love." 

Magoffin’s transcribed texts, which gain unity only from their copyist’s neat, angular hand, also constitute an historical print culture scrapbook. Her poems, and her act of copying them, reveal the extremity of the messy, decentralized environment from which Evert Duyckinck and the Young Americans strove to organize a national authorship and national literature in the early nineteenth-century United States. 

In his preface to his *Library of American Books* offering, *The Raven and Other Poems*, Edgar Allan Poe notes that his anthology rescues his periodical work from the vagaries of the early nineteenth-century print market. He sardonically observes:

> These trifles are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going at random ‘the rounds of the press.’ If what I have written is to circulate at all, I am naturally anxious that it should circulate as I wrote it.

Once authors like Poe published in a magazine or newspaper, they forfeited all control and ownership over their work, and even lost the ability to track its progress through the market. A close examination of Magoffin’s commonplace book reveals the “many improvements” forced upon authors under such conditions, as their work appeared, often anonymously, only to be edited, repurposed, and truncated at will between magazines. Magoffin’s copied poems also reveal the speed with which content proliferated and spun away, going the “random ‘rounds of the press,’” from its author and point of origin. Her excerpts also demonstrate the fractured condition of a regionally divided print market that spawned Duyckinck’s nationalizing effort in the *Library of American Books*. Magoffin’s triumphant rise as author from her anonymity in the background of the diffuse, reiterative chaos of her commonplace book reinforces Duyckinck’s 

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7 My discussion of Magoffin’s commonplace book is indebted to Meredith McGill and her work on copyright law, the practice of reproduction, and authorial anonymity in the nineteenth-century print market.

own reliance on travel narratives in his effort to consolidate authorship and a national literature in the antebellum United States.

Magoffin’s wide variety of attributions for her copied poems reflects the persistent instability of the category of “author” in the early nineteenth-century United States. Magoffin opens her collection, for instance, with a piece attributed to literary nationalist “F.G. Halleck” but immediately follows with an unaccredited, two-line excerpt on the same page.9 She identifies some of her passages with Felicia Hemans, Tasso, Southey, Byron, Shakespeare, and John Quincy Adams. “The Indian’s Lament” on page seventeen remains unattributed by Magoffin because it appeared anonymously during her lifetime. William Walker Jr., a Wyandot Indian, finally receives credit for the lament in 1882, a delay that reflects the paucity of attributed authorship early in the century as well as its subsequent rise.10 Even when Magoffin lists her poems with an author, they often bear slippery designations that hardly dispel their anonymity. Some have only a first name, like “Amelia” on page thirty-three, who is actually Amelia Welby, as the reader finds out three pages later with another transcription. Magoffin identifies some excerpts only with a title, as in “Childe Harold” on page twenty-four—perhaps Byron requires no introduction. Sometimes she only provides initials, as in S.M.K.B. on page four, W.F. on page twenty-three, or “S. P. S. of Louisville” on page thirty-three. On the other hand, some of Magoffin’s shadowiest excerpts—spare lines pulled onto the page without name, title, or initials—aren’t by undistinguished amateurs at all, as might be suggested by their lack of attribution. They come from authors like John Milton and Washington Irving, or John Keats’s


10 Among other publications, Walker receives credit in: History of Sandusky County (Cleveland: H.Z. Williams & Bro., 1882) 17.
champion John Hamilton Reynolds, who wrote “Think of Me,” which appears on page twenty-six. Magoffin’s attributional variations aren’t the result of a lack of attention on her part. It’s likely that even the most famous authors’ poems appeared anonymously in the sources that Magoffin copied. It’s even possible that editors picked up the poems without ever knowing who the original writer was. Magoffin’s commonplace collection demonstrates the lack of standard authorial recognition and professionalization in the antebellum print market, which the dedicated copyist dutifully replicated in the pages of her diary.

The publication history of Magoffin’s commonplace poems underscores just how widely periodical content travelled, how fast it moved from its source, and how long it stayed in circulation, ever more distant from its origin and author. Magoffin’s selections appear in any number of nineteenth-century periodicals or poetic anthologies, and several may even be found printed in multiple sources in close succession. One frequently cited piece from Magoffin’s journal includes the image on page eleven of a woman’s heart delineated “by a Gentleman” and a lady’s reply to that unflattering caricature. It appears in Atkinson’s Casket in September of 1833 (as did another excerpt from page twenty-three of the commonplace book) and in the Rural Repository in 1835, which acknowledges its original source as The Saturday Evening Post.

In 1828, the year after Magoffin was born, The Worcester Talisman and The New Monthly Magazine carry a poem titled “Memory.” Magoffin copies it more than a decade later

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11 The excerpt “Behold her” on page three comes from Paradise Lost; Washington Irving wrote “Woman’s Love,” which appears on page twenty-five.

12 My analysis in this section does not provide a complete publication history of each poem by any means. Using a few examples, I intend to indicate that most of the poems in the commonplace collection can easily be found published somewhere, in situations that demonstrate the proliferation of reproduction and the print market’s fractured nature.

onto page three of her commonplace book. In early reproductions, the ninth line appears as “An ark in time’s bereaving sea.” Twelve years later in 1840, the holiday gift book The Gem alters the line to “A mark in time’s bereaving sea.” This is how Magoffin copies the poem, in a relatively small example of the changes wrought to original works in the freewheeling print market of the antebellum United States. The earliest Magoffin could have copied the 1828 poem was in 1843, as indicated by the fact that her first entry in the commonplace collection, Halleck’s “Forget-Me-Not,” didn’t appear in print until then. “Memory” circulated anonymously for at least fifteen years by the time the teenager inscribed it into her journal.

“Love,” on page twenty of the commonplace album, appears in The New York Mirror in 1839. It is still in circulation forty-two years later, when it appears in The Mystic Star in 1871. On page twenty-two of the commonplace book, Magoffin inscribes an even more extreme example. The poem begins “Some go to church.” It appeared, anonymously, in print at least as early as 1805 in the Boston Weekly, twenty-two years before Magoffin’s birth. The Young Lady’s Book of Elegant Poetry carried it in 1836, The Treasury in 1886, and, in 2011, after more than two centuries of circulation, it appears in 1001 Unforgettable Quotes About God, Faith, and the Bible. The Boston Weekly, The Young Lady’s Book, and The Treasury all published the poem without attribution. In contrast, Magoffin attributes it to R. A. Warfield in the 1840s, while in 2011, Ron Rhodes, author of 1001 Unforgettable Quotes, credits the nineteenth-century

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preacher Charles Spurgeon with the poem.\textsuperscript{19} Since Spurgeon wasn’t born until 1834, nineteen years after the poem emerged in Boston, he can’t be the author. The long, diverse litany of “Some go to Church,” and its dual attribution of authorship, exemplifies the effects of a print market in which authors published anonymously, enjoyed no copyright protection, and ultimately lost control of their print creations.

Other poems from Magoffin’s commonplace book appear, unattributed, in \textit{The New World,}\textsuperscript{20} \textit{The Knickerbocker,}\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The New York Mirror} and \textit{The Mystic Star},\textsuperscript{22} the \textit{American Masonic Register},\textsuperscript{23} the \textit{Ladies Literary Casket},\textsuperscript{24} \textit{The Poughkeepsie Casket},\textsuperscript{25} a book of ballads,\textsuperscript{26} Sarah Josepha Hale’s \textit{Flora’s Interpreter,}\textsuperscript{27} and even as the definition of “spider-wort” in \textit{Familiar lectures on botany practices}, by Mrs. Almira Lincoln.\textsuperscript{28} Magoffin appears to copy “Wall Flower” on page twenty-four directly from Dorthea Dix’s \textit{The Garland of Flora}, as

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{19} Ron Rhodes, \textit{1001 Unforgettable Quotes About God, Faith, & the Bible} (Eugene: Harvest House, 2011) 37.
\item\textsuperscript{20} “The Betrothed,” by Charles Swain appears on page 28 of Magoffin’s manuscript diary and in \textit{The New World} 3 (Nov. 27, 1841): 347.
\item\textsuperscript{21} “Forget me not,” by F.G. Halleck appears in the \textit{Knickerbocker} (Jul. 1843): 48, and on page 2 of Magoffin’s commonplace album. “Woman” on page 30 of Magoffin’s album appears in the \textit{Knickerbocker} 15 (1840): 181 as “Rights of Woman” by Amasa Walker.
\item\textsuperscript{22} “Love,” \textit{The New York Mirror} 17 (1839): 189; and “Love,” \textit{The Mystic Star, a Monthly Magazine Devoted to Freemasonry and Its Literature} 14 (Nov. 1871): 40.
\item\textsuperscript{23} “Farewell,” on Magoffin’s commonplace page 21 appears in \textit{American Masonic Register and Literary Companion} 1.18 (Jan. 4, 1839): 141.
\item\textsuperscript{24} “Conversation Comparisons” on page 36 appears in \textit{Ladies Literary Casket} 1 (1831): 136.
\item\textsuperscript{25} “Hope—is the rainbow’s glorious hue,” appears in \textit{The Poughkeepsie Casket} 2 (Feb. 9, 1839): 176.
\item\textsuperscript{26} The first poem on page 12, “Oh! Am I then remembered still?” is a ballad by John Barnett (WorldCat) that can be found in \textit{The Quaver or Songster’s Pocket Companion} (Aldermanbury: Charles Jones, 1846) 56.
\item\textsuperscript{27} “Sentiment,” on page 18 may be found in \textit{Flora’s Interpreter}, edited by Sarah Josepha Hale (Boston: Marsh, Capen and Lyon, 1832).
\end{itemize}
evidenced by the fact that a second poem (“An emblem true thou art”) identically follows “Wall Flower” in both Dix’s volume and Magoffin’s commonplace book. 29 The nineteenth-century sources listed above encompass and expand beyond all the decades of Magoffin’s life, and include publication venues like Boston, Albany, Worcester, Louisville, New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Poughkeepsie. They illustrate the dispersed localities and decentralized structure of the early nineteenth-century print market, as well as its atomization into a vast plethora of niche publications. 30 Even in a nascent publishing center like New York, where the Knickerbocker and The United States Magazine and Democratic Review reached larger audiences, specialty, small-market periodicals like the Ladies Literary Casket abounded. In their four-decade span, the periodicals listed above also indicate the sheer amount of time some of Magoffin’s poems circulated (“Some Go to Church” being the most extreme example), becoming ever more unidentifiable with their authors or place of origin.

The point of this conversation isn’t to claim that Magoffin read all these particular magazines, annuals, and poetic and botanical anthologies. It would be impossible to determine the actual sources of her commonplace copies. Rather, the point is that this investigation barely scratches the surface of the potential sources available for Magoffin’s copies: there were innumerable reiterations of each poem available in the market. Even a cursory examination of the commonplace book reveals the massive scale of borrowing that occurred between periodicals in the fractured, non-copyright-protected market of the early nineteenth century—a reproductive borrowing and perpetuation of authorial anonymity in which Magoffin, as copyist, partook. The

29 “Wall Flower” and “An emblem true thou art” on page 24 of Magoffin’s manuscript may be found in Dorthea Dix, The Garland of Flora (Boston: B.G. Goodrich, 1829): 174.

30 For an excellent analysis of the lack of a national print marketplace in the early nineteenth-century United States, see Michael Winship, “Distribution and the Trade,” 117-129.
ever-increasing, centrifugal disbursement of content from its source challenged nineteenth-century efforts to create a nationally identified literature, because content removed from its origins cannot be tied to a specific ideological location of production. Furthermore, as Magoffin’s copybook demonstrates, a national market didn’t exist—not only was the country divided into diverse regions and niche publications, but continuously shared content entered a global exchange that resisted the recognition of national origins.

Trans-Atlantic Anonymity and Loss

Meredith McGill usefully analyses the circulation of Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher* to demonstrate that rampant sharing between periodicals elided the national origins of literary content. Poe’s classic tale first appeared in the United States only to be picked up, “without acknowledgement,” by Bentley’s Miscellany in London, after which it moved back into the U.S. in the Boston Notion “under a heading that suggested British authorship: ‘From Bentley’s Miscellany for August.’ . . . allow[ing] it to be mistaken in Boston for a British text.”

Most likely, the editor of the Boston Notion didn’t know any better. More than any other excerpt, the poem “To” on the second page of Magoffin’s leather-bound notebook demonstrates how continuous, uncontrolled reproduction severed content from its origins and dramatically reduced its meaning as it went “the random rounds of the press,” in Poe’s apt phrase.

When Magoffin copies “To,” the excerpt, like its title, floats on the page, free of context or claims of ownership; we don’t even know whom the writer addresses with his or her poem. The act of transcription sheds any associations that anchor it to location, writer, or meaning. Thus, when the first lines straightforwardly declare, “I could go through the world with thee/To

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31 McGill 157.
spend with thee eternity!” to all appearances, the transcription seems another commonplace scrap “mostly of love,” as Stella Drumm surmises. Ironically, the poem originally appeared as part of a short story that offered a disquisition into the very nature of authorship, identity, and forgetting. The larger volume of which that story was a part, *Passages of the Diary of a Late Physician*, stirred an intentional controversy that manipulated and satirized the conditions of the nineteenth-century-print market that the Young Americans labored to overcome with their literature-making enterprises.

Magoffin’s “To” first appeared, without any title, in a widely reproduced, anonymous short story, “A Scholar’s Death-Bed.” That story was part of *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician*, first published serially in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* and then collected into a book. Just after *Blackwood’s* published “A Scholar’s Death-Bed” in its magazine in September 1830 in Britain, the story spun across the Atlantic and through the print market. The installment appears, unattributed, in the United States in August in *The Cabinet*, and in December in *The Casket*. In November, *The Museum of Foreign Literature and Science* picked up several pieces of the serial at once, including “A Scholar’s Death-Bed,” and attributed them as being “From Blackwood’s Magazine.” “A Scholar’s Death-Bed” appears again in an 1832 New York annual gift book, *The Hyacinth*. These reproductions demonstrate an anonymous, serial progression

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across the Atlantic that highlights the circulatory, de-nationalized proliferation of print borrowing in the nineteenth century.

Blackwood’s played on the author’s anonymity by marketing The Diary of a Late Physician as a sensational real journal kept by a doctor tending patients in their last extremities (a construct amplified by the good physician’s own supposed “lateness”). In this case, authorial anonymity fueled interest and provided a neat marketing hook, and the story’s publication stoked a controversy that anticipated the fury generated by the appearance of Herman Melville’s Typee. Upon its appearance, speculation raged about who the author of the Diary might be, and whether or not its case studies were true. A letter even appeared in The Lancet from an irate physician protesting the diary’s ascription to his friend, a “Dr. Armstrong,” and complaining about the author’s violation of doctor-patient confidentiality, “the sacred secrets which are communicated to us in perfect confidence by our patients, and ought to be preserved inviolable” (emphasis in original). In 1835, when the Harpers included a two-volume set of The Diary in their cornerstone publisher’s series The Harper Family Library, a notice in the American Monthly Magazine highlighted the tantalizing mystery that the “entries” launched in London:

the attention which they there excited, has probably never been equaled by the effect of any other fugitive writings; they have been universally read, and as universally admired:-have been attributed to some persons of the very highest literary standing, and again to others who were manifestly incapable of writing them; and, strange to say, their authorship is still a secret.


The (unnamed) writer aptly designates the habitually unanchored texts of the period as “fugitive writings,” elusive literary tracts that circulate wildly in the market, unfixable because they are unmoored from ties to author or location.

The unknown author of “The Scholar’s Death Bed” places two fictional characters and his own anonymity between the verses of Magoffin’s copied poem “To” and their true source (himself). This removal in triplicate distances the writer from the poem before it even enters the print market, a severance that becomes a darkly parodic comment on the conditions of authorship during the period. The author names his titular dying scholar only Mr. -----. Within the confines of the story, this fictional patient “wrote” the poem, which the tale’s unnamed narrator/physician claims to “copy” into the narrative, much as Magoffin herself copies verses into her commonplace collection. The narrator says he found the poem “written in pencil, on a blank leaf of his [Mr. -----] Aristophanes.” 39 The narrator further remarks at the poem’s conclusion that the verses “were followed by several more lines; but these will suffice,” suggesting the imagined, ironic truncation of a poem that never existed as a whole in the first place. This figurative dismemberment of a non-existent original implies that any original becomes imaginary, disfigured, and ultimately lost by the practices of uncontrolled reproduction in the early nineteenth-century print market. 40

A few lines after the poem appears, “A Scholar’s Death-Bed” closes on a continuing loop of anonymity and loss: “Yes; it was all over. Poor Mr. ----- was dead. I shall never forget him.” In a final stroke of irony, of course Mr. ----- and the also-dead narrator-physician must be

39 Quoted material comes from The Cabinet printing, 4.6 (Aug. 1830): 251-262.

40 My notions of the receding original in an age of reproduction are influenced by Edward Bruner, Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), and John Frow, “Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia,” October 57 (Summer 1991): 123-151.
forgotten: they can’t be remembered because they’re never identified in the first place. Rather, like the incomplete, untitled poem, their truncated narratives only occur in partial transfer, within the bounds of the story. That story circulates throughout the transatlantic market, but the originals cease to exist; not only are the characters dead, they, like the poem, were fictional in the first place, buried deep in an imagined history inaccessible to the reader. The embedded poem in *The Scholar’s Death Bed* offers a metaphorical comment on a nineteenth-century periodical market whose essential condition is one of authorial “death” and “forgetting,” that promises only lost originals, narrative fragmentation, and fugitive reiteration.41

Magoffin’s commonplace poems demonstrate not only the nineteenth-century flair for appropriating content, but also how such repetitive copying creates persistently replicating layers of anonymous reproduction that sever text from author and origin, making it impossible for writers to establish an oeuvre or stake a claim for a nationalist literature. In creating the *Library of American Books*, Evert Duyckinck constructed a venue that combated these conditions by gathering scattered periodical pieces into anthologies or offering writers a chance to “make an independent author of you at once” in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s words, by publishing a travel narrative. As copyist and then travel diarist, Magoffin herself embodies the anonymity of the market and the fruition of Hawthorne’s promise of transition to instant, independent authorship via travel writing. Although Stella Drumm indicates that Magoffin marks some commonplace poems “original,” this does not indicate authorship by the Kentucky teenager: she only uses the designation once, for a poem she also attributes to the unknown “P.H.”42 In the first fifty-or-so

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41 In 1838, *Blackwood’s* published a third volume of *The Diary of a Late Physician* with Samuel Warren, a prominent attorney and author (not a physician), at long last listed as author, revealing the stories to be sensational works of gothic fiction. By this time, however, the earlier installments, including *The Scholar’s Death Bed*, had already been widely and anonymously reproduced in the market— an ironic realization of Samuel Warren’s argument about the conditions of nineteenth-century authorship.

42 Drumm, *Introduction*, xxiv and *MS Commonplace* 22.
leaves of commonplace poems, endpapers, and cover, Magoffin remains practically invisible. She creates no original verses; she never writes her name or initials on her journal’s end papers or frontispiece to claim ownership of her notebook or its contents; no introductory statement begins the commonplace book; she never signs her name after transcribing a poem. Magoffin’s cursive hand and subsequent pencil highlights indicate only the presence of an anonymous amanuensis, ghost-like behind the words on the page. Without the travel narrative, there would be no way at all for a reader to determine who owns the diary or writes in its pages.

**Traveling and the Spontaneous Eruption of Authorship**

![Image: Susan Shelby Magoffin Journal, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.](image)

The first page of Magoffin’s personal diary.

Once Magoffin proceeds towards extra-nationality, her writerly persona bursts from the page, leaving no doubt as to her role as author and owner of the notebook. The commonplace section ends on the recto, hand-numbered, page forty-nine of the journal. Almost exactly a year after this entry, Magoffin turns the page, keeps the verso leaf blank, and starts writing anew. She chooses the right side of the spread for her initiation; tellingly, it is the page that faces outward, most directly and assertively, towards the reader. Magoffin begins with a title writ large, “Travels in Mexico Commencing June 1846,” that intimately joins her authorial emergence with

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43 Image: Susan Shelby Magoffin Journal, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.
her movement away from the nation. She then announces herself as the source of the journal’s narrative, a claim of ownership and authorship that’s underscored by exuberant, decorative embellishments of her pen: “El Diario de Doña Susanita Magoffin,” she inscribes. Her proclamatory adoption of Spanish reinforces the role her extra-national journey plays in her writerly emergence. It is as if, by becoming a traveler, she writes in a manner and language—whether it be English or Spanish—that denotes an entirely new state of being and thinking; she has embarked on Sheldon Wolin’s theoría. She even returns to the front of her journal to write “Susanita Magoffin” on the inside cover, using her adopted, Spanish-inflected name as a stamp of ownership on her notebook at last. Magoffin reinforces her originary moment by restarting her journal’s pages as she initiates her travel narrative. The commonplace collection ends on her hand-numbered page forty-nine; the diary begins mid-notebook on a newly designated page one.

Magoffin’s state of travel inspires her authorial independence; her unique experience as a traveler both validates her writerly enterprise and provides Magoffin with implied permission to record anything she imagines. She opens the first travelogue entry with the observation that “My journal tells a story tonight rather different from what it has ever done before.” She not only begins to recount new experiences, she literally tells a different kind of story: she’s no longer a copyist, but generates, for the first time, her own narrative. She also announces, “the curtain raises now with a new scene. This book of travels is Act 2nd, literally [sic] and truly.” While this description might refer to previous travels Magoffin and her husband took to New York to prepare for their trip, it also serves as a stark demarcation from the earlier half the journal and Magoffin’s childhood habit of copying poems into her commonplace pages. “Act the 2nd”

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44 MS Diary 1; Print diary 1.

45 MS Diary 1.
initiates Susan Shelby Magoffin’s claim to tell her own story. She revels in her new-found independence of voice, commenting shortly after a rain storm: “And at the close of this to be quietly without any trouble to one’s self, into the middle of a bed in a nice dry tent, with writing materials around you and full privilege [sic] to write anything and every thing that may chance to enter one’s head whether foolishness, as this is, or wisdom.”

Magoffin’s delight in being able to write about “every thing that may chance to enter” her head denotes a clear transition from her commonplace collecting, which involved transcribing “every thing” that had occurred to other people, rather than composing her original thoughts on the page.

Scholarly challenges to Magoffin’s authorship exist. Although Magoffin writes a private diary, she clearly envisions her narrative within a larger print culture context—namely the succession of Santa Fe Trail accounts published in the nineteenth century, and in particular Josiah Gregg’s deeply influential Commerce of the Prairies. Howard Lamar, Deborah Lawrence, and Virginia Scharff argue that Magoffin consciously emulates Gregg in her diary—a reading that implies a subordinate position for Magoffin as a copyist of his original work. Lamar notes that, “She did write with a model in mind: Gregg’s famous Commerce of the Prairies, a copy of which she not only owned but appeared to have learned by heart.” Following Lamar, Virginia Scharff also contends that Magoffin used Gregg “as a model for her observations.”

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46 Print diary 22.

47 It does not appear that Gregg and Magoffin crossed paths during the war. At its conclusion, however, Gregg and her husband Samuel Magoffin set up a brief trading partnership that Samuel dissolved while Gregg was in the U.S. procuring their first shipment of goods (Horgan, 90).


Deborah Lawrence goes even further: she places Gregg and Magoffin in such close company that Lawrence reads the first part of Magoffin’s diary as remaining within “Gregg’s discursive framework” of jolly frontier adventurism, but that Magoffin must abandon “her imitative voice of authority” as disillusionment and difficulty set in. Lawrence’s analysis particularly diminishes Magoffin’s status as an author in her own right and suggests a continuation of her copyist role into the pages of her personal diary. Instead of taking the position that Magoffin follows Gregg so closely that she practically rearticulates his text, this dissertation turns the emphasis to Magoffin’s personal agency in her authorial relationship with the explorer. Far from robbing her of power, that relationship underscores her emergence in her diary’s pages as an autonomous wordsmith in her own right.

Magoffin refers to Gregg in her journal several times, and seems to be conscious of following in his footsteps, both on the trail and as an author. At one point she refers to Gregg as her “predecessor,” and she says of one campsite, “the place is called by Mr. Gregg, Coon Creek.” Earlier she writes from Cow Creek and notes that, “according to the calculation of Mr. Gregg, a gentleman who made several expeditions across the Prairies and who wrote a history of the trade &c, we are 249 miles from Independence.” Rather than memorizing Gregg as Lamar claims, this chapter argues that Magoffin had a copy of Commerce of the Prairies with her on the trail—which is also Scharff’s conclusion—and that she consulted Gregg’s narrative frequently, like a guidebook, as many travellers did. Regardless of Gregg’s influence on her authorial endeavor, she only tracks his route for the first six months of her sixteen-month journey, until

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51 Print diary 73, 49, 36.
she and her husband, Samuel Magoffin, reach Bent’s Fort. The Magoffins take the Mountain Branch leg of the trail, while Gregg travelled along the Cimarron Cutoff.

Magoffin’s authorial independence is particularly apparent in contrast to her commonplace pages. Even when she relies on Gregg for information, she asserts her authorial voice and creates her own narrative in contradistinction to his. During one reference to her predecessor, Magoffin even goes to far as to correct, not copy, his text. The Magoffin caravan encounters rattlesnakes on the trail just where Gregg’s did, but the diarist writes: “There were not hundreds killed tho’, as Mr. Gregg had to do to keep his animals from suffering, but some two or three were killed in the road” (emphasis in the original). Magoffin’s editorial stresses point out the extreme difference in the numbers of rattlesnakes she encountered in comparison to Gregg’s report. Her italics highlight and claim the uniqueness of her experience, and also slyly call into question Gregg’s veracity by the implicit suggestion that he exaggerated his numbers. She subtly claims the superior position as the more reliable narrator.

Later, Magoffin quotes a data-riddled passage from Gregg about mirages, another intertextual weaving that appears similar to, but actually stands in stark contrast with her role as copyist of the commonplace book. Magoffin sees a “false-pond,” and writes:

To use the language of my predecessor, Mr. J. Gregg, from whom I have gained my information respecting them, “It has usually been attributed to refraction, by which a portion of the bordering sky would appear below the horizon; but there can be no doubt that they are the effect of refractions upon a gas emanating from the sub-scorched earth and vegetable matter, or it may be that a surcharge of carbonic acid precipitated upon the flats and sinks of the plains, by the action of the sun, produces them.”

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52 Print diary 50.

53 Print diary 73.
This passage, which is a direct quote rather than an off-hand reference to the explorer, recalls Magoffin’s poetic reproductions in the early portion her journal. She copies Gregg in this instance, word for word (although, unlike Frederick Marryat in *Monsieur Violet*, she credits her source). In contrast to the anonymous, completely unnamed ventriloquist of the copybook, Magoffin’s authorship in this instance remains apparent even as she quotes Gregg. She explicitly acknowledges her active “use” of Gregg’s language, and she writes in the strong first person about absorbing knowledge from him. Furthermore, once Magoffin completes copying Gregg’s mirage description, her authorial attention veers instantly to something completely unrelated and thoroughly personal to her: her pet greyhound, Ring, who travels with the caravan.

Immediately after the mirage reference, Magoffin changes subjects: “My life of adventures and sight-seeings is beginning again. Nothing of importance has occurred as yet, save that we were frightened a good deal last night by *el perro*” [“the dog”]. Magoffin relates that Ring howled fearfully through the night, an undeniably individual experience—like much of her diary—that belies her purported role as mimicker of Gregg. Even in the early portion of her trip, when her journey most closely mirrors his, Magoffin’s narrative only superficially follows *Commerce of the Prairies*. The two texts are related more by a commonality of campsites than by Gregg’s editorial dominance. Rather than taking Magoffin’s references to Gregg as an indication of her dependence on him, the relative paucity of her actual copying of his text indicates just how far she’s come from the juvenile copyist of her commonplace book. Magoffin may be in conversation with Gregg (and other explorers) as she writes, but she converses with them not as an anonymous reader and editorial copyist, but as an authorial peer.

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54 I argue that the length of this passage indicates that she has Gregg’s text with her on the trail.

55 Print diary 73.
Writing the Nation from the Borderlands

Magoffin views her journey through the lens of nationalism, but, while Gregg sardonically parodies democracy, Magoffin approaches her *theoria* more like John Russell Bartlett, ingenuously accepting the presumptions of Manifest Destiny and their foregone conclusions of uncomplicated democratic increase. For much of her journey, Magoffin envisions herself as a benevolent torchbearer of an expansive domesticity. Her homemaker’s project extends the nation abroad and anticipates a mutually cooperative inclusion of Mexican citizens into the growing United States. Just like Gregg, Magoffin constructs her caravan as a mobile representative of the nation just a few miles from Council Grove, where Gregg’s own democratic election took place amongst “the heterogeneous appearance of our company, consisting of men from all grades of society.”56 Magoffin similarly comments that “we have a strange compounds of Americans, Mexicans and negroes; Horses, mules and oxen . . . It is a village on a hill this.”57 Andrew Menard explores the parallel in Magoffin’s diary to John Winthrop’s foundational sermon as he approached New England; Menard also describes a similar metaphor in James Fennimore Cooper’s *The Pioneers* and Mary Rowlandson’s captivity story.

Menard’s argument places Magoffin’s journal directly in the center of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century print culture that projects democracy to the frontier, and he interprets Magoffin’s “Act the 2nd” as a “renewal of Winthrop’s founding moment.”58 Menard’s analysis provides a broad platform that suggests that John Russell Bartlett, Alexis de Tocqueville, Horatio Bridge, Josiah Gregg, and Susan Shelby Magoffin partake in the same imaginative tradition,

56 Gregg, *Commerce*, 29.
57 Print diary 20.
58 Andrew Menard, “Down the Santa Fe Trail to the City Upon a Hill,” *Western American Literature* 45.2 (Summer 2010): 171.
whereby travel represents a secondary, continuous re-founding of American democracy beyond the edges of the nation. The first city on a hill was stationary, but the traveller’s assertive mobility acts conceptually to expand the extent of the nation with every new campsite. As Menard writes, “it is as if each encampment becomes a kind of ‘village on a hill.’” Magoffin’s caravan, like Gregg’s and Bartlett’s caravans and Bridge’s ship, serves as the mobile laboratory of a nation in the process of formation, with the travel writer serving as the observational scientist, reporting on that experiment in print.

Beyond Magoffin’s initializing reference to John Winthrop or her place on the shelf next to borderland travel narratives, Magoffin’s private journal belongs directly amidst the flood of mid-nineteenth-century popular literature that responded to and speculated upon the conquest of Mexico. The issue preoccupied popular writers of the period; romances of Mexican adventure permeated the print market. As Shelley Streeby observes,

> In these novels, relationships between U.S. soldiers and Mexican women, especially, are used to figure possible postwar relationships between nations. But although one might expect these novels to celebrate U.S. intervention and promote the annexation of all or part of Mexico, many raise questions about the justice of the war and express various fears about the incorporation of Mexico and Mexicans into the union.  

In the typical plot of such stories, a stalwart American hero rescues a beautiful, vulnerable Mexican maid from the clutches of a villainous countryman. Ned Buntline’s *Magdalena*, for instance, plays out a story in which the evil Mexican Colonel Alfrede sexually and economically threatens the title heroine until a dashing American rescues her. In George Lippard’s popular,

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59 Menard 171.


61 Shelley Streeby and Jesse Alemán have reintroduced Lippard and Buntline’s “Mexican narratives” to the scholarly public. Without their work, I wouldn’t be aware of the connections I draw to Susan Shelby Magoffin’s journal or the counter-metaphor I construct for Magoffin’s own marriage in relation to the rhetorical climate in the United States. See Jesse Alemán and Shelly Streeby (editors): *Empire and the Literature of Sensation: An Anthology*
1848, ripped-from-the-headlines *Legends of Mexico*, a soldier returning from the U.S.-Mexico War bursts into his Ohio family dwelling, where his father and two sisters gather around the hearth. “When I left for Mexico, I told you I would bring back with me a Trophy of War,” he announces. “That trophy is here!” The soldier flings the door wide to reveal his new wife—a voluptuous, reticent, Mexican maid. “That beautiful Trophy,” as Lippard crassly puts it, “from the battle-rent walls of Monterey.” George Lippard’s fictionalized bride stands in for an objectified, feminized Mexico—a damsel in distress, willingly available for appropriation by the United States. Both Buntline’s Magdalena and Lippard’s trophy wife replay a rhetorical trope familiar to nineteenth-century readers that conflates the martial occupation of northern Mexico with the sexual and marital occupation of a female Mexican body whisked away from her homeland to the interior of the United States. This trope emerges rather startlingly in Magoffin’s own non-fiction narrative during a Santa Fe dinner party that she and Samuel attend. The United States General Stephen Watts Kearny addresses the mixed American and Mexican officials at the table and toasts, “The U.S. and Mexico—They are now united, may no one ever think of separating.” The tone-deaf dinner-party salute unequivocally couches the United States’ hostile conquest of Mexico in terms of a matrimonial contract.

In contrast to this rhetorical metaphor, Susan Shelby Magoffin represents a different sort of trophy wife. Her narrative runs directly counter to the typically imagined trajectory of the appropriated Mexican wife or mistress moving north into the United States. At eighteen, Magoffin marries a man twenty-six years her senior, the wealthy Santa Fe trader, Samuel Magoffin. She brings to her husband a union with one of the wealthiest families in Kentucky and

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63 Print diary 135.
a genealogy bristling with prominent soldiers, politicians, and settlers. Susan Magoffin’s grandfather Isaac Shelby, for instance, served as the first governor of the state and helped write its constitution. Whenever the Magoffin caravan stops at a Mexican settlement, the locals flock to view the pretty American child-bride (her youth inspires arch comments from Mexican senoritas) travelling in luxury down the Santa Fe Trail. Like the exotic Mexican inamorata of popular U.S. literature, Magoffin creates a spectacle wherever she goes; like the beautiful senoritas, Magoffin’s individual experience stands as a metaphor for the larger national U.S. enterprise. As Andrew Menard observes, Magoffin “appears to see herself as both a representative and the conscience of America.”

Magoffin’s marriage, combined with her journey south into Mexico on the eve of the war, complicate nineteenth-century imperial rhetoric by posing questions not only about the incorporation of Mexicans into the United States, but also by challenging the internal national union of the domestic and imperial enterprise. These challenges portend personal, national, and authorial rupture for Magoffin. Her own home-grown domestic sphere, and by extension the domestic political union of the United States, become deeply threatened by the allure of expansive travel, and in turn create a crisis for Magoffin’s newly found authorial identity.

**Democratic Domesticity**

Susan Shelby Magoffin enacts a literal embodiment of Amy Kaplan’s *Manifest Domesticity*, in which the domestic sphere and the imperial sphere intertwine. In Kaplan’s concept, the “domestic” represents both the home and the nation; the appropriational imperial

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64 Menard 180.
enterprise is therefore an effort to expand the borders of the national domestic space outwards, a project that requires the incorporation, cultivation, and civilization of supposedly barbarous foreign landscapes and peoples. The projection of United States’ domestic nationality into hostiley acquired territory assumes that domesticity actually belongs in this foreign space and concurrently that foreignness should be or can be incorporated into the nation. As Kaplan writes, “understanding the imperial reach of domestic discourse might map the way we read women’s . . . narratives of domesticity and female subjectivity as inseparable from narratives of empire and nation building.”66 Magoffin constructs herself throughout her diary as explicitly domestic. She eagerly sets up house in her itinerant home on the trail, and immediately creates a more permanent domestic space during any extended stay. She even goes so far as to open one entry with “Let me see what has transpired today within the little circle of my vision,” a statement that refers to the circumscribed domestic sphere from which Magoffin understands she observes the world.67

Susan Shelby Magoffin’s domesticity is emphatically mobile. It is tied to, moves with, and supports her merchant-husband’s efforts in what Kaplan calls the “public male arena of the market.”68 In Magoffin’s case, the very mobility that gives domesticity its imperial reach also instills it with instability. As Virginia Scharff notes, Magoffin enacts “precarious domesticity in the midst of mobilization.”69 The project of manifest domesticity experienced by Magoffin is only as secure as the carriage in which she travels and the collapsible walls of the tent in which she sets up house. On the trail, there are several moments in which the anti-domestic intrudes

66 Kaplan 584.
67 Print diary 112.
68 Kaplan 581.
69 Scharff 44.
into Magoffin’s fragile domestic space. These events are sometimes picturesque, such as the day that Magoffin delightedly finds her tent pitched so that an abundance of wild rose bushes bloom inside it. This early moment promises a foreign wilderness filled with benign—and tamable—natural beauty that is easily contained within her mobile domicile by the mere choice of its positioning in the landscape. Only a few days later, however, the untamed wilderness turns explicitly threatening: wolves haunt the fragile perimeter of her cloth walls, a pestilence of mosquitoes invades horribly, and a deluge floods her tent, collapsing Magoffin’s domestic space on top of her and threatening her with bodily harm. As Magoffin comments, we “set up the house, which from necessity had but a sand foundation.”

The only ground available to support the mobile domestic structure renders it even more unstable, underscoring the ephemeral, fragile condition of Magoffin’s domestic enterprise and likewise implying that a nation driven by the impetus to expand might end stretched to the breaking point. Only a few days previously, Magoffin had been thrown from her luxury carriage as it plunged over a hill in a dramatic rollover accident. The violence of the crash shattered the vehicle; its roof would have landed on Magoffin but for the protective arm of her husband, which barely managed to deflect the collapsing structure and keep her from serious harm.

Even more than her temporary, unsteady shelter and disabled transport, the sexual nature of Magoffin’s honeymoon combined with disastrous events in her narrative speak most directly to the complications of imperialism, expansive domesticity, and authorship expressed by even the most sanguine of democratic travellers. Magoffin’s imperial honeymoon places her experience in the larger context of popular war rhetoric and print culture metaphors that conflate imperial invasion with sexual conquest. Rather than personifying a cross-cultural marital/sexual

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70 Print diary 57. Andrew Menard notes these events “assume biblical proportions” in Magoffin’s descriptions (172).
exchange as in George Lippard or Ned Buntline, Magoffin’s journey into Mexico first mirrors her own sexual awakening with her American husband. She represents herself as a young ingénue friskily testing the boundaries of propriety as she moves outside the United States and beyond the strictures of her traditional social mores (she revels in a racy outdoor “nap,” for instance). Sadly, Magoffin’s enchantment with her new marital state fades the farther she moves outside the United States, as exemplified by a miscarriage: for Magoffin, imperial increase becomes associated with decrease and death.

Magoffin’s encounter with Mexican women bathing in a stream while she remains cloistered in a coach behind heavy layers of clothing and a thick veil underscores the sexual threat that surrounds her marriage. She writes: “The women slap about with their arms and necks bare, perhaps their bosoms exposed . . . if they are about to cross the little creek that is near all the villages, regardless of those about them, they pull their dresses, which in the first place but little more than cover their calves—up above their knees.” Magoffin’s reaction indicates more than prudish astonishment for what she sees as the exhibitionism of the Mexican women. Rather, her new sexual awareness translates into a sudden understanding of the sexuality all around her, and a realization of the challenge posed to her domestic position by what she sees as the hyper-sexualized availability of the bathing women. Her own cloistered position, within her protected domestic space and behind her dress and veil, in this case renders her feminine propriety as powerlessness and isolation, while the scantily clad Mexican women assertively remain front and center in the public view. Thus, Magoffin’s narrative rewrites popular war rhetoric to reassign the role of virginal, vulnerable innocent not to Mexico, but to the United States in the form of Susan Shelby Magoffin herself. In the process, Mexico becomes renarrativized as a canny,

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71 Print diary 95.
worldly, and powerfully feminized other capable of restructuring the fabric of the domestic and national space of the United States.

During an extended stay in El Paso late in her diary, Magoffin’s domestic and sexual insecurity come to a crisis. Magoffin meets a Mexican lady who is, as Magoffin describes, “much given to talking.” The woman asks “if I was never jealous of my husband.”72 In a moment of perhaps feigned incomprehension to deflect the woman’s implied question, Magoffin claims not to understand “what ‘zeloso’ meant.” The Mexican woman ignores the evasive gambit and presses her point, and, in the words of Magoffin, “was quite particular to explain to me that at the moment he might be off with his other Senorita.” Complete narrative and emotional collapse follow the suggestion of Samuel Magoffin’s infidelity. By her own account, Magoffin reacts with distress, adamantly defending her husband and expressing her outrage at an implication that she calls both insulting and false. Even so, the fact remains that Magoffin, shocked as she claims to be, chooses to include the event in the diary. By writing the incident into her private account, Magoffin chooses to repeat the allegation, an act of uncomfortable but validating inclusion that suggests that she also accuses Samuel Magoffin of infidelity, or at least acknowledges the surrounding sexualized threat to her domestic harmony. Virginia Scharff shares this reading, observing that “Susan was devastated . . . the blow shook Susan’s faith in Samuel . . . and made her doubt the Mexican women who knew him, perhaps better than she.”73

The crisis engulfs Magoffin’s authorial persona, freezing her usually consistent writerly output, as Scharff notes, for an entire week. In the seven days prior to the “zeloso” entry, Magoffin writes in her diary every day but one; after the suggestion of her husband’s infidelity, a

72 Print diary 211-212.
73 Scharff 59.
distinct narrative rupture occurs: Magoffin waits seven more days to write again, suggesting a crisis so overwhelming to her authorial subjectivity that it renders her speechless. Her next entry opens with the intimation of unabated catastrophe. She begins with the exclamation “Oh, the ups and downs of this world! . . . my friends tell me I am so triste [sad]; and no wonder, when nothing but the dark bare walls of a Mexican prison are staring me in the face.” Initially, it seems the Mexican home the Magoffins occupy in El Paso has transformed from a comfortable, semi-permanent domestic space into an inescapable foreign prison in the face of Samuel’s possible sexual impropriety with a Mexican señorita. Magoffin’s phrasing also implies a reference to her diary: as she begins to write again, her journal lies open before her, “staring [her] in the face,” its pages like “blank walls” challenging her to articulate the collapse of her domestic idyll. Magoffin cannot escape her Mexican narrative; the giddy self-realization once offered by authorship in her diary’s pages morphs into a prison of disillusionment. Magoffin complains that she spent the day after her “zeloso” diary entry “half deranged by a headache,” presumably locked in her Mexican home and locked in her own mind, unable to write, the deranging headache a reference not only to her physical disintegration at the suggestion of her husband’s infidelity, but also to the catastrophic “derangement” of her narrative effort.

The sequential gap in the diary also marks a rupture in the imperial narrative of Manifest Destiny that the Magoffins enact. Two days after she resumes writing, we learn that her reference to the prison might have been due, not to rumors of her husband’s infidelity, but to frightening rumors of reinvasion by Mexican troops that bring the possibility that Susan and Samuel will be actually—not just metaphorically—thrown into prison, or even murdered. Friends alert the Magoffins to a plot to plunder and demolish their wagons and obliterate their commercial/imperial enterprise. Simultaneously, news arrives that General Taylor has been

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74 Print diary 212.
defeated and taken prisoner with his entire army, that eight thousand Mexican soldiers march on
the American Doniphan’s one thousand troops, and that Santa Anna looms on the Texas border.
These tidings prove untrue, but for a suspenseful week, the Magoffins huddle inside,
overwhelmed by the specter of total imperial disintegration and besieged by the sudden
emergence of a hostile population that, like the wolves outside their frontier tent, stalk the
perimeters of their home, eager to invade and destroy it at the first return of Mexican troops.

Merely the week before, Magoffin cheerfully returned visits to local Mexican dignitaries,
who welcomed her into the best social circles of El Paso. The rumored wholesale failure of the
U.S. military lifts the veil of conviviality under which the Magoffins reside, exposing their
isolated vulnerability in a foreign landscape that does not welcome their presence. It is also in
this section, near the heading “Monday, the first of March,” that Magoffin later pencils a starred
footnote onto the top of the page: “While at this house and in the critical situation we were in I
never wrote all I might have done, for fear of my journal being seized had things gone with us
differently.”75 The act of authorship not only proves emotionally difficult for Magoffin, it also
poses a real danger to her wellbeing. Under the stress of potential domestic and imperial
collapse, Magoffin’s authorial project also begins to disintegrate; she cannot express her dismay
at her husband’s suggested infidelity, and she cannot author her full experience due to the threat
of exposure.

Magoffin never revisits the subject of her husband’s real or imagined infidelity again, but
the compression of space resulting from a full week of missed diary entries and her pivotal
exclamation about the Mexican prison bridges the invasion of the imagined Mexican mistress
into Susan’s domestic consciousness with the imagined counter-invasion of Mexican troops that
threaten the well-being of the Americans in the region and disrupt the forward progress of

75 Print diary 215; Diary MS 194.
Manifest Destiny. Ultimately, Magoffin’s mobility results in her counterintuitive immobilization. She is imprisoned within the walls of a compromised domestic space she cannot escape—even her diary no longer provides the expressive freedom it once did—and she is threatened with literal imprisonment by the potential resurgence of the Mexican nation into recently captured territory. Susan’s disillusionment with her husband’s possible infidelity and the United States’ imperial project bears out the anxieties expressed in the U.S. about the consequences of the aggressive acquisition of new citizens and new territory. This trepidation metaphorically plays out in popular culture as a failed attempt at a trans-national marriage between characters who stand in for their larger nations. While we don’t know the end of Lippard’s idealized union between the young Mexican trophy wife and the stalwart American soldier in *Legends of Mexico*, just a year later Lippard publishes the much more fraught *‘Bel of Prairie Eden*, in which an American’s Mexican wife wastes away and dies due to the consequences of conquest. Other Mexican heroines like Ned Buntline’s Magdalena perish before they even reach the altar to marry their American sweethearts.

Instead of the trans-national failure of the shotgun marriage between Mexico and the United States, Magoffin’s account rewrites the typical plot to suggest an even larger catastrophe from her nationalist perspective—the weakness of the domestic union that composes the United States itself. In the beginning, Magoffin’s honeymoon account burbles over with optimism and good cheer. She even exclaims, “It is the life of a wandering princess mine!” She ends with disenchantment and failure. Her representative experience calls into question the advisability of

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77 Print diary 11.
imperial conquest and reveals the threat that such expansion poses not only to conquered
populations, but to the conquering nation. Sounding like Albert Gallatin in “Peace with Mexico,”
a Mexican dignitary scolds Magoffin just before her break-down-inducing conversation about
her husband’s infidelity. Don Ygnacio suggests that the attraction of the United States to Mexico
breaks a larger domestic covenant: “This war is entirely against the principals of [George]
Washington, which were to remain at home, encourage all home improvements, to defend [y]our
rights there” [emphasis in original]. Ygnacio, whom Magoffin called “a second George
Washington in his appearance,” implies that it is the movement outward from the nation that
renders Magoffin’s marital union and the United States’ domesticating project both hypocritical
and vulnerable to collapse.\textsuperscript{78}

The project of manifest domesticity and imperial expansion by definition invites—or
rather, requires—entry by former outsiders into the domestic space of the nation. These coerced
houseguests, so to speak, threaten to displace citizen-Susans not only at the nation’s periphery,
but at its domestic center, posing a destabilizing threat to the perceived status quo of American
identity and to the fundamental structure of the United States itself. As Susan Shelby Magoffin
reflects in August, 1847 near the end of her honeymoon diary, in a statement that indicts both her
domestic union and the hostile incorporation of Mexico into the United States, “after all this
thing of marrying is not what it is cracked up to be.”\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{Material Challenges to Manifest Narrativity}

Just as Magoffin’s narrative reveals the fragile basis upon which the project of Manifest
Destiny rested, Magoffin’s manuscript journal illustrates the fundamental insecurity that

\textsuperscript{78} Print diary 211.

\textsuperscript{79} Print diary 245.
underlay the expansive, nationalist editorial project of the United States. That project sought to assert an autonomous voice and write itself as a coherent, viable nation with projects like Evert Duyckinck’s *Library of American Books* and organizations like the American Ethnological Society and American Copyright Club. The material instabilities of Magoffin’s journal demonstrate how the actual experience of expansion undermines the editorial gloss of literary nationalism. Almost a century after Wiley and Putnam and Evert Duyckinck launched *The Library of American Books*, Missouri historian Stella M. Drumm undertook her own nationalist project when she persuaded Magoffin’s daughter, Jane Magoffin Taylor, to relinquish the family heirloom for publication.\(^80\)

While Magoffin recounts difficult experiences on the trail, in Drumm’s editing, the diarist’s practice of *writing* those episodes seems to remain fluid, the act of journaling an easy hobby that hardly garners notice. In her seminal introduction, Drumm suggests that the manuscript diary exists as a self-contained, internally coherent document. Scholars have unquestioningly accepted that assessment for almost a century.\(^81\) The historian writes:

> Mrs. Magoffin kept her journal in a book eight and a half inches wide, ten inches long, and one and a half inches thick. The pages are lined and the binding is three-quarters calf. The first forty-nine pages, numbered consecutively, were devoted to poetry, mostly of love. Some were copied by her from well-known authors, whose names are given in each case. Some are marked “original”. . .

\(^{80}\) While much of my analysis critiques Drumm, I certainly don’t intend to belittle her considerable efforts in editing the diary proper and in bringing the manuscript to print. The fact that her work stands even today marks the significance of her contributions. Some critics, like Virginia Scharff, take issue with Drumm’s extensive footnotes, which betray a boosterish support of Manifest Destiny, and in many ways diminish Magoffin’s own text. Drumm’s footnotes on male Americans frequently take more space on the printed page than Magoffin’s own narrative, for instance, and both Howard Lamar and Drumm fall into the trap of framing Magoffin’s narrative with the male actors she met and who enacted U.S. imperialism against Mexico. While Scharff raises valid points, and I myself challenge Drumm, we should also acknowledge the achievement that publishing Magoffin’s diary was in the first place. Drumm’s editing is a product of her time, but, importantly, it is also heroically ahead of its time. The female Missouri historian championed and gave voice to a formerly unheard female traveller; Drumm’s effort in the 1920s enables the work of all scholars that follow.

\(^{81}\) Howard Lamar, for instance, repeats Drumm’s assertions in his influential introduction.
The numbering of the pages starts anew with the beginning of the diary, being marked from 1-206. The handwriting is round, well formed and legible, written in ink, with scarcely a blot in the whole volume. The pages are likewise clean, bright, and free from stain.\textsuperscript{82}

The editor’s description implies that: 1) one precisely measured volume comprises the entire diary, 2) the travel narrative neatly fills two-hundred-six consecutively numbered pages, and 3) only a single, neat hand inscribes the still-clean interior of the originally blank book. None of these observations is true.

Drumm describes a hefty, leather-bound journal, but Magoffin’s travel account continues into a second, decidedly less substantial notebook—curators at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University merely tuck the thin second pamphlet into the fitted box that houses the weightier first volume. This second, never-mentioned diary consists of unbound signatures taken from a much smaller notebook. Unlike the first, substantial journal, the second exists as a fragment, as parts conscripted from a divided whole that is much smaller and more ephemeral than the first journal. Drumm moves on to describe Magoffin’s narrative as comprising two hundred six pages, and, indeed, the first journal ends on Magoffin’s hand-numbered page “206.” However, the second, unmentioned, notebook begins oddly on page 199 and includes thirty-two closely written pages. The aberration disconcertingly suggests that the second notebook jumps backwards to precede or overlap some events in the first, that Magoffin or her descendants lost one hundred, ninety-eight pages, or that Magoffin simply misnumbered her second diary.\textsuperscript{83} The break between the two journals also coincides with an abrupt rupture in

\textsuperscript{82} Drumm xxiv-xxv.

\textsuperscript{83} None of these possibilities provides a completely satisfactory explanation. The second journal clearly follows the first, as can be seen by the dates of the entries and the events recorded. Magoffin might logically begin a new notebook on her hand-numbered page one, which could account for the discrepancy in pagination between the journals if some pages of the second notebook have been lost, but it seems improbable that Magoffin would have recorded 198 pages of “lost diary” in a mere month. On the other hand, there’s no doubt that something goes missing in the gap: it’s unusual that the second diary begins with no explanation of the narrative break, as Magoffin normally
Magoffin’s written narrative: the first journal stops perplexingly in mid-sentence, a sudden, unexplained breach that suggests the onset of an event so catastrophic that it interrupts Magoffin’s authorial enterprise mid-stroke and mid-thought, forcing her to abandon her first journal for a new, less-permanent venue, in spite of the leather-bound notebook’s remaining twenty-six or so large, blank pages.

At the moment Magoffin stopped writing in her first journal, more than three-quarters of an empty spread stared out from around her final, broken sentence, emphasizing the suddenness of the interruption and Magoffin’s extended narrative silence. At this point in her travelogue, Magoffin recalls journeying just in front of a military caravan from Chihuahua towards Saltillo. Her final sentence stops short, without even an ending punctuation mark: “if we went a head [sic] of all, we had no satisfaction in any thing, if we stoped [sic] to rest a few moments, they crowded onto” (my emphasis, no ending punctuation in the original). With an editorial slight of hand, Drumm’s print version divides “onto” into two words and inserts a period, so that the sentence transforms to: “if we stoped [sic] to rest a few moments, they crowded on too.” (my emphasis, period added by Drumm). Drumm hides Magoffin’s original fragment and omits the fact that significant events have gone missing from the narrative. The editor follows that repaired sentence immediately with the first entry of the second notebook, dated June 20, 1847. Drumm’s smooth continuation obscures a month’s gap in Magoffin’s record, cloaks the narrative rupture, and conceals the existence of the second, less substantial notebook. The discontinuity in the

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84 MS Diary, first journal, 206.

85 Print diary 231.
original manuscript suggests that an unnamed event, lost in the breech between journals, intervenes in Magoffin’s narrative and radically challenges her authorial persona. Materially, she mysteriously moves to the second volume, a much less permanent, fragmentary platform for her authorial endeavor. That move challenges the unity and durability of her literary project and highlights the precariousness of her position as an author. Because of Drumm’s editing, the material evidence of Magoffin’s burgeoning editorial collapse disappears from the print record.

Drumm creates an impression of authorial stability not only by splicing the two separate journals together, but also by her description of Magoffin’s handwriting and the pages in the notebook. According to the editor, Magoffin’s “handwriting is round, well formed and legible, written in ink, with scarcely a blot in the whole volume. The pages are likewise clean, bright, and free from stain.” While it is true that Magoffin writes with a delightfully legible hand, her pages do not remain free from blot. Drumm’s assessment constructs an artificial model of Magoffin’s writing project that suggests it progresses smoothly and without challenge. Her description ignores pages where Magoffin’s narrative, in the form of her actual handwriting, clearly becomes messier as the hardships she relates increase. Many events Magoffin recounts also invade the physical boundaries of the notebook itself, leaving permanent scars that reach into the material heart of her authorial enterprise. The editor overlooks these incursions into the diary’s physical space, an omission of fact that establishes the journal as a “clean copy” of Magoffin’s writing that belies the complexity and vacillations of the actual, material conditions of the manuscript’s production.

86 Drumm xxv.
In some instances, Magoffin voluntarily blots her private writing space with the flowers she delightfully collects and presses into her diary. At least three specimens still lie nestled in the journal’s pages today, their shadowy stains bleeding outward on the paper, halo-like, around the fragile, desiccated remains. The flowers don’t merely lie between the pages of Magoffin’s diary, they soak into them and indelibly mark the platform upon which Magoffin’s narrative rests. Like the collected literary fragments in the commonplace portion of her journal, the flowers are intentionally captured scraps—excerpts even—of her frontier adventure, imbedded in her text for later revisiting.

While the pressed flowers represent Magoffin’s intentional incorporation of a foreign element into her diary, other, uninvited incursions threaten to ruin it entirely, even as they mirror personal threats to Magoffin’s wellbeing. On Tuesday, August 21st, Magoffin opens her entry with “A ship-wreck on land, is the theme of my story today” (her emphasis), in which she recounts the severe rainstorm that floods her tent and finally collapses it on top of her as “the elements seemed in deadliest warfare.” Besides Magoffin’s verbal description of the deluge, her pages capture a material record of the event: water spots bloom on both sides of this full

87 Image: Susan Shelby Magoffin Journal, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.

88 Drumm must have handled these flowers herself as she typed a copy of the diary for publication. It’s impossible not to imagine her carefully removing and then replacing the delicate specimens—which would have been over seventy-five years old at the time—in their original positions after she finished.

89 Print diary 54-55.
spread, and they soak into the previous and following leaves of the journal. The blemishes gradually diminish several pages beyond their original soaking, but not before they leave an indelible mark, much as Magoffin’s pen inscribes her adventures onto the page. The dark, spreading discolorations register the unwelcome, watery penetration of the external, hostile world into the very center—the gutter—of Magoffin’s private space, materially breaching the integrity of her document and threatening her authorial issue with ruin.

Each of these moments suggests the fragility of Magoffin’s authorial project, and how it lies open, like the pages of her journal, to obstruction and invasion from potentially hostile external forces. Magoffin’s narrative reporting bears out these material metaphors: she inserts a few remarks into the journal after her return home that not only destabilize its temporality, but also reveal a “blot” on Magoffin’s experience of authorship and Manifest Destiny that significantly redacts her autonomous voice. Squeezed into the top margin of page 194 in the manuscript diary, Magoffin later observes, “While at this house and in the critical situation we were in I never wrote all I might have done, for fear of my journal being seized had things gone with us differently.”

Sequentially, Magoffin attaches the footnote to an entry she records almost a full month before the narrative rupture that causes her move to a new journal, indicating that surrounding conditions already threaten her writerly enterprise and truncate her descriptive, first-person voice. The remark also indicates that Magoffin’s act of authorship actually threatens her physical wellbeing. At this moment, the vulnerable, far-from-home Magoffin writes from deep in newly

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90 Image: Susan Shelby Magoffin Journal, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.

91 Print diary 216. In the printed version, the note appears at the bottom of the page, not the top, as in the original, and it goes otherwise unremarked.
conquered Mexican territory, surrounded by rumors of her husband’s infidelity, Mexican reinvasion, American defeats, plots to kill her and her husband, and the possible assassination of her government-agent brother-in-law. Magoffin’s authorial endeavor turns perilous and her voice falters as the American imperial project seems to teeter on the brink of collapse.

Besides her telling footnote, Magoffin added several other insertions to her diary after her return home, creating a circular narrative structure for her journal that challenges the prescribed conclusions of Manifest Destiny. Magoffin wrote the entire body of her travel narrative and all of her commonplace transcriptions, except for one important exception, in ink, as Drumm describes. In contrast, Magoffin used a pencil to add a chart of distances; some readerly highlighting in the form of underlines, checks, and squiggles; and a few footnotes to the end pages and margins of her journal. These annotations in graphite lie on top of her ink cursive in an archeological layering that indicates that she returned to her journal to reread and add to its contents in pencil after her return home from Mexico.

Magoffin also copied a single contribution into the commonplace book in pencil. The handwriting in this entry, while still recognizably hers, also changes markedly—it is no longer the “round and well formed” penmanship described by Drumm, but rather a more cramped and less open cursive, as can be seen by comparison to the partial poem that appears above it in ink on the page. The graphite medium and the changed handwriting indicate that Magoffin adds the poem after (perhaps long after) she completes her journey. She inserts this excerpt on page forty-one of her commonplace album; the first-person diary begins after page forty-nine. Magoffin’s graphite contribution circles back to precede the entire travel diary, tracing a return to the pre-travel portion of her notebook that joins the two sections—commonplace collection and first-
person journal—into a single, circular record of her experience of authorship and Manifest Destiny.

**An Ending in Triplicate**

It is tempting, and even logical, to read Magoffin’s diary as a straightforward rendition of Manifest Destiny that moves outward from the nation in a progressive arc of time, history, authorship, and territorial increase. Magoffin’s printed text, rife with Drumm’s footnotes about the U.S.-Mexico War and the historical figures (mostly male) that Magoffin meets, reinforces that narrative sweep; however, like the truncated poem in “A Scholar’s Death Bed,” the print version of Magoffin’s diary only attends to part of her story. Drumm’s editorial project glosses the journal’s deep fissures with a veneer of American exceptionalism that overlays the manuscript’s underlying instability. Drumm’s sanitizing may be unconscious and driven by the cultural parameters of the early twentieth century, but it also repeats the Young Americans’ editorial attempt to draw a fractured nation together under the shell of literary activism in the early nineteenth century. A close examination of Magoffin’s original manuscript reveals a recursive trajectory underneath the clean narrative thrust of Manifest Destiny, an arc filled not with triumph but with repeated loss and circular narrative collapse. That collapse, wrought by the consequences of expansion and written into Magoffin’s diary, ripples through three successive generations of her family.

Contrary to Stella Drumm’s description, Magoffin’s original pages display more than the diarist’s elegant cursive: her daughter, Jane Magoffin Taylor, and her granddaughter, Susan Shelby Taylor, also write in the first, leather-bound notebook. Jane and Susan Taylor’s inscriptions have never been published, nor have they received scholarly attention. Both women
insert letters—essentially diary entries in their own right—into narrative disjunctures in Magoffin’s journal. In addition to her letter, daughter Jane Magoffin Taylor copies a poem into the commonplace collection many years after her mother’s death. Jane Taylor is not the only copyist who returns to contribute to the first pages of the leather bound journal—her mother does as well. Susan Shelby Magoffin’s final words in her journal don’t appear at the end of the smaller, fragmented notebook, as critics have always assumed (Howard Lamar notes, for instance, “Mrs. Magoffin ended her journal on September 8, 1847, on a note of anticlimax”). Rather, Magoffin’s devastating conclusion lies buried within the commonplace collection, a previously undiscovered entry in pencil. It binds the women’s letters and the two portions of the journal together in a lament of sorrow and loss, ultimately revealing the catastrophic extent of Magoffin’s personal disillusion and authorial dissolution as she returns home from the frontier.

Page 206: Magoffin’s dangling final sentence, ending with “onto,” in the first journal, followed by Janie Taylor’s letter to her mother.

On the last page of the leather-bound journal, just underneath Magoffin’s fateful, dangling “onto,” fifteen-year-old Janie Magoffin begins a poignant appeal to her mother, dead for eleven years. Janie writes, as indicated by her heading, “Roadside” somewhere around St.

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92 Susan Magoffin died when Jane was four years old.

93 Lamar xxxii.

94 Jane Magoffin Taylor’s gravestone and death certificate list “Janie M. Taylor.”
Louis, Missouri, a wayward location that conjures images of a fugitive girl secreting her mother’s diary from home in order to pen her message. Beginning directly under the broken final sentence in Magoffin’s first journal, Janie’s letter is itself a fragment: she fills the space her mother left on page 206 in her own moment of crisis, but the next two leaves of the diary have been sliced away, so that Taylor’s entry also ends mid-sentence. Markings on the paper edges left in the gutter indicate that Taylor’s letter continued for three more pages. Perhaps an older Taylor, preparing to turn the diary over to Stella Drumm, cut away her youthful confessional and began the sanitization that Drumm’s editorial project would complete.

When she wrote, Janie Taylor was only three years younger than her mother when she married Samuel and embarked on her own roadside diary along the Santa Fe Trail. Janie writes:

St. Louis County Missouri, “Roadside” March 21st, 1867

Dear precious Mamma, sleep in peace, many are the voices that call you blessed. Eleven summers have rolled on since the hand, that traced the first part of this page, became pulseless in death. Often I open this journal and read, while sweet memories crowd upon me.

Do angels grieve, are they ever pained? I often ask myself the question. If they do I fear, alas! Dear Mamma you are too often grieved by your poor erring willful child. Would that I could be more like you loved Mother, but that old “father of all mischief” too often takes possession of my poor heart and when I attempt to drive him forth I am so faint and weak. Will I never learn to conquer in my own heart? I wonder if dear Mamma ever experienced such struggles with a selfish nature? Oh no. How could I question myself so? Mamma was always gentle and good. I almost despair of ever being like her, for so often I do grieve and may the dear one who has undertaken the arduous task of recovering of her way ward child ~ ~ [cross-out and dashes present in manuscript]

Twenty years after Susan Magoffin’s return, her daughter converses with her through the pages of her diary in a dirge of memory and loss. Jane Taylor also replicates her elegy, at an unknown time, by copying a portion of a poem into a blank space on page thirty-nine of the

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Image: Susan Shelby Magoffin Journal, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.
commonplace collection. The excerpt comprises the last nine lines of *Thanatopsis*, a meditation on death by literary nationalist William Cullen Bryant (whom Jane Taylor credits). Taylor’s letter and the lines from *Thanatopsis* don’t articulate a girlish enthusiasm for romance, but rather a cry of anguish, rooted in the yearning of a daughter for her lost mother. Taylor’s two contributions to the journal, a commonplace copy and a first-person letter, replicate Magoffin’s own manifestations of authorship as copyist and narrator, revealing the journal’s two sections as deeply entwined articulations of a singular personal experience.

Granddaughter Susan Shelby Taylor, Susan Magoffin’s namesake, sandwiches her 1924 letter on the page that Magoffin left blank as she turned over the commonplace journal to begin authorship anew as a first-person narrator. Susan Taylor’s missive faces the first page of the personal diary, presumably to insure that Stella Drumm or her mother (or perhaps both) see the claim that she stakes to her grandmother’s narrative. Taylor writes in opposition to Drumm’s project, and presumably also in opposition to her own mother, who turned the diary over to the Missouri historian (Drumm dedicates the printed text “To Jane Taylor, The Gentle Daughter of Susan Shelby Magoffin”). Now faded and difficult to read, granddaughter Susan Taylor’s sentences may be almost fully pieced together with careful study; brackets within the following transcription indicate now unintelligible words determined by their context. She writes:

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96 Jane Magoffin’s handwriting is both distinctive and obviously different from her mother’s.

97 Susan Shelby Taylor is 41 years old when she writes the letter.
To Whom it May Concern;

I am now engaged in the work of copying and editing this diary. It has been the understanding between my mother and myself for years that [I] would do it. She placed it in my hands & it was her wish that [I] should [do it]. Anyone who takes the work away from me now is doing a very dishonest thing & does it with my protest.

For me to edit the manuscript itself, its English compositions & to omit certain religious reflections will not injure the work for historical reference use, or for further editing & publication.

It would be very stupid to give it out in its present unedited form and might be injurious to the [family].

Susan Shelby Taylor

We can only speculate as to the exact situation that inspired this letter, but one thing is certain: the traditional narrative about the diary’s transfer—that Jane Magoffin handed it over to Drumm and helped with the text—is more complicated and contested than it appears. At the very least, Susan Shelby Taylor lost her fight to publish her grandmother’s story, and to control those narrative results. Her letter also seems to indicate, from the phrase “English compositions,” that Taylor intended to work with the entire manuscript, diary and poems, together. As we know, Magoffin’s manuscript ends truncated by Drumm’s focus on only the first-person diary.

Ultimately, Magoffin’s journal captures the abridged authorial and editorial voices of four women (Magoffin, Janie Taylor, Susan Taylor, and Stella Drumm) who underscore the complexities of the editorializing project of American nationality. It is Susan Shelby Magoffin’s final entry into the commonplace book that most completely, and sadly, interweaves the two portions of her journal together and challenges the optimistic rhetoric of Manifest Destiny.

Magoffin first breaches the boundary between diary and commonplace collection when she delightfully slips one of her prized 1846 flowers between pages thirty-five and thirty-six of
her poetry album, next to poetry copied well before she embarked down the Santa Fe Trail. The insertion of the 1846 flower-scrap into the earlier commonplace portions of the diary denies the imagined barrier between the sections of the journal and creates a narrative interflow between the two, organically joining them and remixing the temporality of the journal. Even more tellingly, on page forty-one of the commonplace book, almost ten pages before her first-person diary begins, Magoffin inserts a last poetic excerpt: an inscription in pencil on a page she’d left mostly blank, except for the overflow of four lines of poetry in ink from a previous entry. The penciled handwriting still shows off Magoffin’s characteristically sloping, elegant capital “A” and “M”—they retain their familiar angular precision and slant—and the typical flourish on her capital “T,” but the handwriting itself has become more compressed: the lines sit more tightly on the page, the spaces between words are less open, the letters cramped and messy.98 The four lines of the initially copied poem at the top of the page provide an immediate contrast: the lines in ink appear more free, with elongated words and more space between pen strokes; it seems a lighter hand trippingly scratches the ink onto the page, while the heavy, thicker marks of the pencil indicate a more arduous experience of writing. Even the simple task of copying the second poem onto the page appears to be weighted with difficulty.

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98 Image: Susan Shelby Magoffin Journal, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.
The change in Magoffin’s handwriting and her use of graphite indicate a change in both temporality and mood in the commonplace collection. Like her other pencil additions—her footnotes and highlights, for instance—this chapter posits that Magoffin entered the poem into her commonplace pages after she finished her first-person diary. By the time she copies the excerpt, in other words, she’s returned home. She’d suffered a miscarriage on the trail that she describes in her diary. During her travels, Susan Shelby Magoffin also fell pregnant a second time. She carried this baby full term. Near the end of her journey, sick with yellow fever and deep in Mexico, Magoffin gave birth to a son who survived only a few days. Magoffin never wrote of this event. Instead, she left her first-person account unfinished as she awaited the ship that would begin her journey back to the United States. Once there, Magoffin inscribed that last love poem in pencil into her commonplace book. Titled “Thou art gone from my gaze,” the excerpt comes from a popular, nineteenth-century song by English musician George Linley.99 Characteristically, it was widely reproduced and circulated for decades in Britain and the United States, including in Boston in 1852.100 Linley didn’t write the verse to a missing lover. He wrote it to his young daughter, on the occasion of her death.101

The commonplace book that begins Magoffin’s journal also brings it full circle: without its first section of copied poems, the journal’s rich significance as a record of authorship, domesticity, and the perils of expansive democracy in the early nineteenth-century goes missing. Magoffin’s final inscription drastically complicates Drumm’s characterization—and common critical perception—of the commonplace pages as a trivial gathering that may be written off

99 Dolores M. Bacon, Songs Every Child Should Know, 1906 (Kessinger, 2006) 80.

100 George Linley, “Thou Art Gone From My Gaze” (Boston: Henry Tollman, 1852).

101 Magoffin’s transcription reads in part: “Thou art gone from my gaze,/like a beautiful dream,/I seek thee in vain,/By the meadow and stream./Oft I breathe thy dear name,/To the winds floating by/But thy sweet voice is mute/To my bosom’s lone sigh. (The irony of my providing only a fragment of Magoffin’s fragment of the poem does not escape me).
because they only contain unoriginal, copied poems “mostly of love.” “Thou art gone from my gaze” quietly denotes the devastation wreaked on Magoffin, and on her domestic enterprise, by her act of expansive travel. In addition to tracing Magoffin’s emotional pain, her final inscription indicates the full, tragic dissolution of her authorial enterprise. Once her travel ends, Magoffin never enacts the role of “author” in her journal’s pages again. She adds notes and rereads her text, but, no longer willing to assert her vibrant personality onto the page, she folds once again into the background, regressing into the role of silent copyist as she moves home. Magoffin’s triumphant emergence as a first-person narrator in concurrence with the imperial expansiveness of her honeymoon, and her subsequent collapse back to anonymous commonplace copyist, defeated and disillusioned, suggests both the power and fragility of the national subject in motion, and how the act of writing about travel sustains and threatens the authorial persona in the early nineteenth-century United States.
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