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Manifest Domesticity in Times of Love and War:

Gender, Race, Nation, and Empire in the Works of Louisa May Alcott, María Amparo

Ruiz de Burton, Gertrude Atherton, and Pauline Hopkins

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

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2008

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Manifest Domesticity in Times of Love and War:

Gender, Race, Nation, and Empire in the Works of Louisa May Alcott, María Amparo

Ruiz de Burton, Gertrude Atherton, and Pauline Hopkins

by

Shih-szu Hsu

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair

This dissertation examines how four U.S. women writers from disparate racial, ethnic, class, and regional backgrounds negotiated and reimagined discourses of gender, race, nation, and empire in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Using the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48), the Civil War (1861-65), and the Spanish-American War (1898) as well as other moments of conflict such as Indian

Removal and large-scale westward migration as major historical reference points, I explore how these women writers used seemingly “apolitical” domestic motifs and practices, such as love triangles, courtships, marriage, and family interactions, to support, critique, challenge, and/or subvert racist and imperialist policies of the nation, and, more importantly, to promote their own political agendas through narration. My analysis builds upon Amy Kaplan’s thesis in “Manifest Domesticity,” which argues that gendered metaphors of domesticity could be used as a “civilizing” force to justify imperial relationships between the conqueror and the conquered. Even though the texts under discussion vary in terms of genres, subject matter, and the year of publication, I contend that they all try to converse with dominant national ideologies through complicated textual engagements with wars, love, domesticity, and U.S. imperialism, and that by doing so they delineate alternative kinds of transregional and intercultural negotiations at their specific historical moments. Chapter one analyzes Louisa May Alcott’s antislavery narratives (1860-64) and her sensational thrillers written during the same decade in relation to the sentimental disciplinary power of white womanhood. Chapter two discusses Dan, Alcott’s unruly hero in the second and third books of the Little Women series (1871; 1886), in terms of U.S. westward imperial expansion. Chapters three and four look at how two California writers, the Mexican María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and the Anglo Gertrude Atherton, mapped out their disparate literary visions of California and the West in the 1870s and 1880s and during the turn of the century and the early twentieth century respectively. Chapter five examines Pauline Hopkins’ 1902 novel, Winona, in relation to African Americans’ engagement in social practices and cultural imaginings concerning Indianness.

Introduction

Manifest Domesticity in Times of Love and War:

Gender, Race, Nation, and Empire in the Works of Louisa May Alcott, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Gertrude Atherton, and Pauline Hopkins

On July 12, 1893, at the meeting of the American Historical Association during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered the influential address, "The Significance of the Frontier," in which he elaborated his famous definition of U.S. national character. Explaining "American development" in terms of the expanding frontier line, Turner claimed that "This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character" (2-3). To him and to numerous scholars and policy-makers following his footsteps, the United States was a nation characterized by infinite hope, primitive innocence, regenerative possibilities, unbounded freedom, and perpetual movement of expansion. What Turner tries to do, in Alan Trachtenberg's words, is to give the nation a much-needed "coherent, integrated story of its beginnings and its development" (Incorporation 13). Turner's frontier thesis, in this sense, exemplifies the process of producing national myths: spin the desirable and eliminate the unwanted. Thus expansion could be painted as a natural destiny for the nation, testifying to the spirit of American exceptionalism in all its glory. His address is as much an example of wish-fulfillment and myth-making as a "description" of U.S. history.

So what was eliminated in this process of wish-fulfillment and myth-making?

Turner's frontier thesis proposed to evade, suppress, and redirect certain unresolved tensions in both national and international affairs at that specific historical moment. On the one hand, while the U.S. was transforming into a society built upon industrialization and monopoly capitalism in the postbellum years, it became more and more divided by racial, gender, and class conflicts as well as urban-rural disparity. On the other hand, as the nation tried to expand power and territory and grab more materials and labor from outside sources through military and non-military conquests, confrontations with "unfamiliar" peoples within, around, and outside national boundaries naturally ensued and problematized the demarcation line between domestic and foreign. These undercurrents were what was hidden behind the "coherent, integrated story" of national glory and development in Turner's account. Presented at the World's Columbian Exposition, an occasion celebrating white supremacy, western scientific racism, and U.S. imperialism, Turner's thesis, by evading "unwanted" tensions and creating a "desirable" history, allowed national consolidation to be gloriously reconceived in terms of expansion and in a way paved the road for further U.S. imperial expansion in the global world.¹

What I want to examine in this dissertation is this continuous tug of war between the coherent, integrated official story of the nation and the unresolved micro-histories of conflicts and struggles. Just like Turner, many of his contemporaries and forebears in the nineteenth century participated in the process of reorienting the nation and renegotiating

¹ Although Turner's thesis would eventually dominate the interpretation of U.S. history, one should remember that in 1893 its view of the West and the frontier as major forces in shaping the national agenda was in fact quite revolutionary. According to Henry Nash Smith, Turner's thesis can be seen as "a polemic directed against the two dominant schools of historians": the group interpreting American history in terms of the slavery controversy and focusing on the North-South division and the group "explain[ing] American institutions as the outgrowth of English, or rather ancient Teutonic germs planted in the New World" (291-92).

national character by producing and circulating narratives that suited their own agendas, even though these agendas might not necessarily conform to the dominant culture's interests as much as Turner's did. The four female writers that are the primary focus of this dissertation are no exception: (1) Louisa May Alcott, a white New England author who, albeit well-known generally for her children's literature such as the Little Women trilogy, published works in various kinds of genres such as antislavery narratives and sensational thrillers in her earlier career during the 1860s; (2) María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, an upper-class Californiana who published the first Mexican American novel ever written in English in 1872 and her second, as well as last, novel in 1885; (3) Gertrude Atherton, a white California author who considered herself a descendant of both the South and the North as well as an insider to the Spanish tradition in California, and who embarked on her project of composing the narrative chronicle of California since the early 1890s; (4) Pauline Hopkins, a famous African American writer who wrote magazine novels and articles for the first African American general interest magazine around the turn of the century. Coming from disparate racial, ethnic, class, and regional backgrounds, these four writers negotiated and reimagined discourses of gender, race, nation, and empire in their works during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. What I would like to probe is the different ways in which they reappropriated certain roles, rules, conventions, and symbols to engage in their own versions of myth-making and to solve their respective dilemmas through narration in the face of the official grand narrative.

Love and war are the two important themes through which I plan to approach the abovementioned questions. Using the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48), the Civil War

(1861-65), and the Spanish-American War (1898) as well as other moments of conflict such as Indian Removal and large-scale westward migration as major historical reference points, this dissertation explores how these four women writers used seemingly “apolitical” domestic motifs and practices, such as love triangles, courtships, marriage, and family interactions, to support, critique, challenge, and/or subvert racist and imperialist policies of the nation, and, more importantly, to promote their own political agendas and engage in their respective versions of wish-fulfillment and mythmaking. My analysis builds upon Amy Kaplan’s thesis in “Manifest Domesticity,” which argues that gendered metaphors of domesticity could be used as a “civilizing” force to justify imperial relationships between the conqueror and the conquered; for example, imperialist assimilation could be lauded as a form of philanthropic home education, and military invasion could be compared to necessary housekeeping and marriage made in heaven. Even though the texts under discussion vary in terms of genres, subject matter, and the year of publication, I contend that they all attempt to converse with official national ideologies through complicated textual engagements with wars, love, domesticity, and U.S. imperialism, and that by doing so they delineate alternative kinds of transregional and intercultural negotiations at their specific historical moments of production, circulation, and reception.

“Wars Continue Each Other”: An Intercultural and Transnational Perspective

Paraphrasing Virginia Woolf’s words that “books continue each other,” Kaplan claims that “wars continue each other”: “Wars generate and accumulate symbolic value by reenacting, reinterpreting, and transposing the cultural meanings of prior wars”

(“Black” 122). While Kaplan here specifically refers to the imagined continuity between the Civil War and the Spanish-American War as illustrated in Thomas Dixon’s The Leopards’ Spots, this contention can be expanded to incorporate other nineteenth-century wars and political, cultural, and military turmoil as well. Expanding her argument, this dissertation tackles the interconnections among several wars, phenomena, and events from transregional and intercultural perspectives, such as the Civil War and the Black Legend in chapter one; white westward expansion and the Civil War in chapter two; the U.S.-Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, and the California Fable in chapters three and four; and the Civil War, Indian Removal, and postbellum black predicaments in chapter five. Juxtaposing all these together, sometimes in rather unexpected combinations, I contend that part of the significance of these four writers’ narratives lies in the fact that they put in the spotlight some “unusual” interconnections among these seemingly unrelated events (such as the connections between the Civil War and the U.S.-Mexican War) as well as the accumulative symbolic value of an event supplemented by its interpretation of prior and other current events (such as African Americans’ turn-of-the-century revisions of the antebellum abolitionist movement and of the white-centered practices of “playing Indian”).

The most important part about discussing these “unusual” interconnections, in my opinion, is that they point to alternative views or counter-narratives that are usually suppressed or evaded in the official grand narrative. This observation is indebted to Kate McCullough’s argument in Regions of Identity, in which she situates several women “regional” writers’ works as conversing with the national fantasy of an integrated “American” identity and a unified national literature from their specific regional, cultural,

and racial locations. Using different authors or writings and exploring different intersections of racial, ethnic, national, regional, gender, and class imaginings, I build upon her study to further explore the tensions between the official narrative and the multiple unofficial counter-narratives. In the official version, U.S. national character, as Turner and his followers would argue, is mystified as singular and unified, with fixed and stable cultural boundaries and values. What this version creates is the neglect and marginalizing of racial, ethnic, national, regional, class, gender, and sexual “others” that play an essential part in shaping the contours of U.S. culture but which are obscured or excluded by the predominant myth of American exceptionalism that puts privileged white male ideologies at the center. This dissertation aims to explore the ways in which the narratives under discussion empower certain “others” through alternative forms of wish-fulfillment and myth-making engaged in by the authors. And to achieve this goal, I look at how wars and other events and phenomena “continue each other” in their writings and what kinds of unofficial and unorthodox counter-narratives can be located in this continuum.

To better examine this continuum and to disinter alternative counter-narratives, my study situates the writers and their works in various intercultural and transnational contexts in which the United States was implicated during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, contexts that are often ignored due to the general effort to construct the collective fantasy of a white unified nation. In contrast to this fantasy, this period of time actually witnessed enormous changes in the composition of population and territory and in the imagining of citizenship and nationhood. In the shadow of the U.S. narrative of progress, all the newly arrived, incorporated, or emancipated citizens and non-citizens

struggled to fight for their survival and lay claim to U.S. citizenship while the dominant culture was renegotiating its definition of abstract citizenship to distinguish between assimilable future national subjects and inassimilable “uncivilized” aliens. If the nation, as Benedict Anderson claims, is “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6), the nation-state of the U.S. during this time period was indeed undergoing the process of imagining itself to be a unified community; the result, however, was rather ambiguous since the newly arrived immigrants, the forcibly incorporated former aliens, and the ostensibly emancipated ex-slaves kept challenging the definition of national citizenship and expanding the cultural boundaries of the imagined community of the United States. In this sense, the U.S. nation was more like an intercultural assembly of imagined communities composed of disparate, even conflicting, voices and agendas than a “unified” imagined community.

In my opinion, these texts, although different from one another in terms of genre, subject matter, and the publishing year, were rewriting intercultural, interracial, and transregional histories of the nation at different moments through their revisions of several important political events and cultural phenomena. Their narratives, in this sense, present their respective reconstructions of the official history. It is my belief that narrative, as an example of personal and collective wish-fulfillment and myth-making, is a site where disparate, even competing and conflicting, discourses of racial, ethnic, gender, regional, and national identities crisscross and interact with one another and which is thus marked by different sets of political desires and imaginings about identity, citizenship, and nationhood. One purpose of this study is to delve into these mechanisms and to observe how the narratives, juxtaposed with one another and situated in national and

transnational contexts, can delineate a more polyphonic view of the United States. In this regard, this dissertation follows recent academic efforts to initiate a more intercultural, transnational model for the study of U.S. American literatures and cultures, that is, to reformulate curricula and scholarship in a more comparative, transamerican, post-nationalist, and global perspective.²

This intercultural, transnational focus, furthermore, can lead to a better understanding of the correlation between discrimination at home and imperialism abroad around that period of time, which is another important focus of this dissertation. Just as Kaplan claims in her well-known introduction to Cultures of United States Imperialism, “imperialism as a political or economic process abroad is inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses of race, gender, ethnicity, and class at home” (16). One cannot discuss the Civil War without referring back to the U.S.-Mexican War; neither can one fully evaluate the failure of black Reconstruction without taking into account the history of U.S. imperialism abroad.

Take the Civil War, an important historical event in this dissertation, for example. While previous scholarship has mostly interpreted this war in terms of black-white relations and the North-South division within the nation, foregrounding other interracial and interethnic encounters as well as the East-West cartography and U.S. westward imperial expansion not only provides a more transnational perspective, but it also problematizes the general view of a unified nation and an integrated national culture. On

² Among others, see Paul Lauter, “The Literatures of America: A Comparative Discipline”; Donald E. Pease, ed., National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives; John Carlos Rowe, ed., Post-Nationalist American Studies; John Carlos Rowe, The New American Studies; Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman, eds., The Futures of American Studies; Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds., Keywords for American Cultural Studies.

the one hand, several scholars, including David Potter, Michael Paul Rogin, Shelley Streeby, and Kris Fresonke, argue that the U.S.-Mexican War, an important international event in molding the East-West national imagination, disturbed the sectional balance between the North and the South because of the debate over whether or not to extend slavery in the newly acquired lands. Just as Rogin states, “the eruption and apparent pacification of the slavery crisis, between 1846 and 1851, defines the American 1848” (Subversive 21). The victory over Mexico and the newly acquired southwestern territory triggered north-south sectional conflicts over the question of slavery, which in turn at least partly contributed to the eruption of the Civil War. U.S. westward expansion in the international arena, in this sense, accentuated cleavages between the North and the South in the national sphere.

On the other hand, although the acquisition of western land aggravated sectional tensions, the West gradually became a mythical, aestheticized icon symbolizing freedom, opportunities, and even “American spirit” and the nation itself. This is exactly what Turner indicated in his turn-of-the-century frontier thesis: “The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West” (3). Shifting the West to the center spot, he even claims that “the slavery struggle...occupies its important place in American history because of its relation to westward expansion” (3). Written at a time marked by the failure of Reconstruction, intense class and racial conflicts, and the widespread enactment of racist Jim Crow laws, Turner’s piece in a way testifies to the historiographic endeavor to efface the memory of slavery and to rewrite the legacy of the Civil War as more about reunion than about race at the turn of the century.³ Glorious

³ See David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory.

marching into the West of a white nation thus obscured “unpleasant” memories of racial conflicts and sectional division. The transnational West, partly the reason that caused the sectional divide within the nation, paradoxically later became a U.S. West, a mythical symbol of the glorious unified nation. All in all, in order to properly address the topic of the Civil War, one cannot avoid considering questions about the East-West framework, westward expansion, and non-white-and-black racial formations in the transnational sphere. Neither can one discuss racial discrimination at home without looking at imperial conquest abroad.

Women Writers in Conversation with Manifest Domesticity

Besides wars, another important theme that connects the chapters together is domesticity or domestic topics, especially love as a common motif in domestic narratives. My discussion of domesticity and love is closely related to the abovementioned subjects of the intercultural and transnational imaginations and the negotiations between the official grand narrative and alternative counter-narratives. In my opinion, these four writers, through their different appropriations of the ideologies of domesticity, illustrate the uneven process of creating national narratives in transnational and intercultural contexts.

Numerous academic works on domesticity have reassessed this notion from new angles. Now it is generally agreed that the idea of domesticity is not only about domestic households but is also related to nation building and imperial conquests. Similarly, the domestic narrative made popular by nineteenth-century U.S. white women writers is not only a literary genre centered on domestic happenings, but it can also be viewed as

portraying sets of relations and actions that could effect readerly identification with and across genders, races, classes, regions, and nation.

Part of the reason why I chose only women writers for this study is that the nineteenth-century idea of domesticity is inseparable from the “cult of true womanhood” upheld in white middle-class culture; that is, the ability to cultivate an ideal domestic environment was one of the important criteria by which to judge whether one was qualified to be a true woman. And in this framework the most effective tool for domestic women to carry out this task was what Richard Brodhead calls “disciplinary intimacy”: discipline through love and persuasion instead of outright punishment. Even though domesticity was once viewed as the domain of middle-class white women and sentimentalism and thus conservative and apolitical, feminist scholars from the 1960s onward have tried to revise this misconception, arguing that cultural practices of sentimental discipline actually provided women the political agency to transform patriarchal values in their households without having their activities stigmatized as “political” and thus unladylike. Later scholars further explored the political power of the discourses of domesticity and added nationalism and imperialism into the discussion.

I will trace this critical genealogy of domesticity in a more detailed manner in chapter one. First of all, I explore how Brodhead’s notion of “disciplinary intimacy” is appropriated, negotiated, complicated, and challenged in the texts under discussion, a notion meaning discipline through love imposed by middle-class women, particularly maternal figures, with the goal of instructing the disciplined how to feel and act in the “right” way. Secondly, I will explicate how this notion of disciplinary intimacy helps to mold national ideologies and imperialist myths, a process designated by Kaplan as

“manifest domesticity”: that is, discourses of domesticity being used to promote the imperial goal of manifest destiny, to tame the foreign and to consolidate dominant national narratives. Whereas Kaplan’s argument focuses more on the collaboration or collusion of discourses of domesticity with imperialism, I want to elaborate both the collaborative side and the incongruent side, to look at how the four women writers from disparate backgrounds challenged as well as upheld the mechanism of “disciplinary intimacy” with their own different agendas in mind, while imagining alternative possibilities to approach identity, citizenship, and nationhood. In other words, in the disciplinary project of middle-class women I am most interested in its hidden loopholes, which naturally occur since domesticity as “a process of domestication” is constantly changing, rewriting the demarcation line between the civilized and the wild, and creating uncertainties and complications.

After laying down the definitions of disciplinary intimacy and manifest domesticity, I will go on to discuss the white New England writer Alcott in the first two chapters, whom I choose as my first author not only because of the chronological order, but also because she, as a white northeastern woman engaging in sentimental teaching through her domestic narratives, fits in with Kaplan’s analysis perfectly: a white woman who used domestic motifs and practices to discipline “uncivilized” others on nationalist and imperialist missions. However, even though Alcott empowers her white heroines by giving them the authority to discipline racialized others, as an abolitionist Northeasterner and a “topsy-turvy” unmarried woman who has “an olive complexion” and often uses Latin figures to signify passion and deviancy, she is also located at the intersection of several conflicting cultural, racial, and regional axes. While her ideal of a feminized

nation led by white “little women” seems to point to an alternative set of national ideologies built upon more equal terms, the outcome turns out to be rather dubious, especially in the case of anti-slavery narratives in which the symbol of Spanishness is used to exoticize, “beautify,” and even mask blackness.

The Mexican Ruiz de Burton’s Californio version of manifest domesticity highlights more incongruities and perplexities within the process of disciplining and domestication. For one thing, Spanishness in Ruiz de Burton’s novels is problematically coded as white rather than black, and is used to extol a hispanized Mexican white womanhood and to create an alternative kind of national household not built upon Anglo-Saxon New England values. While the white woman is still revered as the indispensable matron who guards domestic values and manages the national household, Ruiz de Burton tries to broaden the definition of whiteness by hispanicizing and whitening her Californio and Mexican heroines and thus characterizing them as eligible candidates for the position of “white” national mothers. The problem is that the racist assumptions about whiteness still remain intact. In other words, by challenging the existing U.S. racial hierarchy that discriminates against Californios/Mexicans, Ruiz de Burton ends up reinscribing the same logic of this hierarchy. And this is the insurmountable limitation with her non-Anglo-centered version of manifest domesticity and with her project of promoting transcultural, transregional, and transnational identifications via sentimental tropes.

The white California author Atherton offers yet another approach to manifest domesticity in her 1898 novel The Californians, in which discourses of imperialism end up helping the adventurous “new woman” rewrite and resist conventional restrictions within the discourses of domesticity. For instance, her daring, independent California

white heroine Helena willfully stays away from the domestic realm, and dreams about leaving the “useless” Spanish past of California behind and taking imperial adventures around the world. Helena’s freedom as a new woman, however, is juxtaposed sharply with the constraint bestowed upon the racialized mixed-blood heroine Magdaléna of Spanish and New England descent, who remains the “uncivilized” other waiting to be disciplined and “set straight” by the dominant culture. In sum, whereas Atherton rewrites manifest domesticity by positively portraying the ambitious “new woman” Helena, who despises domestic values and aspires to conquer the world, she reinforces the imperialist aspect of manifest domesticity through her delineation of Magdaléna, who, as a racialized other, must remain “domesticated” and can only find her future happiness by marrying a respectable white New Englander.

This imperialist stance toward Mexican California, in my opinion, is what essentially distinguishes the two California writers from each other. In contrast to Ruiz de Burton’s use of the discourses of domesticity to consolidate her Mexican/Californio heroines’ status within the white nation and to criticize Mexican Californians’ oppression by Anglo America, Atherton’s mixed-blood heroine must forsake the tradition of old Spanish California to be incorporated into the new integrated California and the imperialist national household—a goal propagated by the ambitious Anglo heroine Helena, who challenges conventions of female domesticity in hopes of taking an active part in renarrating national history just as U.S. men did in their turn-of-the-century imperial adventures. In this sense, discourses of domesticity can paradoxically be used as both a weapon against Anglo racism and a helping hand perpetuating white imperialism.

The African American writer Hopkins, the last author covered in this dissertation,

sharply critiques racist and imperialist U.S. national ideologies. In contrast to the general pattern in which the white woman disciplines the racialized other and helps to pursue the imperial goal of manifest destiny, in Hopkins' novel it is the quadroon heroine Winona who stands for the white female discipliner and uses sentimental teaching to educate the "uncivilized" black other, Judah. What is intriguing about Hopkins' portrayal of white culture is that she manages to critique U.S. racism without condemning white culture altogether. For instance, by extolling British abolitionism and, to a lesser degree, U.S. northern abolitionism, Hopkins affirms the possibility of making white allies in the battle against racism while criticizing white-centered U.S. national ideologies at the same time. In the same grain, she ambiguously endorses both Winona's embrace of white domestic tropes (such as sentimental discipline) and her condemnation of black "violence" without denouncing her mixed-blood heroine as a traitor to the race; Winona, instead, can still be delineated as a revolutionary who challenges U.S. racist national ideologies and actively engages in political action. After all, Winona's disciplinary gaze, albeit participating in the white ideological construction of "black violence," is more about affirming African Americans' ability to uplift themselves than about condemning blacks as savage others. Hopkins' version of manifest domesticity thus turns out to be as much about condemning U.S. racism as about managing racialized others.

To sum up, these four women writers show that the United States as a polyphonic nation was formed through constant negotiations among different regional, racial, ethnic, cultural, national, and transnational figurations and imaginations. And they achieve this goal by narrating love and wars, that is, by endorsing, challenging, and/or rewriting the imperialist agenda of white female domesticity. If narratives, as Fredric Jameson argues,

function as “a socially symbolic act” through which writers can arrive at a temporary solution to social and political dilemmas, what I try to do in this study is to survey the different solutions that these four women writers offer and to situate the solutions in relation to the authors’ disparate class, racial, ethnic, cultural, and regional backgrounds and to the historical contexts of the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

Chapter Outline

The study begins by analyzing Alcott’s antislavery narratives (1860-64) and her sensational thrillers written during the same decade. In chapter one, “Race, Nation, and Sentimental Womanhood: Interracial Encounters in Alcott’s Works during the 1860s,” by using the framework of manifest domesticity, I contend that in Alcott’s narratives the sentimental power of northern white womanhood plays an indispensable part in “civilizing” marginalized racial minorities and in renegotiating a new kind of sentimentalized, feminized nationhood that accepts both the unorthodox white woman and the racialized man as its legitimate members. The limitation of Alcott’s project is that somewhere in her racialized mixed-race male protagonists still lurks a violent trait that can link them to “savage” blackness, and that her unorthodox heroines will eventually be assimilated into the domestic/national household. In this sense, her ideal of a color-blind, sentimental nation led by “little women” is a Utopia after all.

Next I turn to Alcott’s sensational thrillers (mostly composed during the 1860s) to address several issues hitherto under-explored by the Alcott scholarship, including the correlations among her antislavery narratives, domestic novels, and thrillers; the

delineations of race and nationhood in the thrillers; and the relations between the thrillers and the major historical event that took place when the stories were produced: the Civil War. In my opinion, even if the thrillers do not address questions concerning nation and slavery directly, they tackle them indirectly by using slavery imagery to delineate gender relationships and by celebrating the subversive power of white women that the Civil War helped to unleash. The thrillers, in this sense, can be viewed as the reverse side of the antislavery narratives, delineating alternative endings for the unorthodox white middle-class heroines. The Hispanicized sensational heroines, furthermore, along with their Hispanicized ex-slave brothers in the antislavery stories, not only add a Spanish/Latin dimension to the discussion of the Civil War, but also problematize the perceptions of blackness and whiteness in the nineteenth century.

My second chapter, “The ‘Domesticated’ Western Hero and U.S. Westward Expansion in Alcott’s Little Men and Jo’s Boys,” discusses Dan, Alcott’s unruly hero in the second and third books of the Little Women series (1871; 1886), in terms of U.S. westward imperial expansion as well as his double identity as a metaphorical injured Civil War soldier and a “domesticated” dime Western hero. One of my important goals is to highlight the importance of Dan as a character in examining Alcott’s literary career and political visions in connection with nineteenth-century U.S. imperialism and expansionism.

I will first recount the general perception of the U.S. West and westward expansion in the nineteenth century. Then I will turn to Thoreau’s 1862 article “Walking” to elaborate on the vision of westward expansion that this piece presents as well as Thoreau’s possible influence upon Alcott’s delineations of the West and Dan. I argue that

Dan can simultaneously be viewed as the discipliner and the disciplined, an imperialist Thoreauvian walker and a racialized wild other, roles that are deeply related to the process of domestication and to the white woman's power of sentimental discipline. I also contend that by likening Dan's whole disciplinary journey, especially his final westward mission of "civilizing" Indians, to the story of an injured soldier, Alcott not only shows how important the sentimental project of white womanhood still was in reconstructing the nation during the postbellum years, but she also illustrates how indispensable a referent point the West had become in remembering and renarrating the Civil War as well as how the East-West and North-South axes were intricately related to each other. Yet Dan as an Indianized, Mexicanized, and sometimes even Africanized "white" man, albeit more or less "domesticated" by the white women, still cannot survive in the ideal domestic realm imagined by Alcott. This fact not only reflects the ongoing negotiations between the domestic novel and the dime Western in the postbellum era, but it also highlights the limitations of the white woman's disciplinary project and of Alcott's renarration of national manhood and ideologies.

My third chapter, "Regional Writing, National Memories, and Transnational Undercurrents: Ruiz de Burton and Atherton Rewrite the Histories of Californios/Californians," and my fourth chapter, "The California Fable and the Imperialist New Women in Atherton's Californians," discuss how two California writers, one from the viewpoint of the Californios (the Mexican Californian land-holding gentry) and the other from the viewpoint of the Californians (a more "integrated" regional identity said to subsume various traditions of the land), mapped out their disparate literary visions of California and the West in the 1870s and 1880s and during the turn of

the century and the early twentieth century respectively. Situating my analysis in relation to postwar literary regionalism, contemporary myths such as the Spanish Fantasy Heritage and the California Fable, and the U.S.-Mexico War and the Spanish-American War, I examine how the Mexican Ruiz de Burton and the Anglo Atherton, by composing regional stories of romances and myths, not only employed discourses of domesticity to empower and/or restrict their heroines, but also intervened in the national project that generated narratives of memories and amnesia in the face of social divisions and political dilemmas. My overall goal is to illustrate the interracial/interethnic, transregional, and transnational world in which the United States was implicated during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

In chapter three, first I address nineteenth-century literary regionalism and the “transnational” turn in recent academic reevaluation of regionalism, and then I situate Ruiz de Burton and Atherton, whose works abound in region-specific descriptions, into the discussion. Whereas the general function of regional writing might be to suppress emerging local identities and to create a collective, homogenous national consciousness, some regional writers still helped to introduce new forms of local identities to the national audience and presented a more heterogeneous, unorthodox, even subversive picture, which I call the hidden side of the local, or the “hidden local.” I want to examine the hidden local in the two writers’ works, that is, the part of regional writing that was supposed to be left out, forgotten, or subsumed into the official history but that still managed to make an appearance, the part that was closely related to the transnational undercurrents and intercultural confrontations in California during the postbellum years. In chapter four, I explicate the California Fable in order to further situate Atherton and

her appropriation of manifest domesticity in the transnational contexts of California at the turn of the century. I look at how Atherton uses this fable to narrate her ideal of California “women of tomorrow” that were closely related to contemporary imperialist sentiments. At the end of chapter four, I conclude my discussion of these two authors by turning to the collective phenomena of nostalgia and amnesia in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Looking at how the two authors formed their memories and myths about California, I reiterate that they intervened in the collective process of national narration through their respective versions of wish-fulfillment and myth-making.

My fifth chapter, “Turning Indian, Empowering African American Identity: Hopkins’ Turn-of-the-Century Version of Manifest Domesticity in Winona,” analyzes Hopkins’ 1902 novel in relation to African Americans’ engagement in social practices and cultural imaginings concerning Indianness. I first address the popularity of the turn-of-the-century cultural practices of appropriating Indianness and the Pocahontas myths, and then I delineate how African Americans reinterpreted these practices and myths to create agency for themselves. After mapping out this general historical context, I narrate Hopkins’ own views of racial relations in general and American Indians in particular. Finally I explore how Hopkins uses the contemporary discourses of “appropriating Indianness” to empower her black characters and how the heroine Winona can be viewed as an Africanized version of Pocahontas. Viewing Indianness as a symbol of unbounded freedom and unspoiled nature, Hopkins indianizes and reenergizes her African American characters and in this way asserts her belief in the common brotherhood among colored races. However, since Hopkins’ focus is obviously on Indianness rather than on real-life Indians, and since her delineation of Indianness is

stereotypically embedded within U.S. imperial imaginaries, her internationalist ideal of common brotherhood between Indians and blacks is, after all, too unrealistic. As a result, her Africanized version of manifest domesticity proves to be ambivalently liberating and limiting at the same time.

To conclude, looking at the texts by these four women writers, I examine their disparate appropriations of the discourses of manifest domesticity through topics related to love and wars. In this way, I explore how they rewrite intercultural and transnational histories, engage in social critiques, and create political agency for themselves and their characters at their respective historical moments. Their works, put together, explicate the uneven, multi-layered, and complicated process of national narration, in which people reappropriated and created symbols, rules, conventions, and stories to engage in alternative versions of myth-making and wish-fulfillment in the face of social dilemmas, political predicaments, and the ubiquitous presence of the dominant national narrative.

Chapter One

Race, Nation, and Sentimental Womanhood: Interracial Encounters in the Shadow of Manifest Domesticity in Alcott's Works during the 1860s

The cultural politics of domesticity in the nineteenth century U.S. have long been the focus of theoretical debates. In the past, analyses of domesticity have mostly concentrated on how it represents middle-class white woman's sphere, symbolizing either conformity to "a 'conservative' popular cultural tradition" or "an alternative economic system" of resistance from the woman's point of view (Romero 1, 3).¹ In the past two or three decades, however, a shift in the academic focus has taken place to incorporate issues of race, class, nation, and empire into the discussion and to reevaluate the connection between domesticity and men. As the binary divisions between domestic/political, household/battlefield, and private/public prove to be more and more tenuous, it becomes imperative to reassess the idea of domesticity, the complex relationships among domesticity, national ideologies and empire making, and the roles that white middle-class women and other people play within it.

In light of this reassessment, in chapter one I would like to examine the problematic relationships between Northern white womanhood and the reconstruction of national ideologies during the Civil War by analyzing Louisa May Alcott's antislavery writings and sensational stories composed in the 1860s. First, I will focus on Alcott's antislavery

¹ Romero has described three different approaches to the discourses of domesticity: first, "orthodox" literary criticism that denounces "domesticity and its cultural offspring (denominated variously as 'sentimentalism,' 'women's fiction,' or 'the domestic novel')" as part of conservative popular culture (1); second, Anglo-American feminist criticism that upholds domesticity as an alternative site from which the middle-class white woman can resist hegemonic discourses and articulate different cultural views; third, the "revisionary" feminist approach that reexamines "the class- and race-impelled subtexts—and the institutional contexts—of Anglo-American domesticity" (3).

narratives and contend that the sentimental power of Northern white womanhood plays an indispensable part in “civilizing” and disciplining the foreign and in renegotiating national boundaries and ideologies during the war. Then I will turn to the subversive gothic heroines in Alcott’s sensational thrillers to further probe the disciplinary project of white womanhood, to amplify the effects of the Civil War on Northern white women, and to explicate how Alcott uses her sensational heroines to embody female subversion and to present another side of the disciplinary project. In chapter two, I will turn to the character Dan—the “wild” boy in Alcott’s well-known Little Women series—and his western pilgrimage to explicate how the disciplinary project of the white woman “tames” unorthodox manhood and contributes to U.S. imperialist expansionism, and how this process of taming/disciplining can be situated in terms of both the Civil War and U.S. westward expansion. All in all, I want to show that although Alcott’s sentimental project in which the Northern white woman tries to incorporate “otherness” into the nation may seem liberating at first sight, it has limitations. If one views Alcott’s narratives as “a socially symbolic act” through which she tries to imagine and negotiate a temporary answer to social and political dilemmas, this answer turns out to be not completely satisfying but contains problems and loopholes, especially with regard to how Alcott conceptualizes race and racialized others in light of nineteenth-century fears of racial degradation and cultural degeneration.²

Manifest Domesticity: The White Woman’s Disciplinary Project in Conversation with U.S. Imperialism

² See Fredric Jameson, “On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act,” 17-102.

In order to address questions concerning white middle-class womanhood in the nineteenth-century U.S. North, I will first briefly examine the culture of sentiment and the interconnections among sentimentality, domesticity, discipline, and white middle-class womanhood, and then go on to explicate how these notions have helped to construct and/or challenge national ideologies and imperialist myths in the nineteenth century. In her 1992 introduction to The Culture of Sentiment, Shirley Samuels has explained the working of nineteenth-century sentimental literature as “a set of rules for how to ‘feel right,’ privileging compassion in calibrating and adjusting the sensations of the reader in finely tuned and predictable responses to what is viewed or read” (5). The nineteenth-century culture of sentimentality, in this sense, can be viewed as a disciplinary tool to teach the targeted readers how to channel and control their responses, how to view, react to, and feel about certain themes in a “proper” way.

This disciplinary power of sentimentality is also the focus of Richard Brodhead’s 1993 book, Cultures of Letters. Following Foucault’s theorization of discipline, he emphasizes the importance of the ideologies of “disciplinary intimacy” in transforming the age of corporeal punishment into that of “discipline through love” in the antebellum United States. According to him, in the nineteenth century there appeared “a purposeful sentimentalization of the disciplinary relation” in which the child was disciplined through strong bonds of love instead of punishment (19). In the end, the child’s relation with authority became relocated within the realm of emotion, and s/he would introject the lesson given by the authority even more effectively. Just as Brodhead has contended, “the discipline of love reveals itself as a mechanism...not for the mitigation of authority but really for the extension of its regulating hold” (21). In this way, the nineteenth-century

model of disciplinary intimacy creates a more thorough form of subjugation and a more subtle way to delimit freedom and impose regulations.

It is important that in contending that this theoretical model of disciplinary intimacy cannot be discussed separately from considerations of the social structures around that period, Brodhead designates the middle-class household as the most significant site of execution. Furthermore, although Brodhead does not specify the gendered structure of the middle-class domestic sphere, his argument strongly suggests that the white middle-class mother was the indispensable agent to carry out this project of disciplinary intimacy; that she, as the primary child discipliner at home, was responsible for raising her children up to become suitable future citizens for the society. One can accordingly deduce how important a role nineteenth-century middle-class mothers must have played in upholding public values and social functions by managing child-rearing in domestic households.

The idea of middle-class women performing public duties can in fact be traced back to the notion of “republican motherhood” in the Revolutionary era. According to Romero, the idea of republican motherhood is the precursor of the nineteenth-century ideal of the domestic mother. In her words, late-eighteenth-century educators gradually viewed women as the ones who “in their capacity as mothers...exercised a determining power over the fate of the Republic in the values they taught boys who would grow up to lead the nation” (14; my emphasis); white women thus became responsible for the spiritual and physical well-beings of the future leaders. The influences of the middle-class woman/mother, in this sense, were no longer confined within the domestic household but could be imposed as an instrument of social reform as well as a guiding force of public and national values. Just as Nina Baym has claimed, in view of the influences that

republican mothers had over their spouses' and children's civil virtues, home became "obviously crucial to the formation of public opinion in Habermas's sense, and women were obviously participators" (6). Judging from these descriptions, the nineteenth-century middle-class white woman indeed can be seen as following the spirit of the "republican mother," serving as the guardian angel of national values by disciplining and cultivating future male citizens.³

What I am interested in with regard to this disciplinary project of the nineteenth-century white middle-class woman, however, is its hidden loopholes rather than its apparent goals—loopholes that, in my opinion, are intrinsically related to the ineffectiveness of the project in representing and situating racialized others at a time period when knowledge and notions concerning race and nationhood were undergoing tremendous renegotiation. Or, to use Samuels' words, if the project of sentimentality in the nineteenth-century U.S. is a "national project" about "imagining the nation's bodies and the national body" (3), what kinds of bodies were being imagined and what were being excluded? And what bodies were able to serve as constituents of the national body in the end? It is important that Samuels emphasizes how unpredictable and unstable the outcomes of this project can be, that "the bodies for whom such reform efforts are enacted are only to a limited extent culturally and critically malleable" (5). Romero has similarly stressed this unpredictability, claiming that middle-class domesticity as an ideology was unevenly received, practiced and enacted, always in the making, open to

³ The term "republican motherhood" was first coined by Linda K. Kerber in Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America to describe how maternal influences in the early Republic reached beyond the home and into the political domain (11). In Domestic Allegories of Political Desire, Claudia Tate also mentions how domestic novels rely on "a tradition of politicized motherhood" that "held sway from the late eighteenth through most of the nineteenth century" (14).

revision, disputes, and the emergence of oppositional formulations (19). Some bodies were less malleable or manageable than others exactly because power, just as Foucault claims, by nature is unevenly distributed across different bodies, and thus creates disparate effects and contingent loopholes.⁴ In sum, whereas female agency acquired through the culture of sentiment could reach beyond home and reimagine the “national body,” the more pressing question that one should ask is what unpredictable outcomes there were and how this unpredictability was manifested on the “nation’s bodies.”

I will argue that to better examine the unpredictable effects of the woman’s disciplinary project on the nation’s bodies in nineteenth-century America, one must take various issues into consideration, such as slavery and abolitionism, the Civil War, the capitalist expansion and imperialist conquests of the nation, and the racialized bodies renegotiating and challenging the nation’s imagination of itself and its constituents. In other words, one needs to look beyond the home toward what is outside it, to probe the tenuous boundary between home and not-home, to situate the woman’s disciplinary project not only in domestic contexts but also in inter/national contexts, and to examine how this project negotiated the changing contours of the national body as well as the varying conceptions of the foreign in the nineteenth century. Before turning to Alcott and her works, I would like to go through several scholars’ opinions about the problems of this project, particularly Amy Kaplan’s theorization of manifest domesticity, in order to better explicate how Alcott’s blueprint about home and nation finally turns out to be an

⁴ See Foucault, Discipline and Punish. Also see Judith Butler’s Bodies That Matter, in which she adopts Foucault’s concept of power as multiply constructed, and claims that “There is no power that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability” (9). Since power is more about the effects of reiterated acting than about a subject who has power, loopholes will inevitably occur in the process of reiteration.

incomplete and problematic one.

From the 1990s onward, scholars have pointed out that previous feminist scholarship on sentimentality and domesticity, although convincingly analyzing the gendered structure of the middle-class household, largely elided questions concerning race and imperialism. For example, in her 1992 piece “Tender Violence: Domestic Photographs, Domestic Fictions, and Educational Reform,” Laura Wexler focuses on what she calls “the expansive, imperial project of sentimentalism” ignored by women scholars such as Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins, claiming that “the energies it [sentimentalism] developed were intended as a tool for the control of others, not merely as an aid in the conquest of the self”; and by “others” Wexler specifically means “people of different classes and different races” (101). Citing Lydia Sigourney’s Letters to Mothers (1838), Romero has similarly contended that Sigourney, appalled by the rush of “untutored foreigners” into the United States, maintained that “it was the responsibility of women ‘to neutralize this mass’ through an internal missionary movement that would spread the good word of the Anglo-American middle-class home” (31). Middle-class women’s influences, in their descriptions, not only consisted in their capabilities to raise future leaders for the nation, but they also extended way beyond the range of domestic and national households, serving as an alternative weapon to conquer and domesticate racialized others at home, around the borders, and abroad.

In her groundbreaking 1998 article “Manifest Domesticity,” Amy Kaplan has persuasively explicated the power of the discourses of domesticity in taming the “foreign” and in renegotiating the contours of the national body. According to her, the so-called “domestic” in fact has a double meaning that indicates both the individual and

the national households; and what links the two seemingly disparate domains together is the fact that they both define themselves in contrast to something outside and foreign, something non-domestic and possibly threatening to domestic/national welfare. What Kaplan wants to demonstrate, however, is that the division between domestic and foreign is ambiguously sustained as well. Expounding the spatial and political interdependence of home and empire, she asserts that

Domesticity...refers not to a static condition, but to a process of domestication, which entails conquering and taming the wild, the natural, and the alien. "Domestic" in this sense is related to the imperial project of civilizing...Domestication implies that the home contains within itself those wild or foreign elements that must be tamed; domesticity monitors the borders between the civilized and the savage as it regulates the traces of savagery within its purview (25-26).

Home or the domestic becomes a mobile and indeterminate space. Its scope can extend beyond personal households to a domestic sphere of empire, the periphery of which is under constant negotiation by the changing definition of the foreign. In this sense, the demarcation line between home and empire in the nineteenth-century U.S. can be anything but stable, since these two were always in the process of constructing and redefining each other. And people's conceptions of the nation and the foreign, of what must be included into and excluded from the national body, were shifting as well because of the numerous contacts and collisions among different groups at home and beyond home. It is this mobility or changeability produced by the ever-shifting conceptions of the foreign that make the effects of the discourses of domesticity so unpredictable.⁵

The nineteenth-century white middle-class woman, as the chief caregiver of the

⁵ Also see Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in which she argues that "international relations reciprocally shape a dominant imperial culture at home, and...imperial relations are enacted and contested within the nation" (14).

household, played an important role in negotiating, consolidating, and sometimes even challenging the ever-changing contours of home, nation, and empire. According to Kaplan, at the time of heightened imperialist expansion when the foreign always seemed to be lurking at the margin of the home in popular imagination, adhesion to the female domestic sphere became a means to reconstruct home and guarantee adherence to the larger family of the nation—especially in an alien space; that is to say, the idea was that by implanting domestic values in the newly conquered foreign lands, one could magically transform the unfamiliar foreign into the familiar domestic (“Manifest” 25). All in all, Kaplan’s theorization has illustrated the importance of the discourses of domesticity in formulating the contours of imperialism and nationalism as well as the indispensable part that white women played in constructing, upholding, and challenging dominant national ideologies. Domesticity as an evolving discourse was constantly rewriting the meanings of domestic and foreign, extending or contracting the boundaries of home, nation, and empire. One cannot fully discuss the idea of “Manifest Destiny,” then, without taking into consideration the discourses of “manifest domesticity.”

What I want to do in this chapter is to discuss Alcott’s antislavery narratives and sensational thrillers, most of which were composed during the 1860s, in terms of the disciplinary project of white womanhood and its dialogue with nineteenth-century U.S. nationalism and imperialism. I will first focus on the antislavery narratives, looking at the roles played by Northern white middle-class women in defining the contours of the nation, the shifting demarcation line between the home and the foreign, and the changing perceptions of racialized others. Alcott’s antislavery stories, in my opinion, explicitly situate white female protagonists in relation to their places within the nation and their

interactions with dominant national ideologies. Ambiguously, these white women demonstrate a rebellious as well as assimilative gesture. While the redemptive power of sympathy enables female protagonists to question unfair national policies such as slavery, in the end they as well as the men of color they help will join the nation, and precariously settle into the national household of the United States. This ambiguous double-edged gesture testifies to what Kaplan calls “the double movement of domestic discourse”: on the one hand, domestic discourses “expand female influence beyond the home and the nation”; on the other hand, they also “contract woman’s sphere to police domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness both within and without” (“Manifest” 28). From my point of view, the reason again lies in the fact that power is by nature an unevenly distributed and multiply constructed process. Therefore, even though some participants of the nineteenth-century disciplinary project of white womanhood might strive to use female power to liberate racialized others, it could very possibly end up repeating the same imperialist logic that it meant to defy. On the other hand, the unstable process of domestication might also result in unexpected effects that challenged the dominant ideologies, thus problematizing and redrawing the inherently tenuous demarcation line between the foreign and the domestic. This is what I want to focus on in my discussion of Alcott’s works.

The Entanglement between Sentiments and Sensations in Alcott’s Works during the 1860s

Louisa May Alcott (1832-88) was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Boston and Concord, Massachusetts. She began to write when she was young, and

produced nearly three hundred titles in a variety of genres in her lifetime; yet she is generally remembered as a writer of domestic children's literature who composed Little Women (1868-69), Little Men (1871), and Jo's Boys (1886). The "seemingly" apolitical, domestic storylines in these novels tend to make people ignore Alcott's own strong political stand and her other novels that convey more blatant political messages. As the daughter of Bronson Alcott, the transcendentalist philosopher who engaged in numerous reform and educational projects throughout his lifetime, and Abigail May Alcott, a strong upholder of antislavery and various reform causes, Louisa vehemently supported abolitionist movements and the emancipation of African American slaves. After the Civil War broke out in April 1861, she participated in several projects organized by Northern women to support the Union army; and eventually in 1862 she, at the age of thirty, went to a Union army hospital in Georgetown to serve as nurse yet unfortunately contracted typhoid fever, and was taken home by her father. The Civil War and her less-than-two-month nursing experience, however, made a tremendous impact on Alcott. Her health was permanently affected by this little sojourn at the hospital, and the works that she produced based upon this experience, such as Hospital Sketches (1863), earned her some money and recognition as a well-respected writer. Besides Hospital Sketches, Alcott also published a few antislavery stories related to either the Civil War or her abolitionist visions between 1863 and 1864, including "M.L." (written before the Civil War but rejected by the Atlantic Monthly in 1860; finally published in the Commonwealth, a Boston antislavery weekly newspaper, in January and February 1863); "My Contraband" (first published as "The Brothers" in the Atlantic Monthly in November 1863; reprinted in Hospital Sketches and Camp and Firesides Stories in 1869);

and “An Hour” (published in the Commonwealth in November and December 1864). I will first analyze “M.L.” and “My Contraband” together, and then turn to “An Hour” to assess her antislavery narratives as a whole and in relation to her sensational thrillers.

Before delving into the antislavery narratives, I want to return to Brodhead and his model of “disciplinary intimacy” to see how his arguments about the three literary cultures that Alcott has engaged in may help us to assess her antislavery narratives as well as her entire corpus. Brodhead observes that the philosophy of “disciplinary intimacy” is the “founding mythology or privileged system of truth” in Alcott’s Little Women series (71). According to him, Alcott herself viewed her books as “maternal supplements in carrying out the disciplinary functions”; that is, through the practice of “discipline through love,” her novels for children, in her own view, could mold young readers’ minds in the direction of parental wishes and inculcate moral lessons into their minds (72). However, Brodhead emphasizes that this moralizing, disciplining goal is absent from most of Alcott’s earlier works. In his argument, Alcott lived in a specific period when authors faced an array of literary possibilities; so she was not only highly conscious of the different publishing cultures around her, but she also had several reading publics and models of authorship available to her. Brodhead points out that in the early 1860s Alcott entered into two different models of authorship that were strongly opposed to each other: one was the form of writing that Alcott submitted to high-culture literary magazines such as the Atlantic; the other was a sensational kind of short story writing that she composed for story papers such as Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper. These two publishing worlds that she became associated with provided her the chance to be both a proto-high and a proto-low cultural literary author. Yet in the end Alcott, Brodhead

maintains, picked a third route by choosing to write domestic novels in support of the model of disciplinary intimacy and domestic values, a model that neither of the two earlier modes of writing used or upheld.⁶ To sum up, in Brodhead's delineation, by the end of the 1860s Alcott had already abandoned her previous two models and established herself as a writer of children's literature who engaged in domestic realism. Her decision to stick to domestic realistic writings, according to him, signified her willingness to set aside personal pleasures to compose socially useful work. He further asserts that this decision has to do with Alcott's own personal background: Alcott used to be a willful, topsy-turvy child and caused a lot of worry to her parent; accordingly, she was "led to identify with the parental view of her character as morally problematic and to find a desired new self in the project of controlling herself on their behalf" (73). Her dedication to moralizing domestic novels, thus, can be viewed as part of this project. Raising the rod of love to discipline others eventually turned into self-discipline. By writing domestic novels, Alcott fulfilled herself through self-sacrifice and self-management.

Although Brodhead has maintained that the two earlier literary models that Alcott engaged in have nothing to do with the tutelary or disciplinary model upheld by the third route, I would like to argue that this kind of demarcation is not exactly valid. Both Alcott's sensational stories and her earlier writings aimed at high-cultural audience convey disciplinary messages—even though to different degrees. For example, Alcott's first novel, *Moods* (1864), a work that she composed to cater to the taste of high-culture

⁶ According to Brodhead, "The two historical models of authorship [the high-culture model and the low-culture model]...were strongly opposed to one another...But a notable similarity between the two is that neither of them encouraged the kind of authorship this chapter began by considering: writing as a tutelary activity in support of the domestic ethos" (85-86). For Brodhead's full argument on Alcott's three different literary models, see *Cultures of Letters*, 74-89. Also see Charles Strickland's account of the three different literatures that Alcott wrote for different audiences: literary, juvenile, and sensational (57-74).

literary magazine readers, strongly echoes the ideal of the disciplinary model. In the beginning of the story, the main protagonist, Adam Warwick, abandons his fiancée Ottila, a Creole lady with dark cheeks and Southern features, because the tie that binds them together, from his viewpoint, is “a passion of the senses, not a love of the soul”; Ottila, to him, “lack[s] the moral sentiment that makes all gifts and graces subservient to the virtues that render womanhood a thing to honor as well as love” (11; my emphasis). What Warwick endorses here is the power of the ideal of disciplinary intimacy to extol “proper” womanly virtues and to channel passionate impulses epitomized by Ottila’s foreign traits. Later the heroine Sylvia, once a topsy-turvy girl, will also learn to introject this disciplinary ethos into herself, and will try to avoid becoming a victim of “moods” by controlling her passions through self-discipline. It is obvious that Alcott already had this kind of disciplinary model in mind as early as the time when she composed Moods, a work that she began drafting in 1860 and published in the Atlantic in 1864.

I will further argue that her works composed around that period, instead of following one particular model or sending one particular message, more often than not contain multiple modes and elements. For instance, the story of Warwick’s disastrous betrothal to the dark beauty Ottila, just as Sarah Elbert has argued in her introduction of Moods, looks very much like the opening of “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment,” a sensational story that Alcott submitted to Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper in 1863 (xxiii). Since the tragic ending in “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment” can be directly attributed to the undisciplined passions of the heroine, this narrative can be said to have a clear moral message upholding the disciplinary ideal just as Moods does; that is, if one cannot domesticate or discipline one’s passions, ruin and disasters will ensue. Just as Shelley

Streeby has argued, since female writers around that period ran more risks for writing sensational novels, “When women publish sensational forms of literature...they often combine sentimental and sensational modes”; as a result, “sensational aspects of the text, which focus on violence, shocking scenes, bodies, and the grotesque are often framed by sentimental devices that reassert genteel values and middle-class respectability” (36). While “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment” does not explicitly “reassert genteel values and middle-class respectability,” the ghastly ending that stems from the violation of disciplinary rules makes the story fit into the abovementioned argument. If Alcott, as Charles Strickland has said, occupies “a particularly strategic position from which to comment on the sentimental revolution” best illustrated by the long-lasting popularity of Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, what this position stands for must include her composite use of different literary styles and motifs, such as sentimental womanhood and the femme fatale, in a single narrative (18).

In fact, the sentimental and the sensational, according to Jonathan Elmer in Reading at the Social Limit, are two sides of the same coin. He sees the sensational, “the moment of shock, or horror, or revulsion,” as “erupting from within the sentimental” (93); and further argues that “the sentimental and sensational are complementary mass-cultural modes, dependent on each other for their own proper functioning” (94). Using the trope of “loss of the beloved” to explicate his argument, Elmer states:

Someone dies, and a hole is opened up in the social fabric: sentimentalism promotes the penetration of the reader by affect as the validation of a principle of social cohesion, of the social unity of feeling and sympathy; but then it will seek for ways to close the hole, to control the affect, to modulate grief into mourning. Or again, someone dies, and a hole is opened up: sensationalism lingers at the place of the wound, tarries in the breach of the social limit, explores the affective intensities elicited there; but then rather than allowing for a healing closure, it causes something to

rise up in the opening, some horrifying and impossible embodiment (95-96; My emphasis).

In his description, the sensational moment emerges where the sentimental project fails. Whereas sentimental novels try to invoke the “right” kind of readerly affect, the eruption of sensations lets the affect go wild and evolve into a moment of uncertainty and terror. If the sentimental trope means to “make sense” or make people “feel right” in a certain way, the sensational is the part that is being left out or excluded from the sentimental territory, the part that cannot be “made sense of.” It is the same with Alcott’s works in which the sensational lies low to wait for its rightful moment to erupt, to disturb the apparent balance, and to mess up the disciplinary ethos. Moral sentiments and sensational outbursts, the sentimental and the sensational, go hand in hand in both Moods and “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment”—even though their emphases are different.⁷

The three antislavery narratives I want to discuss were written around the same period of time as Moods and “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment”; and they exemplify similar traits and combine both sentimental and sensational elements. This not only indicates that Alcott then was experimenting with different literary models at a transitional period, but it also discloses her own as well as her female protagonists’ struggles with the ideal of disciplinary intimacy. Even though Alcott finally became a

⁷ These two stories share even more similarities with each other. Otilia and Pauline both have Southern features; both symbolize “passions” in contrast to “discipline”; both are rejected and abandoned by their lovers in the opening of the story. Sarah Elbert even has claimed that Pauline “appears as a blond version of Otilia” (Hunger 171). Their differences lie in the fact that the “evil” woman can be the dominant protagonist in a sensational low-class story but can only be a minor character in a high-class literary work. While the sensational story can let Pauline express her anger fully and bring her will to revenge into effect, Otilia remains silent, and lets Warwick define their relationship for her. Even so, Moods and “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment” can be viewed as two sides of the same coin: one is the moralized version, narrated in line with the disciplinary, sentimental model; the other is the gothicized version, narrated in line with the dark, sensational model.

domestic realist writer, extolling the disciplinary model and denouncing sensational literature (just as Alcott's alter-ego Jo gives up sensational writing as instructed by her mentor and discipliner as well as future husband, Professor Bhaer), in her earlier writing years, this model has not yet so pervasively infiltrated her works. As a result, one can observe sensational gothic moments and sentimental moral teachings juxtaposed in her antislavery stories as well as other works composed around the same period. In my opinion, what this kind of juxtaposition crystallizes is the moment of uncertainty and terror in which "the sensational erupts from within the sentimental." While the antislavery narratives promote the white abolitionist woman's project of "discipline through love," this project can never be fully executed, since the disciplinary model has excesses and loopholes, something lurking at "the breach of the social limit" and waiting to tear up the barely healed-over wound and to challenge the legitimacy of the disciplinary ethos.⁸ And in the case of Alcott's antislavery narratives, this "something" embodies itself in the ambiguously racialized bodies of the mixed race protagonists that are stuck in the middle of the struggle between the abolitionist ideal and nineteenth-century fears of racial degeneration.

"M.L." and "My Contraband": The White Woman's National Project of Disciplining the Racialized Other

Both "M.L." and "My Contraband" exemplify the model of disciplinary intimacy

⁸ Although Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is about the arbitrary construction of gender, it is helpful to think of the disciplinary project also as a performatively enacted one. Just as gender is not an identity but a doing that is repetitively enacted, the disciplinary project is never complete and is always in process. The person being disciplined is performatively constituted as well, always being interpellated by some higher authority without being able to fully meet its demand.

through which the Northern white middle-class woman strives to cultivate “suitable” male subjects for the nation.⁹ What makes these two narratives peculiar is that here the discipliner is an abolitionist and the one being disciplined is a racialized other; so the task of the white woman is not to cultivate white young boys but to domesticate unorthodox racialized men in order to assimilate them into the nation. In both stories, the white heroine, acting as the surrogate mother, exercises the power of “discipline through love” to help the mixed race male character become an assimilable national member. In the end, the abolitionist white woman not only rewrites national manhood into a more sentimentalized, feminized, and multiracial version, but she also resituates herself as the nation’s mother at the time of an acute national crisis. This project of rewriting, however, will prove to be paradoxically subversive and conformist at the same time. In the following pages, I would like to delineate the problematic double effects of the project in relation to the abolitionist Northern white woman first and to the rewriting of national manhood next.

“M.L.” is a love story between a Northern white woman, Claudia, and a Cuban mixed race ex-slave, Paul Frere. The plot opens in a parlor where assembled guests are listening to the brilliant performance of Paul, a poor, handsome singer rumored to have Spanish and noble blood. One of the members of the enchanted audience is Claudia, a white woman gifted with beauty, wealth, and position, but who is all alone in the world,

⁹ A couple of scholars have approached Alcott’s works in terms of the rewriting of national history and the reconstruction of national values, such as Ann Douglas (on Little Women) and Mark Patterson (on “My Contraband”). I am particularly indebted to Elizabeth Young’s brilliant analysis in Disarming the Nation, in which she argues that Alcott uses images of the masculinized nurse and the feminized soldier to allegorically imagine an injured nation revitalized by white maternal leadership. However, whereas Young focuses on Alcott’s Civil War fiction, especially Hospital Sketches and the Little Women series, and therefore discusses only one of her antislavery stories, “My Contraband,” I try to establish the interconnections among her three antislavery narratives as well as the correlations between the antislavery narratives and the sensational thrillers.

without family, relations, or lovers. Fascinated by Paul's sensual singing voice and admirable character, she soon falls in love with him. On the eve of their wedding, Claudia's jealous friend Jessie, who once made love to Paul but was rejected, forces him to reveal his biggest secret to Claudia. The truth is that Paul was born of a Cuban white planter and a quadroon slave mother, and after his father passed away, he was sold to one Maurice Lecroix whose initials "M.L." were branded on his hand. After Paul discloses this secret, fully anticipating abhorrence and disgust from Claudia, she, to his surprise, accepts him totally, and proceeds to marry him just as planned. Even though they are excluded from the circle of Claudia's racist fashionable friends, she finds greater happiness and satisfaction as Paul's wife. They also find brotherhood in another group of honest people as well as a religion that welcomes all humanity without regard to people's race and ancestry. Not only is Paul accepted and lifted from his solitude, but Claudia also escapes from her former tedious life and enters into a nobler calling.

Although "My Contraband" is not a love story, the white nurse Faith Dane at first does feel attracted to the mixed race contraband Robert. Faith leaves home to serve as a nurse in a Union hospital just like Alcott herself did; there she meets Robert, a convalescent freedman with Anglo-Saxon features and a Spanish complexion, who looks quite handsome except for a ghastly wound on his face. It turns out that Robert and an injured Confederate officer Faith attends upon are half-brothers. Robert tries to kill the white man because the officer sold Robert off the plantation and raped his wife Lucy. Faith appeals to Robert's love for Lucy to stop him from committing murder, and then sends him off to begin a new life. Robert decides to change his last name to Dane (thus he is symbolically reborn as Faith Dane's newly begotten son), and then enlists in a black

regiment of the Union army. In the end, he kills his white half-brother on the battlefield, but receives a fatal wound himself. Faith is by his side when Robert draws his last breath and passes away to “the beautiful hereafter, where there is no black or white, no master and no slave” (80).

In both stories, the disciplinary project of the white woman proves to be a national one. Both Claudia and Faith, as representatives of abolitionist white Northerners as well as unorthodox women against regulations of normative femininity, try to bring racialized others into the national household; and eventually they not only reconstruct national manhood, but also rewrite themselves as active participants in molding national values. In the beginning of the story, both Claudia and Faith are abnormal in some way. Since Claudia is all alone in the world, her character does not fit into the familiar domestic scene where the white middle-class woman manages and conducts things. According to Jessie, Claudia is like Diana, a virgin goddess living high above in Mount Olympus far away from the common folk; she does not care to descend from her “Mont Blanc of cool indifference” in matters of love (6, 5). Faith, like Alcott herself, is a self-reliant woman who is her own master, a nonconformist “old maid” who decides to leave home and serve as a Union nurse. We know from Moods that even after the Civil War ends, Faith still travels around, and does not get married or start a family. To conclude, both Claudia and Faith can be viewed as unorthodox figures that exist at the margin of the nation—at least in the beginning of the stories.

The key that transforms them from marginal personages into participants in the national project, in Alcott’s depiction, lies in their antiracist, abolitionist stands and their newly established role as the symbolic mother to the racialized male protagonist. This

argument is basically congruent with Elizabeth Young's overall assessment of Alcott's Civil War writing; that is, Alcott extols white maternal leadership as the very cure to the injured body politic of the nation and to the injured bodies of national subjects.¹⁰

Whereas I agree with her view, I would like to further contend that Paul and Robert only become national subjects after receiving maternal discipline from the white women; that is, the white maternal leadership not only can cure injured bodies, but it can also incorporate new, racialized bodies into the nation. So, by symbolically becoming mothers to the mixed race ex-slaves and turning them into qualified national subjects, Claudia and Faith, once disqualified candidates, earn themselves a place within the national household. Although Claudia had difficulties in finding a suitable spouse before, she eventually marries Paul, and thus enters into "normal" womanhood and motherhood. Holding Paul's wounded palm, once branded with his master's initials, as if it were "a suffering child," Claudia symbolically becomes Paul's mother (16); she soothes his pains and sorrows just as a mother does for her child. She also serves as his mother by taking him into a new home and a new nation, by giving birth to Paul's new identity and leading him into the national household of the United States: "Paul was no longer friendless and without a home, for here he found a country, and a welcome to that brotherhood which makes the whole world kin" (27). Toward the end of the story, Claudia will literally give birth to Paul's children, "the little heads" whom she prefers as company to her racist friends (28). She turns Paul into a father, in this way pushing his incorporation into the U.S. national household even one step further. From an outsider ex-slave to a suffering child accepted

¹⁰ In Young's definition, Alcott's Civil War writing, by which she means the pieces where the war makes a defining presence, at least consists of twenty five years of work, including Hospital Sketches (1863), Little Women (1868-69), Work (1873), and Jo's Boys (1886) (71).

by Claudia, and then to a father raising future national subjects for the nation, the mulatto Paul at last more or less becomes “one of us” through the antiracist white woman Claudia’s love and acceptance.

Importantly, whereas Claudia saves Paul, Paul saves Claudia as well. When Claudia contemplates what Paul has told her about his past, her heart whispers to her: “I was cold, and he cherished me besides his fire; hungry, and he gave me food; a stranger, and he took me in” (23). As an unorthodox woman cut off from domestic ties, Claudia is also an orphan and a stranger in the world; Paul is the one who takes her in, who cherishes her “besides his fire,” and who gives her a home and a “normal” family life via their marriage. Whereas she saves Paul by accepting him and serving as a symbolic mother to him at first, Paul saves her by marrying her and turning her into a real mother later. In the end they find a name, a family, and a country through each other. Together they create a different national household unpolluted by old forces such as slavery, racial prejudices, and gender discrimination; together they breed, nurture, and discipline a new generation of future national subjects, who will create a different set of national ideologies permeated by love and sentimentality; together they envision a brave new world that embraces both the “topsy-turvy” white woman and the marginal racialized man as its national mother and father.

Just as Claudia is to Paul, Faith is also a surrogate mother to Robert. Robert first appears in the story as a liminal figure; one of Faith’s first impressions of him is: “Like the bat in Aesop’s fable, he belonged to neither race; and the pride of one [the white race] and the helplessness of the other [the black race], kept him hovering alone in the twilight a great sin has brought to over-shadow the whole land” (72). What Faith achieves is to

bring this marginalized man into the nation. Using her nursing power, she stalls and temporarily “resolves” the brotherly feuds between Robert and his half-brother, an act that clearly reflects Alcott’s authorial intent to perform the political work as a writer to come up with a solution to the divisions between blacks and whites and the North and the South. It is important that only through the maternal power of compassion and discipline can Faith accomplish this goal. After Faith successfully persuades Robert not to kill his white half-brother and then works out a future plan for him, Robert obeys her with “the docile look of a repentant child” (81). Even more revealingly, the parting gift that Faith gives Robert is a bible with a cover picture of Virgin Mother and Jesus Christ, an image suggestively implying the relationship between Faith and Robert. On the one hand, by saving the mixed race man who later joins the Union army to fight for the cause of national unification, Faith, the unorthodox old maid, symbolically becomes his mother and gives virgin birth to this newly enlisted national member. On the other hand, Robert, the marginal man, is reborn as a soldier—a role that is often idealized as the ultimate contribution to the nation. Just like Claudia and Paul, through each other Faith and Robert find a legitimate place in the U.S. national household.

More than that, in the story, Faith as a Union nurse also becomes a mother figure to all the wounded soldiers from the North. Her power indicates the important role played by Northern white women, especially the unorthodox ones, in solving the problems of sectional conflicts, racial division, and the national crisis in Alcott’s imagination. Through the figure of Faith, Alcott declares to the U.S. public that although a self-reliant spinster has neither husband nor children, she can still contribute to the nation in need, and can become a republican mother by disciplining the racialized other. The change of

the title from “The Brothers” to “My Contraband,” just as Elbert has pointed out in her introduction to Louisa May Alcott on Race, Sex, and Slavery, is indicative in itself (xli). While “The Brothers” can mean both the blood relationship between Robert and his white brother and the brotherhood between men of color and white men, “My Contraband” highlights the white woman’s adoption and ownership of the racialized man and, in extension, her ability to create a new kind of national manhood and brotherhood through this adoption. In Alcott’s blueprint, it is through the redemptive power of Northern white womanhood that both the mutilated bodies of white soldiers and the abused bodies of racialized ex-slaves can be healed and redeemed. It is also through Faith’s abolitionist vision infused with sentiments and compassion that men of color and white men can finally become equalized in some way, a point exemplified by her exclamation after she knows of Robert’s pitiful story: “How many white men, with all New England’s freedom, culture, Christianity, would not have felt as he [Robert] felt then?” (79). Resorting to common human compassion, the central motif highlighted in the tradition of sentimental writing such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Alcott adopts her heroine’s voice to argue for abolitionist causes. Black and white, she reasons, are not that different; and this is the lesson that the Northern white woman passes on.

From Moods we know that after the war, Faith will temporarily settle in a cottage which in the future will become the shelter for the impulsive, topsy-turvy heroine Sylvia in Moods, a place where Faith will offer Sylvia a wholesome home life and maternal instructions. This turn of events again testifies to Faith’s maternal capabilities to nurture and cultivate as well as to discipline. Just as Kaplan has argued in her discussion of Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s blueprint of establishing “Christian

neighborhoods” (communities settled primarily by women as a way of Christianizing and Americanizing immigrants): “Domesticity’s imperial reach allows the woman’s sphere to include not only the heathen but also the unmarried Euro-American woman, who can be freed from biological reproduction to rule her own maternal empire” (“Manifest” 32). Although Faith does not give birth to children or start a family in a conventional sense, through “domesticity’s imperial reach” she can still set up “her own maternal empire,” and become a mother by disciplining deviant, marginal, and “heathen” others and leading them into the route of normalcy.

In sum, Claudia and Faith, both more or less abnormal in the beginning, become eligible republican mothers in the end. Both of them find a way to join the national household: in Claudia’s case it is through marriage, and in Faith’s case it is through the symbolic adoption of “deviant” or “heathen” children. Their cases show that there are ways for unorthodox Northern white women to become republican mothers and serve national interests. By assimilating the racialized other, the white woman gains a say in the construction of national values; whereas she helps the racialized man enter into the national home, she also recreates herself as an active participant in reconstructing the nation in the face of the intensifying crisis of national sectionalism. Although she does not literally fight on the battlefield, the white woman in Alcott’s blueprint proves to be an indispensable part in reimagining a better future for the nation undergoing the Civil War.¹¹ Just as Lyde Cullen Sizer has argued about the political work that white women

¹¹ In fact, images of the battlefield suffuse representations of domesticity in both the narratives, a fact further testifying to the connection among white women, the Civil War, and national ideologies, and to the tenuous demarcation line between private/public and domestic/political. Faith participates in the national battle between the North and the South by serving as a nurse. As for Claudia, after she decides to marry Paul in spite of all, she feels that “the still room” becomes “the battle-field of a viewless conflict between man’s law, and woman’s love” (23). The domestic household, supposedly a woman’s private sphere, is

writers performed during the Civil War, this war was “a time when middle-class women came to believe that they had an acknowledged stake in a national ordeal of overwhelming importance, a personal stake in national politics” (4). Thanks to the war, there emerged a new vision of white middle-class woman’s possible roles in society, roles proving to be indispensable to the nation in crisis.¹² All in all, the Civil War, along with the abolitionist movement preceding it, becomes the catalyst for Alcott to reimagine the Northern white woman’s power and authority, and her portrayal of Claudia and Faith testifies to this.

Indispensable as the woman’s roles might be, this disciplinary project delineated by Alcott turns out to be problematic; that is, whereas the female protagonists in their new roles can get involved in national issues such as abolitionist undertakings, the stories are still suffused with nineteenth-century white supremacist ideas and fears of racial contamination.¹³ The ultimate problem, I would argue, lies in the fact that the disciplinary project of domestication is not only used to discipline the racialized other, but also targets the white woman, the supposed discipliner. Just as Kaplan has contended,

transformed into a battlefield, supposedly a man’s public sphere. Claudia further imagines herself to be a knight who yearns for a good fight: “As young knights watched their arms of old in chapels haunted by the memory of warrior or saint, and came forth eager for heroic deeds, so Claudia in the early dawn braced on the armor consecrated by a night of prayerful vigil...” (23).

¹² As for women’s changing roles during and after the Civil War, see Drew Gilpin Faust, “‘Ours as well as that of Men’: Women and Gender in the Civil War”; Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds, Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War and Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War. Also see Young’s argument about how Alcott’s writing “provides insight into the possibilities, metaphoric as well as literal, the Civil War afforded women for rebellion,” especially in terms of how masculine identification has armed women with agency (78-79).

¹³ See Elise Lemire, Miscegenation: Making Race in America. According to her, “by the time of the Civil War, it was widely believed that race was a biological difference in the blood and that inter-racial sex was therefore a violation of what one scientist termed ‘the natural repugnance between individuals of different kinds’” (8). Also see Reginald Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny; Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color; Ronald Takaki, Iron Cages.

“the imperial reach of domesticity extended not only to racially foreign subjects inside and outside the home, but also to the interiority of female subjectivity” (“Manifest” 43). In this light, the abolitionist white woman, the discipliner who aspires to delineate a new kind of nation, is also the disciplined who could be forced to uphold the existing order and to “purify” the possible traces of deviancy and unruliness within herself. This is the dilemma that Alcott’s white woman faces: with one foot mired in the existing order, one foot heading toward something braver and newer, she cannot properly carry out her disciplinary project of remolding national values.

In Disarming the Nation, Elizabeth Young uses the contrasting ideas of carnival and discipline to explicate the problem with the white woman’s disciplinary project delineated in Alcott’s works. According to Young, “In narrating the split female psychic, Alcott celebrates the pleasures of carnivalesque inversion; yet in addressing the divided nation, she foregrounds the uses of disciplinary order” (72); that is, there is a double-edged force in both Alcott’s self-representations and her representations of her female characters: subverting as well as (self-)regulating. I will argue that one can further designate this double-edged force in terms of gender and race. On the one hand, in terms of gender subversion, unorthodox white women can engage in rebellions against normative femininity, enjoy carnivalesque pleasures by deviating from the norm, and explore non-domestic arenas by upholding abolitionist causes or assimilating racialized men—just as Claudia, Faith, and Alcott herself do. Yet on the other hand, in terms of the issue of racial equality their project has limitations, since the threat that foreign or racialized others pose eventually still needs to be contained in the name of the white supremacist nation, and this in the end comprises the subversive power of the project.

Since the white women's non-conformity and their challenges to the existing order only go so far, "the primary weapon of national transformation—female discipline," just as Young have argued, "all too easily rebounds upon women themselves" (72). To conclude, Alcott, by whitewashing and romanticizing her racialized characters, compromises the subversiveness of her abolitionist project of sanctioning interracial love and criticizing nineteenth-century U.S. racism.

Young's argument is worth further surveying. First she looks at how the contradictory double forces of the domestic discourses work on Alcott's own representations, and maintains that Alcott's topsyturviness is exemplified not only by her identification with masculinity (she wanted to be a man who could fight on the battlefield just as her heroine Jo does), but also by her identification with the racialized other (she once in a letter called herself "the brown woman" as well as "a crass crying brown baby" whose topsyturviness needed to be put in check; she also remarked to a childhood friend that she resembled "a stout mulatto lady" in photographs) (Young 79-80). Young concludes that this kind of metaphorical identification with racialized others is inseparable from "white women's self-representation, as objects of civility as well as civilizing agents" (80). In other words, by adopting racial masquerade to represent herself, Alcott ambivalently engages in carnivalesque inversion while putting herself in the position of the disciplined; that is, as a white woman who metaphorically identifies with the racialized other and uses racialized symbols to project her deviancy, she practices subversion and self-discipline simultaneously.

However, this "metaphorical" identification with the racialized entails incongruence, because Alcott, after all, is not a racialized other, and also because there is a huge

difference between the white woman's self-discipline and the racialized other's being disciplined. Young has convincingly argued that the fact that Alcott identifies herself with brownness rather than blackness suggests that she puts herself in "a liminal position in which her whiteness is energized by, rather than wholly transformed into, blackness" (80). Brownness situates Alcott in a safe liminal place where she can criticize (white) dominant ideologies yet remain being white at the same time, where she can use the idea of racialized otherness to implicate her own deviancy without experiencing being materially situated as a black racialized body. Judging from this, Alcott's identification with racialized people as well as her topsyturviness is limited. Just as Young has contended, "Alcott constructs African American characters as a site of psychic release, a screen on which she can project her own unruly desires while safely displacing them elsewhere" (82). In other words, since they are both "deviant" others, Alcott can project her topsyturviness onto racialized others by masquerading as one of them—without engaging in their "deviancy" herself. Her position as the disciplined is intrinsically different from that of the racialized other.

In a similar vein, Young has pointed out the problem with the maternal leadership of Faith Dane. Whereas her relationship with Robert is not only a disciplinary one in which he accepts her guidance but also has potential to become an erotic, and therefore subversive, one, Alcott immediately turns to describe the ghastly scar on Robert's face and his submissive attitude toward "the mistress" in order to snip the possible interracial romance in the bud. I would argue that even though the interracial romance in "M.L." finally leads to a happy marriage, Paul, after all, lives his life as a slave in Cuba, not in the United States; furthermore, Paul's attraction to Claudia is mainly spiritual. Just as

Elise Lemire has observed in “Miscegenation”: Making Race in America, Alcott “almost completely evacuates Paul Frere’s body from her text” (139). She avoids portraying Paul’s physical body and keeps their attraction to each other as spiritual as possible. The only part of Paul’s racialized body that does appear in the story is his disfigured hand, which testifies more to the cruelty of slavery than to the materiality of his body. To conclude, although the texts advocate abolitionist ideals and try to take in the mix-raced others, Alcott’s vision has limitations, as shown by Paul’s dematerialized body and Robert’s impossible romance with Faith as well as their highly romanticized semi-white appearance. Her blueprint of a new nation guided by female leadership is a fantasy centered on whiteness, not built upon racial equality. Just as Young has said, “Alcott’s fictional nation serves more to revitalize white women than to admit black bodies, male or female, into the national body politic” (107). The materiality of the racialized body proves to be the insurmountable obstacle in Alcott’s seemingly liberating project of the Northern white woman.

One can use the dichotomy of the sentimental and the sensational to look at the ambiguous absence/presence of the racialized body in Alcott’s antislavery narratives. Summarizing Elmer’s analysis, Streeby has asserted that “sentimentalism generally emphasizes refinement and transcendence, whereas sensationalism emphasizes materiality and corporeality, even or especially to the point of thrilling and horrifying readers” (31; my emphasis). I will argue that Alcott’s antislavery works correspond with this description; in these texts, the sentimental project of disciplinary intimacy falls short of its goal, since a sensational moment of terror, a possible glimpse of “materiality and corporeality,” keeps emerging within the darkness, a moment embodied by the female

protagonists' face-to-face encounters with the material bodies of the racialized. Under the guidelines of the nineteenth-century disciplinary project and racial policies, the only acceptable relationship between the white woman and the racialized other should be one of spirituality: the one showing compassion and the one receiving it; the one bestowing acceptance and the one receiving it; the savior and the saved; the discipliner and the disciplined; the missionary and the savage. However, sensational undercurrents break loose and disturb this tenuous balance when the attractive, whitewashed, de-racialized body of the mixed race character becomes racialized again.

In "My Contraband," this is the moment when Faith first becomes aware of the ghastly wound on Robert's face and his slavish demeanor, the moment when one inadvertently perceives the "absent presence" of the unseen, unspoken, unspeakable racialized body behind the seemingly de-racialized, attractive façade of the ex-slave. Although this moment passes quickly, it hovers over the entire story, foreshadowing the im/possibility of the romance between them. In "M.L.," whereas Paul is whitewashed and his physical body is almost evacuated from the text, the materiality of the racialized black body still haunts the end of the story through "the little heads" that Claudia gently caresses—they are the mixed race children of Claudia and Paul, the future citizens of the new national household that Alcott envisions, but what do they look like? What's their color? These questions become the haunting shadows in "M.L." that Alcott evades addressing. In the end, all the im/possible sensational moments remind one of how problematic the role of the white woman as the executor of the disciplinary project can be. The sentimental power of the white woman in Alcott's stories, as (self-)regulating as it may be, cannot deal with the sensational moment of unexpectedness and uncertainty. In

other words, even though the progressive abolitionist white women in Alcott's fictional world can successfully discipline and assimilate the racialized other and thus reimagine a new set of national ideologies, their as well as Alcott's efforts do not result in a picture of true racial equality. The progressive abolitionist message of the texts cannot mask the regressive fact that the bodies of the mixed race protagonists are deliberately whitewashed, de-racialized, and dematerialized.

The Problematic Rewriting of National Manhood

I would like to turn to look at how this double-edged force of the disciplinary project affects the goal of the rewriting of national manhood, a rewriting that is closely related to disciplining the racialized other. First, I want to turn to Dana Nelson to examine how the idea of "national manhood" was being molded, challenged, and negotiated during the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. Concentrating on the early national and antebellum period from the 1780s to 1850s, Nelson in National Manhood has emphasized the antidemocratic nature of the structure of national manhood. According to her, the abstracting of white national manhood orients local manhoods toward a unified, homogenous national ideal, and entails "a series of affective foreclosures that block those men's more heterogeneous democratic identifications and energies" (ix). As a result, the white man must engage in constant self-scrutiny and self-management in order to suppress his own differences and fulfill the national ideal of sameness; and ultimately his ability to model this ideal in his own person would testify to his very eligibility for national citizenship.

Nelson further explicates that this construction of national manhood had everything

to do with the professional management of the private sphere by professional middle-class men; thus she also calls it professional or managerial manhood, stating that “the antebellum period” can be seen as “one when national manhood braced itself in the mantle of professional authority, its sanction fueling the formation of a new, managerial middle class” (133). What is intriguing is that Nelson claims that this professional national manhood can be understood, at least in part, as “a countermove to women’s power on behalf of white manhood” (15); that is, during a time when white women were “testing new theories of public action, voice, and power,” the fact that white middle-class men emerged as professional managers itself can be viewed as a defensive response to this growing female power. Moreover, this move situated itself not only against white women but also against a general Otherness: “This exercise came over and against an ever-expanding arena of Otherness: women, nonwhites, the primitive/poor, the insane, criminals, laborers” (15). Nelson characterizes this method through which national manhood gains its stability as “altero-referentiality”: “the commanding Self seeks stability...through imagined and actual excavations of multiple others” (17). According to her, “If national manhood ‘hailed’ white men into an impossible discipline of self-division, the altero-referentiality of that standpoint provided a safety valve: they could reach for a sense of self-sameness through fraternal and managerial projections of self-division/fragmentation onto democracy’s Others” (18). The nineteenth-century national “interpellation” of white manhood was inseparable from the construction of its enemies and opposites—the multiple others.¹⁴ In this light, both white manhood and its others were unstably constructed since they were not unchanging, fixed entities; rather,

¹⁴ For my usage of “interpellation,” see Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation).”

they are mutually constitutive, altering their contours in response to one another.¹⁵

In her 2000 article, “Thoreau, Manhood, and Race,” Nelson further focuses on “non-whiteness” as the ultimate referential other for constructing white national manhood in the early Republic. Using both St. John de Crevecoeur’s Letters from an American Farmer (1782) and Royall Tyler’s The Contrast (1787) as examples, Nelson asserts that “there emerged a new correlation between manliness and whiteness,” that “American commonality was metaphorically conceptualized as whiteness” (69). This conceptualization of common American manhood as whiteness later underwent great challenges and transformation during the nineteenth century. For the purpose of my discussion, I will concentrate on the Civil War period, which follows right after the one that Nelson has covered in National Manhood, and on the African American’s dialogue with white national manhood. In LeeAnn Whites’ account, as the war went on and more and more black soldiers enlisted, the war “not only constituted a test of the Southern black slaves’ manhood, but it was also widely perceived by the Northern black community as a test and an opportunity for the establishment of their own manhood as well” (11); and the very reason why the North opposed the enlistment of African American men until late in 1862 is none other than the fact that “To take black men into the conflict was to acknowledge their manhood” (12). Moreover, by joining the war, African American men not only strove to prove their manhood but also fought for their eligibility to be a member of the nation (11). To sum up, this war between Northern and Southern men became an opportunity for African American men to demand full

¹⁵ As for white working-class manhood, see David Roediger and Eric Lott for their discussions of how nineteenth-century working-class whiteness was constructed in opposition to blackness and by staging blackness such as in the case of blackface minstrelsy.

membership in society and to gain a say in the reconstruction of national manhood.

Interestingly, Frederick Douglass, one of the ardent recruiters of black soldiers for the Union army, insisted that African American men fought “for principle, and not from passion,” that they secured “manhood and freedom via civilized warfare” (quoted from Cullen 81). So, in Douglass’s view, African Americans not only fought this national battle to prove their manhood to the whole country, but they also fought with principle and discipline, the opposite of beastly passions and incontinent impulses that African Americans were generally associated with in nineteenth-century America. This goal to uplift African Americans obviously corresponds with that of the disciplinary project of middle-class white womanhood. After all, the overall aim of Northern white women was none other than to discipline others and make them become suitable members of the domestic/national household whether the target was white children, white women themselves, immigrants, or people of color—even though this membership might be hierarchically distributed in terms of class, race, regions, gender, and age. To conclude, the adoption of white middle-class values, whether it was striving to gain a place in white national manhood or following the white woman’s disciplinary project, became the criterion to judge the African American’s eligibility to become a national subject as early as around the Civil War.¹⁶ Judging from this, the renarration of national manhood in the post-1850 years is inseparable from the inclusion of racialized others, and is closely related to discourses of disciplinary intimacy.

¹⁶ In discussing turn-of-the-century African American cultural discourses, Claudia Tate has likewise claimed that for African Americans, “the acquisition of their full citizenship would result as much or more from demonstrating their adoption of the “genteel standard of Victorian sexual conduct” as from protesting racial injustice” (4). Middle-class domestic values were regarded as indispensable to the acquirement of full citizenship and recognition by African American society.

Whereas Alcott's antislavery works exemplify how the disciplinary project of sentimentality could help to incorporate racialized others into the nation and thus to renarrate national manhood at the time of the national crisis, her version of the renarration of national manhood is closely related to feminization and sentimentalization. According to Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler in the introduction to Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture, although by the middle of the nineteenth century sentimentality, sympathy, and sensibility seemed to have become thoroughly feminized, sentimentality and masculinity are in fact "mutually constitutive discursive formations" (9). Alcott's works in general exemplify her belief in this kind of intertwining of sentimentality and masculinity as well as her high regard for a sentimentalized, feminized manhood. For instance, just as Young has asserted in her discussion of Hospital Sketches and the Little Women series, "Alcott...uses feminization to intervene in contemporary constructions of nationhood," and constructs "a body politics disciplined and led by white women" as well as a different type of sentimentalized man as exemplified by the feminized soldier (72). Streeby also has claimed that Alcott's model of ideal masculinity in "Pauline's Passion and Punishment" (as shown in Manuel, a Cuban man whose Southern features associate him with passions and savageness) "paradoxically involves a certain feminization" (36). Alcott's antislavery narratives can also be discussed in this light. In both "M.L." and "My Contraband," one can see a new manhood being molded against the traditional version of manhood, a new manhood that is more feminized and sentimentalized. If American masculinity, as Chapman and Hendler argue, has always been "constantly engaged in its own redefinition" (9), the feminized version that Alcott portrays can be viewed as part of this

incessant process of redefining.

Importantly, this new kind of sentimentalized, feminized manhood in Alcott's delineation is also a racialized and foreign one, even crisscrossed with Southern exotic images of passion and savageness. Take "M.L." for example, when Claudia first sets eyes upon Paul, the picture that immediately comes to her mind is a painting of a beautiful Southern tropical view in which violent images of things torn, robbed, and wrecked appear everywhere, whereas on the edge of the horizon "a thunderous cloud seemed rolling westward, and on the waves an ominous wreck swayed with the swaying of the treacherous sea" (5). This picture not only foreshadows the incoming storm that Jessie will arouse by forcing Paul to reveal his secret, but it also indicates something savage and horrifying is related to Paul's past. Yet as an unorthodox woman herself, Claudia does not feel alarmed or horrified; instead, she claims that on Paul's countenance "nature's hand had set the seal wherewith she stamps the manhood that no art can counterfeit" (5). She further compares this manhood to the more conventional kind of manhood that tends to prove its valor on the battlefield: "I respect him more for his kindness to neglected Mary Low, than if for a fairer woman he had fought as many battles as Saint George" (6). To Claudia, Paul has real manliness because he shows his reverence for womankind by treating some neglected lady in the party kindly. This is the new manhood that she endorses—a manhood of the heart, of kindness, and of sentimentality in contrast to the old manhood of chivalry and military valor; a racialized manhood that can be molded, touched, and saved by the white woman.

So, in contrast to the conventional white national manhood that consists of the professional management of the private sphere against "an over-expanding arena of

Otherness” such as women and nonwhites, Alcott reimagines a new kind of sentimentalized manhood of the racialized man in which the female sphere of love and affection is held in high esteem, in which the white woman serves as a highly respected savior/discipliner rather than some damsel in distress waiting to be saved by a gallant knight. Moreover, by doing so, Alcott makes the white woman and the man of color symbolically become the founding mother and father of the new nation. Paul’s description of how he has left his homeland, Cuba, is reminiscent of the U.S. national mythology of the pilgrims who left Britain in search of a new kingdom: “[Paul] left the island and went to and fro seeking for my place upon the earth” (19). And in the end he does find his place as well as a new home and a new country, all through Claudia’s love and acceptance. In this sense, “M.L.” implies that to establish a new kind of national manhood and a different set of national ideologies, one must incorporate new blood such as immigrants and disfranchised African Americans.¹⁷ Although Alcott’s vision smacks of romantic idealization and her delineation of the man of color is exotic rather than realistic, “M.L.” at least presents a more progressive take on interracial relationships in contrast to the stigmatized image of miscegenation generally presented in the nineteenth century, also in comparison to Alcott’s other antislavery stories, and possibly her other works as well.¹⁸

¹⁷ This views can be seen as the exact opposite to those of a good deal of sensational writers around the same period. For example, in Streeby’s description, Mary Denison, a popular dime novel writer, “implies that contact with the foreign actually threatens to weaken U.S. manhood” (244). In face of the contact with the racialized or the foreign other, Denison chooses to view it as a threat to weaken U.S. white manhood, whereas Alcott chooses to interpret it as a chance to create a different kind of national manhood—more sentimental and multi-racial.

¹⁸ The interracial relationships in both “My Contraband” and “An Hour” do not end in happy unions. The betrothal between the Chinese Fun See (a Chinese student who comes to the U.S. for study) and the Caucasian Annabel Bliss in the children’s literature *Rose in Bloom* (1876) loses its supposed progressive implication because of the prejudiced, racist portrayal of Fun See, who is gradually Americanized but whose pigeon accent and funny outlook always make him an object of humor and ridicule.

Faith similarly cultivates a racialized manhood built upon sentimentality and compassion. She stops Robert from murdering his white half-brother by resorting to a common sentimental trope, that is, to Robert's love for his dead wife and to the woman's persuasive power: "Thank Heaven for the immortality of love for when all other means of salvation failed, a spark of this vital fire softened the man's iron will, until a woman's hand could bend it" (81). This is a manhood that can be touched and bent by love and sentiments, saved and cultivated by the white woman. Moreover, this manhood belongs to one who has no paternal name and chooses to use a woman's last name to join the battle fighting for national unity. Whereas Robert proves that the "manhood of the colored race" is good enough for the nation at war (83), his brand-new status as a white woman's new-born "son" shows how important the sentimental power of the white woman is in renegotiating and revitalizing national manhood.

Yet this version of the sentimentalized, feminized "manhood of the colored race," in Alcott's description, results in a rather ambiguous rewriting of national manhood. For one thing, "My Contraband" presents an uncertain, hesitant attitude toward this group of new national subjects. When Faith comes down to nurse the wounded soldiers from the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the first major black American military unit, she highlights her feeling of alienation at seeing the wounded black men (the materiality of the "real" racialized body), people she calls "our boys" just a moment ago: "The scene was most familiar, and yet strange; for only dark faces looked up at me from

Although the 1867 thriller "Taming a Tartar" does end in the conjugal bond between the Russian prince Alexis and the English heroine Sybil, their relationship is deeply implicated in the logic of the master-slave dichotomy, through which the independent, semi-feminist Sybil finally successfully "enslaves" the quasi-savage Russian prince. Even the Spanish-looking sensational heroes and heroines, who may loosely be categorized as quasi-racialized others since Alcott always uses the trope of "handsome Spaniards or Southern Europeans" to implicate racial blackness, more often than not cannot live happily ever after with their objects of love or lust.

the pallets so thickly laid along the floor, and I missed the sharp accent of my Yankee boys..." (83; my emphasis).¹⁹ This feeling of unfamiliarity is entailed by getting in touch with the corporeal materiality of the black body, an effect similar to the sensational moment of horror, shock and revulsion erupting from within the sentimental in Elmer's description. What this moment discloses is that in Alcott's fictional world, the black soldiers are simply "our" boys: abstract, idealized new-born national subjects; they are not "my" boys: somebody one can feel truly, intimately related to on a personal level. There will still be a long road for the black subjects to transform from "our" boys into "my" boys, a point well illustrated by the dire situation that African Americans faced during Reconstruction and Post-reconstruction years. Besides, they are, after all, infantilized "boys," who need guidance and discipline from their republican Northern white mothers such as Faith Dane. In this sense, the relationship between the new male members of the nation and the white woman is anything but one of equality. Nineteenth-century abolitionism was, after all, still underwritten by racist ideologies; accordingly, no matter how progressive her disciplinary project was, the white woman, including the writer herself, was still implicated in the racist and patriarchal discourses of her time. Even though Alcott called herself "a friend to the colored race" (428), and

¹⁹ In a November 1862 letter to Col. T. W. Higginson, Alcott stated that the phrase "The hospital ship & the row of dusky faces" was taken from Frances Dana Barker Gage's letter, in which the abolitionist activist described her interview with the black soldiers who survived the Battle of Fort Wagner (*Letters*). Although it is not clear whether this "strange" feeling was Gage's or was simply made up by Alcott herself, Gage, as an abolitionist and a reformer, shared a lot of similarities with Alcott; therefore, it is possible to claim that this feeling of alienation and strangeness is a common one for Northern abolitionist white women in general. Even though they upheld abolitionist ideals, many of them still harbored racist thoughts.

Probably in response to Higginson's critique of some unrealistic aspects of "My Contraband," Alcott admitted that she did not accurately describe Robert's accent, and might have gotten some details about the hospital and the black soldiers wrong. In this sense, this scene is not only "strange" to the bewildered Faith, but it is also "strange" in itself; instead of a realistic report, it is more like a work of imagination tainted with the abolitionist white woman's arbitrary judgment and possibly racist prejudices.

stated in a November 12th 1862 letter that she “should like of all things to go South & help the blacks” (188), her portrayal of black soldiers and mix-raced men reflects the stereotypical racist view of her time.²⁰

One can observe the problems with this “infantilized manhood” from an earlier incident in which Faith gives Robert a bible with a picture of Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus Christ on the cover, a picture obviously implicating the relationship between the white woman and the ex-slave. The fact that Robert is compared to Jesus Christ, a martyr nailed down to the crucifix for the sin of mankind, not only presages his own eventual martyrdom, but it may also indicate the limitations of the white woman’s mission of assimilating the racialized other into the national home. Since Robert dies on the battlefield, his membership as a Union soldier and a national subject is rather short-lived. Besides, in his point of view, it is for Faith Dane that he fights: “I’ll fight fer yer till I’m killed” (83); he does not fight for the country or for the sake of national unification as a self-conscious national subject. Robert’s first word when he sees the picture of the “Virgin Mother and the Child” is illuminating: “I never saw my baby, Missis” (82). Unlike Paul, who is enslaved in Cuba rather than in the United States, the U.S. contraband Robert cannot have a child and become a father in the U.S. national household. Instead, he can only have a white mother and become her child to be disciplined by her and fight for her; he has no intention of fighting for the country and has no part to play in cultivating future generations for the nation. My contention is that because Robert is a “U.S.” ex-slave, the storyline of “My Contraband” may seem too

²⁰ The first quote comes from Alcott’s 1888 article, “Recollections of My Childhood.” The second quote comes from Madeleine B. Stern, “Louisa Alcott’s Self-Criticism,” Louisa May Alcott: From Blood & Thunder to Hearth & Home.

sensitively close to the dilemmas that the nation encountered around the Civil War period; accordingly, Robert not only cannot serve as a lover/husband to the white woman or a father to the future nationals, but he also has to die in order to avoid further complications. He must first be infantilized (in order to be a son, not a husband, to the white woman), and then be killed—all in the name of the Father. Robert's eventual fate proves how tenuously constructed this new sentimentalized, racialized national manhood is, and how easily it can fall apart at any given moment.

Racialized Manhood, Double-Sided Spanishness, and the Black Legend

Another problem of this rewriting of manhood is that both Paul and Robert as mixed-race men could easily be taken to be white and thus are described as attractive in appearance, a fact that may testify to Alcott's inability or unwillingness to link blackness with attractiveness and to construct a genuinely more multiracial national manhood. While Alcott's general portrayal of the mixed race men is romantic rather than realistic, the most problematic part is that Alcott tends to use the idea of "Spanishness" to articulate this attractive, "whitewashed" manhood of the racialized man.²¹ It almost seems like there are two different types of the racialized other functioning in the texts, and that one serves to rewrite the threat that the other poses to the national body of the U.S. On the one hand, there is the racialized slave type, the repulsive, dangerous, and savage black other; on the other hand, there is the romanticized Spaniard type, the exotic, attractive, racially ambiguous other, who has a dark look but is generally assumed to be

²¹ Alcott herself was somewhat aware of the unrealistic aspect of her portrayal of the mixed-race character. In her November 12th 1862 letter to Col. Higginson that I just quoted, she admitted that Robert "did not talk as he should" since she "had no time to study the genuine dialect" (188).

white. Combining these two images together in the mixed-race characters, Alcott manages to make racialized manhood attractive rather than downright repulsive (although sometimes it can still be savage and horrifying), and thus she tries to dodge the problem of miscegenation as well as nineteenth-century people's general abhorrence of it while celebrating her abolitionist vision. Her method, however, cannot really solve the dilemma concerning slavery and black/white racial tensions; these questions may temporarily be stalled, but are still lurking somewhere and waiting to resurface. If, as Horsman has described, "by 1850 the natural inequality of races was a scientific fact which was published widely" and "in the second half of the century formed part of the accepted truth of America's schoolbooks," Alcott's antislavery works, with all their good intentions and honorable goals, cannot escape from the contemporary myth (156-57).

I want to illustrate Alcott's representation of this racist myth by further explicating the trope of "Spanish masking/displacement" used by her, and by going through some ideas about Spanishness in terms of Alcott's individual history and in terms of the general perception of Spanishness in the nineteenth-century U.S. In both stories, Alcott masks the mixed race ex-slaves as "attractive" Spaniards. Paul, son of a Cuban planter father and a quadroon slave mother, bears attractive Spanish features; in Jessie's words, "This man...is a Spaniard"; "he is a handsome soul"; "the dark man with the melancholy eyes" (4, 5). Interestingly, when Jessie finds out the truth about Paul's lineage, he immediately ceases being attractive, and in fact even becomes some abhorrent being that one needs to get away from. Jessie's reaction epitomizes people's general abhorrence of miscegenation around this period, as shown by the rejection by Claudia's racist friends of this interracial couple after they become aware of Paul's racial identity. The ideal ending in which

Claudia and Paul find acceptance and friendship in a Utopia-like community cannot erase the fact that other people outside this little circle still find the idea of interracial relationships repulsive. Paul, even if putting on an attractive Spanish mask, is still a hideous, inferior man of color from most people's viewpoints.

The trope of masking/displacement in "M.L." also holds true in terms of location. In regard to the fact that "M.L." obviously carries strong abolitionist messages targeted at U.S. Northern readers, it is curious why Alcott chose to make Paul a "Cuban" ex-slave. I will argue that possibly by masking the U.S. as Cuba, the home as the foreign, Alcott attempted to play down the controversial issues of miscegenation and interracial love; that is, it might be safer for her to set the story in Cuba so that she could avoid harsh criticisms. Besides, one needs to take into account the fact that Cuba served as an integral part in the U.S. Southern blueprint of building a Caribbean empire that gained popularity significantly in the South after the U.S.-Mexican War and during the 1850s.²² Since Alcott, as a Northern abolitionist, must be against the idea of a Southern empire predicated upon slavery, she, by critiquing slavery in Cuba, was also indirectly critiquing slavery in general and U.S. Southern slavery in particular. Judging from that, it is politically significant that the ex-slave Paul finally finds his new identity, home, and country here in the United States, an ending that aptly illustrates Alcott's political revisioning of an abolitionist nation willing to embrace men of color as its nationals.

In this sense, Alcott's geographical displacement of the U.S. with Cuba not only connects slavery in Cuba with slavery at home, it also reminds one of the importance of reconsidering U.S. slavery in connection to slavery across the Americas and in relation to

²² See Robert E. May for a discussion of the importance of Cuba in the Southern dream of a Caribbean empire before the Civil War.

other forms of inter-American encounters and conflicts. This argument corresponds with one of Streeby's central theses in American Sensations that "class and racial formations and popular and mass culture in Northeastern U.S. cities are inextricable from scenes of empire-building in the U.S. West, Mexico, and the Americas" (15). As Alcott's antislavery narratives are closely interrelated with her more sensational literary production in terms of themes and characterization, they fit in with this description. Therefore, one should not only think about the exotic choice of location, such as Cuba in "M.L." and the mysterious island in "An Hour," in this inter-American light, but one should also reposition Alcott's representation of the Spanish-looking ex-slaves (as well as some of her sensational heroines and heroes) in connection with nineteenth-century general perceptions about Spanishness and about the "Spaniards" (particularly Mexicans) in Central and South America.

Whereas the racialized slave and the attractive Spaniard at least kind of reach a tenuous balance and result in a happy inter-racial couple in "M.L.," "My Contraband" puts into the spotlight the lingering effects of the "repulsive" slave side. Robert, just like Paul, is "more quadroon than mulatto, with Saxon features, Spanish complexion darkened by exposure, color in lips and cheek, waving hair, and an eye full of the passionate melancholy..." (71). At first, Faith, who cannot see Robert's full profile at the time, finds him attractive, and decides to comfort him as a friend. But once he turns around, exposes his ghastly scar on the face, and addresses her with an obsequious "Yes, Missis," all the romance surrounding him dies away: "not only did the manhood seem to die out of him, but the comeliness that first attracted me [Faith]" (71). As Robert transforms from an attractive "Spanish" stranger to an obedient "black" slave, Faith

similarly adjusts her position from that of a “friend” to that of a “mistress.” To sum up, although Alcott lets the ex-slave put on a “Spanish” mask to make him look attractive and become more like “one of us,” the ensuing sexual attraction as well as the possible romance between Faith and Robert must be nipped in the bud to dissipate the shadow of miscegenation—especially because “My Contraband” is entirely set in the U.S. during the Civil War rather than some foreign country such as Cuba. According to Elise Lemire, during and after the Civil War, miscegenation was used to “mark a violation both of Nature, because of the presumed blood or species differences between blacks and whites, and of good taste, insofar as blacks were deemed unattractive and foul-smelling” (8). Accordingly, in writing “My Contraband,” Alcott needed to handle the issue of miscegenation carefully so as not to defy the “rule of Nature” or offend the general “good taste” of people. And here she achieves this goal by shifting focus from Robert’s attractive Spanish features to his slavish, infantilized aspect.

The “repulsive” racialized slave side also surfaces in the form of violence and savagery, a point corresponding to the nineteenth-century myth that blacks are beastly and thus are capable of violent behavior. Both stories describe this animal-like, semi-savage, and dangerous aspect of the mixed race man. When Jessie discloses Paul’s secret, he looks like “a hunted creature, driven to bay”; “had not his opponent been a woman some swift retribution would have fallen on her, for there was murder in his fiery blood” (15). Here Paul is portrayed as a haunted animal, which, if driven by desperation, is fully capable of doing harm since this “natural” tendency is in his blood. After all, “his Southern temperament” is “more keenly alive to subtle influences than colder natures” (13); thus he is more easily aroused, affected, and even angered to the point of

committing murder. Since the “Southern temperament” not only alludes to Paul’s Cuban lineage but also refers to his “Spanish” complexion, Spanishness in Alcott’s delineation, attractive as it may seem, bears traces of impulsiveness, violence, and even savageness.

Whereas Paul already has many noble, “civilized” traits even before he meets Claudia, Robert is portrayed as less “civilized.” Paul does not put into practice his intent of murder, but Robert does, and he would have succeeded in consummating this “violent,” “savage” act if not for Faith’s interference. Nevertheless, the possibility that racialized others could commit violence, murder white men, and copulate with white women still lingers in the text. In order to prevent this from happening, Alcott must find a way to keep Robert in check, and her answer is to send him to the army, the ultimate emblem of national loyalty. Just as Young has argued, “the translation of Robert’s violent impulses into his bravery as a soldier controls the specter of armed black violence within the structured confines of the army...this same aggression is sanctioned in the name of national struggle” (97). Because Robert joins the Union army, the text can at least temporarily stall the problem by channeling Robert’s “violent” impulses into the battlefield, and by refiguring the combat between men of color and white men as that between the North and the South, unification and separation, and antislavery and pro-slavery agendas. This is also why the Fifty-Fourth black regiment can fight and kill (Southern) white men, that is, in the name of the Union Army and national unification. Moreover, to keep the possible violence of racialized manhood in check, Alcott even goes to the other extreme by “infantilizing” it. Robert and one black soldier who befriends him are portrayed as childlike, obedient, and willing to be disciplined by the white woman Faith. Yet ultimately the only way to put all the ghosts (such as interracial romance and

black violence) to rest is to kill Robert off. The racialized body of the mixed race man, even though it is romanticized, hispanized, institutionalized, and infantilized, still suggests possibilities of violence and miscegenation, and thus is too dangerous to leave aside. All in all, even though Alcott strives to make her mixed race characters noble and attractive in order to controvert some aspects of the general myth concerning blacks (such as that black people are ugly, foul-smelling, and lacking in morals and integrity), she still follows contemporary racial stereotypes and portrays Paul and Robert as impulsive, violent, and in need of discipline. In this sense, their Spanish masks, no matter how beautiful and attractive they are, still bear traces of violence and savagery. To conclude, in Alcott's imagination, the dangerous slave type and the attractive Spaniard type juxtapose and entangle with each other intricately in the body of the racialized other.

One can trace this entanglement partly to the enduring myth of the "Black Legend," a myth centered around an evil, mixed-blood, and inferior Spain. According to George Mariscal in "The Role of Spain in Contemporary Race Theory," the Black Legend refers to "European writings that since the 1550s have cast Spain as the cruel, arrogant, irrational Southern neighbor of the continent" (7); later the myth migrated to the Americas with European imperialists, who painted Spain as the least "European" of Europe's nations: a barbaric, evil, degenerate Spain (8).²³ In other words, "The representation of Mexicans and Spaniards as 'inferior' mixed breeds" in the nineteenth-century U.S. in fact "echoes the eighteenth-century portrayals of Spain as

²³ As for the negative description of Spaniards, besides *Retamar*, *Mariscal*, and *Gibson*, see David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* and Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita's introduction to *The Squatter and the Don* for their take on Levin's argument: "Levin finds that American heroes in United States history were always portrayed as energetic, kind-hearted, moral, virtuous Protestants in opposition to the Spanish, Catholic villains presented as being greedy, despotic, lazy, cruel, treacherous and immoral" (9). Also see *Retamar* and *Gibson*.

insufficiently European” and “harkens back to sixteenth-century anti-Spanish discourse”—myths concerning the Black Legend, in a word (Mariscal 19). Yet on the other hand, there was also a less prominent myth of the White Legend of Spain, in which Spain was not viewed as a rapacious conqueror, but was rather portrayed as a “humanitarian and Christian friar” (Gibson 7). Judging from this, Spain appeared to be “an inherent dialectic of opposites,” an ambiguous signifier par excellence (Gibson 15). Furthermore, Spain was also ambiguous in terms of race and culture. In “Against the Black Legend,” Roberto Fernandez Retamar, quoting several historians, claims that because Spain was geographically and culturally a point of convergence for Christians, Moors, Jews, Muslims, Arabians, and Africans, some believed that Spain ceased to be European, and instead acted as a link between the East and the West, as an ambiguous site through which different, even contradictory, meanings were projected and negotiated (63-65). This ambiguous linkage between Spain and non-European, non-white cultures and countries, according to Retamar, has also associated the Black Legend of Spain with diverse forms of racism; that is, being viewed as Spaniards not only amounts to being degenerate and evil, but it could also implicate one with non-European, non-white cultures such as African blacks, and thus make one turn into the object of racist prejudice. Horsman has similarly argued that in the nineteenth century some deemed that Southern Europeans and, in general, people with darker skins were racially closer to blacks on the false assumption that it was easier for them to produce fertile offspring with blacks than for “purer” white races (154). In sum, the Black Legend was not only about projecting an arrogant, evil Spain, but it can also be about imagining a dark, racialized, and even Africanized Spain.

Whereas Spaniards can be blackened and Africanized, light-skinned blacks such as mixed-race descendants between whites and blacks can also be portrayed as exotic Spaniards or Southern Europeans during the nineteenth century, especially in novels. For example, Betsy Klimasmith, using Uncle Tom's Cabin, Passing, and several of Alcott's works as examples, has pointed out the close link between blacks and Southern Europeans in literary presentation: "In nineteenth and early twentieth-century fiction, light-skinned blacks often passed as people of Spanish, Greek, or other Mediterranean ancestry" (118). All in all, all these assumptions and imagery concerning Spanishness reflect the ambiguous nature of this term in nineteenth-century America, showing how easily this idea can be associated with blackness and savageness as well as with attractiveness and exoticism. One can even view Spanishness as a whitened alternative to blackness and brownness, serving as a cautionary reminder about the problem with using only a black/white binary model to interpret nineteenth-century works, about the importance of adding an inter-American, transnational perspective into the discussion.²⁴

Judging from all these facts, Alcott, in using the idea of Spanishness to portray her mixed race characters, was in fact following the contemporary tradition of connecting Spanishness with racial, cultural, and geographical ambiguities. Yet Alcott generally refrains from delineating the Spanish-looking other as ultimately evil. In her works, Spanishness may equal passions, impulsiveness, tempers, and sometimes even violence and savageness, but it is never downright degenerate or total evil. By doing so, Alcott more or less embarks on the task of rewriting the negative aspects of Spanishness. Just

²⁴ This point is indebted to Streeby's caution against the danger of using only a binary black/white model and marginalizing "issues of empire and inter-American conflicts" in discussing the reformation of working-class whiteness in the antebellum years (13).

like Streeby has said in discussing “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment,” whereas Spanish blood is usually associated with “degradation and pollution” in nineteenth-century sensational stories, Alcott complicates the delineation of Spanishness by connecting it with more positive attributes (36). Streeby, however, also has noted that even though “in many ways Alcott undermines the racial hierarchies that the story paper promotes,” she still identifies Southern races with “savagery and the passions” (35, 36).²⁵ Since passions can easily slide into savagery and savagery can easily slide into the very proof of racial inferiority, the seemingly harmless equation of passions with people of Southern temperaments in fact smacks of racial prejudices and white supremacist ideas. To conclude, in terms of Alcott’s fictional writing, although she generally chooses to emphasize the attractive, exotic side of Spanishness over the savage, dangerous side, sometimes the demarcation line between the attractive, exotic man and the degenerate, inferior slave, between impulsive passions and murderous savageness, can be extremely tenuous and unstable.

According to some critics, Alcott’s ambivalent depiction of both attractive and horrifying sides of Spanishness and Spaniard-like figures and her emphasis on the former have everything to do with the author’s personal histories. Elbert has traced the emergence of the Spanish figure back to Alcott’s diary in which she recounted a strange dream she had right after she ended her short service at a Union hospital (Hunger 156-58). In this dream, Alcott found herself married to a stout, handsome Spaniard who, on the

²⁵ Streeby describes how Southern temperaments are ambivalently associated with both passions and savageness in the story. The Cuban male protagonist Manuel has a Southern temperament that makes him an eligible member of the group of passionate, impulsive men such as Paul, Robert, and other sensational heroes. Even though his Southern traits are generally portrayed in a positive light, even though he represents ideal, even feminized, manhood as well as a gentler, preferable partner for women, there is still a passionate, violent, quasi-savage side lurking in his Southern blood that makes him capable of committing violence—just as in the cases of Paul and Robert.

one hand, looked like her mother who constantly brought comfort to her; but on the other hand, she admitted that “with all the comfort I often found in her [Alcott’s mother’s] presence, there was blended an awful fear of the Spanish spouse who was always coming after me, appearing out of closets, in at windows, or threatening me dreadfully all night long” (Cheney 119). What was portrayed here is a love-hate relationship, illustrated respectively by her mother and a bluebeard-like fearful groom. The Spanish figure appears to be both comforting and familiar as well as dangerous and dreadful to Alcott, just as Spanishness as a popular cultural symbol was around that period.

Elbert further connects this dream to Alcott’s own dark-looking appearance, stating that like her mother, Alcott “had an olive complexion, dark eyes and hair, perhaps reflections of the Portuguese ancestry on her mother’s side of the family.” Yet it seemed that Alcott herself did not always appreciate this darker self; instead, following her father Bronson Alcott’s rather racist theory of colors that links lighter complexions with transcendence and spiritual advancement,²⁶ she, as Michelle Ann Abate has pointed out, “makes the racist correlation of a fair complexion with angelic behavior and dark or brown skin with unruly habits” (80, no.10); and this correlation between darker skin and bad behavior even infiltrates her works, in which “characters who can be placed anywhere on the spectrum of villainy—from the dastardly evil to the mildly mischievous—are frequently given a dark hue in her fiction” (71).²⁷ In Elbert’s view, these darker-skinned characters, portrayed as wild, impulsive, and sometimes in great need of discipline, disclose Alcott’s fear of herself, of the otherness within herself that

²⁶ Frederick C. Dahlstrand, *Amos Bronson Alcott: An Intellectual Biography*, 231-32.

²⁷ Also see Elaine Showalter’s introduction to *Alternative Alcott* for a discussion of Alcott’s darker skin (xx).

she dreads might be “inherently licentious” since her deviant status of spinsterhood appears to the antithesis to “normal” female domesticity that involves marriage and child-raising (157). This fear, as Brodhead and Young have recounted, also symbolizes Alcott’s self-regulation of her topsy-turvy nature, a disciplinary process that had been imposed upon Alcott by her parents ever since she was small. All in all, the “Spaniard” dream testifies to both Alcott’s wish to follow the domestic teaching and her fear of her own inability to fully fulfill the mission.

Even so, I will argue that Alcott’s representation of the “Spanish” characters in fact can be said to symbolize her ambivalent feelings about “falling out of normalcy”: positive as well as negative; affirming as well as negating. After all, despite all her wish to follow the disciplinary ideal, the Spanish otherness, generally speaking, was still portrayed in a positive light, a point that might indicate Alcott’s ambivalence toward and challenge of the domestic disciplinary model, and that can be observed more closely in her sensational thrillers which I will discuss later in this chapter. In other words, whereas the “darker” characters are supposed to be tamed and disciplined, they also mark and echo the author’s own deviancy, and perhaps also her implicit wish to fall out of normalcy and to preserve her wilder self. In this light, the inseparability between race and Alcott’s self-representation, such as “a crying brown baby” and “a stout mulatto lady,” at least partly stems from the author’s ambivalent perception of her deviancy and self-discipline.

To sum up, although Spanish or Latin figures are stock emblems of passions and crime in the lurid romances of Alcott’s time, her ambivalent portrayal of Spanishness in both positive and negative senses reflects her personal identification with and dread of

the Spanish figure. Her perception of Spanishness is double-sided: appreciation blended with fear, identification intermingling with misgivings. As a result, the idea of Spanishness in her works contains different, even contradictory, connotations and meanings. Whereas the Spanish-looking mixed race men may represent a new version of sentimentalized, feminized manhood, somewhere in them also lurks a secret violent trait that links them to “savage” blackness.²⁸ My contention is that since Spanishness served as an ambiguous symbol in Alcott’s time, she reappropriated it and used it as a tool to articulate a new version of manhood, to assimilate “fearsome” racialized others into the national symbolic, and to negotiate the tensions between passions and regulations, deviancy and discipline. Racialized others in Alcott’s stories, through their “Spanish transformation,” become lovable ideal men even though there is always something unpredictable and dangerous lurking within them.²⁹

“An Hour”: The Limitation of the White Woman’s Disciplinary Project

Now I would like to turn from racialized manhood to white manhood in order to further explicate the problems in the disciplinary project of Northern white women. While Southern white men in Alcott’s depiction seem to be beyond redemption (such as Master Ned in “My Contraband”), the position that Northern white men occupy in Alcott’s rewriting of national manhood, although ambivalently situated, has a more positive tone. I will use “An Hour,” an antislavery story written a little bit later than both

²⁸ Besides associating Spanishness with Africanized blackness, Alcott also, to a lesser degree, orientalizes Spanishness, using oriental motifs to portray her Spanish or Spaniard-like characters, such as Rose St. Just in “Perilous Play”; the evil Dr. Karnac in “A Whisper in the Dark”; and Dan in *Jo’s Boys*, who is asked to play an Egyptian character in a family play (57) and who puts on “a many-hued Eastern dressing-gown” during his convalescence (295).

²⁹ I borrow the term “Spanish transformation” from Streeby’s work, *American Sensations* (228).

“M.L.” and “My Contraband,” to answer this question. The story takes place between eleven o’clock and midnight on a Southern plantation in an island owned by a dying slave-owner, whose son Gabriel has just returned from the North to see his dying father for one last time. Since Gabriel is raised in the North at his dead Northern mother’s request, he abhors the cruelty of the Southern slavery system; yet he has no choice but to return to the South to receive his “slave-cursed inheritance” because his step-mother and two half-sisters need to be well taken care of (47). What Gabriel does not know is that the slaves in the plantation have already decided to take the matter into their own hands and plot a vengeful insurrection. This plan is inadvertently revealed to Gabriel by Milly, a beautiful mixed race house slave who is secretly in love with him. Persuaded by Gabriel, Milly eventually promises to save his stepmother and half-sisters (the father is already dead by then) on the condition that he agrees to free all the slaves on the next day. After Milly sends an old blind slave, Cassandra, to delay the rebel slaves and then rushes off herself to get help, Gabriel feels that he is unable to simply wait and do nothing, and decides to meet the rebel slaves face to face. Using a whip and a bloodhound, he successfully subdues Mose, the strongest slave in the plantation, before he reaches the meeting place of the gathering rebels. Hearing that Cassandra resorts to the love of God to persuade the slaves not to commit any more violence (they already killed all the other white men in the plantation), Gabriel steps out like “a beautiful, benignant angel” to the slaves’ eyes, and declares them all free. When the slaves tearfully rejoice over their newly found freedom, the tramp of many feet is heard, which possibly comes from the help that the white ruling class in the plantation has been waiting for.

Although Gabriel was born in the South, he was raised in the North and thus grows

up to be a man with a “gentle” and “generous” heart (48). I will contend that he, in an anachronistic way, can even be symbolically viewed as a son of either Claudia or Faith, a child brought up, nurtured, and disciplined through the project of disciplinary intimacy by Northern white women. In the same grain, one can see “An Hour” as the sequel to “M.L.” and “My Contraband.” If Claudia and Faith as well as Alcott herself are engaged in the national project of rewriting manhood, how does this manhood turn out? How successful or unsuccessful is this Northern white woman’s project? These are the questions that Alcott tries to explore in composing “An Hour.” Although none of the female characters comes from the North (except for Gabriel’s mother, who is already dead), “An Hour” has everything to do with Northern white women. By portraying Gabriel, a white man as well as a legitimate national subject who bears legacies from both the North and the South, from both his mother and father, Alcott wants to show the triumph of a mother’s disciplinary love over a father’s coercive will as well as the Northern abolitionist ideal over the Southern slavery system. Yet this Northern project, I argue, also produces problems and ambivalent outcomes. While I already explicated the problems of this project in terms of the white woman and the man of color in my analysis of “M.L.” and “My Contraband,” now I would like to turn to “An Hour” to tackle the question from a different angle—in terms of the white man and the woman of color.

At first sight, Gabriel seems to represent the new manhood that Alcott strives to advocate. His is a manhood different from that of his Southern father, since Gabriel, with “his sturdy Northern sense of right and justice,” refuses to take in Milly as his mistress, who is his father’s bait to lure him into appreciating the “beauty” of the slavery system. He abhors the cruelty with which his father and other white overseers treat the slaves, and

refuses to accept affluence founded upon other people's tears and sufferings. Besides, Gabriel is also portrayed as a man whose "heart was as gentle as it was generous" (48), a man who can be moved by sentiments, feelings, and pity; thus his manhood not only embraces antislavery ideals but can also be viewed as sentimental, even feminized. Nevertheless, the specter of traditional manhood still haunts the whole story. When Gabriel forces Milly to disclose the truth, he resorts to the old way of playing the role of the master: "Speak, Milly, or I shall be tempted to use my authority as a master, and that I never wish to do" (52). Even after successfully persuading Milly into getting help, Gabriel decides that he, as a man, cannot sit by idly and wait for a woman's rescue: "Man-like, Gabriel could not long stand idle while danger menaced and women faced it for him" (58). His version of manhood becomes one that cannot bear to be saved, bent, transformed by a woman—perhaps especially because the woman involved is not white and thus cannot serve as a legitimate discipliner.

Other instances show that although Gabriel despises the Southern slavery system, his mentality is still very much that of a slave owner. Deciding to face the slaves all by himself, Gabriel "yearned for a single friend, a single weapon, that he might conquer or die like a man" (59; my emphasis); that is, his manhood still depends upon the possession of weapons and the ability to conquer. Later, when he does get his weapons, a heavy whip and a bloodhound, two ultimate symbols of the cruelty of slavery, he uses them to tame the brawny Mose. Even though he does not resort to violence, he treats Mose just as a superior superintends an inferior, or a parent disciplines a child; Mose to him is by no means an equal. Importantly, when Gabriel tries to concoct a scheme to tame Old Mose, "a strange consciousness of power came to him; his muscles seemed to grow firm as iron,

his blood flowed calm and cool...He would master Mose..." (60; my emphasis). Gone is the Northern "gentle" manhood that one sees in the very beginning, the kind of manhood dictated by sentiments, compassion, and pity; it is instead replaced by the old manhood ruled by power and force, neither sentimentalized nor accessible to feelings. In conclusion, while Gabriel plays the role of the discipliner just as the Northern white woman does, he also represents the traditional manhood that the white woman strives to revise, a manhood that, according to Nelson, situates itself against the idea of a general otherness such as women, racialized others, the primitive, the foreign, and the insane—whoever does not fit into the idealized blueprint of white national manhood. At least part of Gabriel is still governed by this kind of "master" mentality. Even though the overall message of "An Hour" indicates the triumph of the new manhood that can sympathize with slaves and condemn slavery, the problematic ending poses a big question mark. When the help does come (possibly a regiment of armed white men), what will become of the slaves? After all, they already killed the white overseers; even though Gabriel wants to protect them, their fate still hangs on a thin line. Yet Alcott simply states that "the victory was already won," and ends the story without further dwelling on the future fate of the slaves.

Another problematic point in "An Hour" is the interracial love between Milly and Gabriel, which, compared to that between Paul and Claudia, shows more unresolved tensions. Whereas the mixed race ex-slave Paul and the white woman Claudia save each other and form a family together, it is not so in the case of the quadroon slave Milly and the white man Gabriel. Although at first sight it is Milly who is saving Gabriel and his family, in the end he, by reassuming the power of the master, hardly needs her help. On

the other hand, Milly is described as saved by Gabriel. After she knows that Gabriel genuinely thinks of her as “a fellow-creature, born to the same rights, gifted with the same powers, and capable of the same sufferings and sacrifices as himself,” she feels her entire life is redeemed by him: “through all her frame there went a glow of warmth and joy, as if some strong, kind hand had lifted her from the gloom of a desolate despair into the sunshine of a happier world” (57); “she...looked at him as if he were the one saving power of her thwarted life” (58). Whereas Gabriel does save Milly just as a knight saves a damsel in distress, one cannot be so sure if the reverse is also the case.

The key, I argue, lies in the fact that Milly is not a middle-class white woman. Because she is a woman of color, she can neither discipline nor save the male subject as Claudia and Faith do. In contrast, she as a “deviant” racialized other occupies the position of being disciplined, domesticated, and saved. Similar to Paul and Robert, Milly is portrayed as semi-white and beautiful in appearance, like “some brilliant flower of the tropics” (48); and she likewise has a wild, impulsive Southern nature and the potential to commit violence. When Gabriel demands to know the truth, “For a moment she struggled like some wild creature caught in a net” (51); afterwards, when Milly defiantly discloses the secret that slaves are going to rebel, “some spirit stronger than herself seemed to possess and speak out of her, making her look like an embodied passion, beautiful, yet terrible” (53). Southern temperaments, passions, and even animal savageness are once again bundled up in the exotic racialized other. Milly needs to be disciplined and domesticated by someone who is the legitimate member of the national household; she cannot be the discipliner herself.

The tricky part is, although Milly is not good enough to be the discipliner, her

semi-white status also makes her quite unlike the other slaves in the plantation. While Alcott does not specifically use “Spanishness” to portray her, Milly is described as an attractive Southern exotic beauty and can easily become a possible candidate for interracial romance. Once again, Alcott averts the “problem” of linking blackness with attractiveness by presenting a beautiful semi-white mixed race person as the possible love interest (even though Milly still cannot be Gabriel’s future wife). What makes “An Hour” more problematic is that there are many “real” black characters in the story; that is, the materiality of the racialized black body finally appears in one of Alcott’s antislavery stories. The rebel slaves are, with few exceptions, presented as a savage group engaged in “some heathen rite” (63); one of the rebel leaders is even described as “a burly, brutal-looking negro,” “as near an animal as a human creature could become...” (62). It is revealing that Alcott depicts another rebel leader, the “fair” Tony, in a totally different light: “a young man, so fair that the redlines across his shoulders looked doubly barbarous there ... this was the Tony who was too much cut up with his last whipping to run on Ms. Butler’s errand, but not too feeble to strike a blow for liberty” (62). Tony’s presence is to induce pity and respect, and to show readers the inhuman cruelty of the slavery system, whereas the other slave leader invokes fear and disgust, reminding readers how dangerous a racialized other can be. It seems that this different treatment has everything to do with skin color: Tony is a more sympathetic character because he is light-skinned; similarly, Milly can become a possible love interest, if not a wife, to Gabriel because she is light-skinned as well. In a word, how close a character’s skin color is to whiteness pretty much decides her/his characterizations and fates in Alcott’s stories, a point that clearly reflects the influence of Bronson Alcott’s theory of complexions on

his second daughter.³⁰ Blackness equals either savageness or naïve childishness, whereas whiteness or light skin color equals more accessibility to civilizing influences and the disciplinary project.³¹ While “M.L.” and “My Contraband” touch upon this idea, “An Hour” strikes the point home. Even though Milly is white-looking and exotically beautiful, the materiality of the black body looms large in the text, constantly reminding one of the “savage,” “dangerous” side of the racialized other. To conclude, although Alcott tries to critique the slavery system by dwelling on the human or attractive side of her racialized characters, the binary division between the savage black and the civilized white still remains more or less intact, and whiteness is still the ultimate ideal. These are the limitations of the Northern white woman’s project of incorporating racialized others and rewriting national manhood in Alcott’s narratives.

Due to the limitations of Alcott’s project, Milly ends up becoming an ambiguous, liminal figure who struggles between black and white, looking white but not actually white, racialized in terms of lineage but not in terms of appearance. As a “deviant” other, Milly must receive discipline instead of being the discipliner; yet since she is also a semi-white woman, occupying the position closer to that of the white woman in the racial spectrum, the ultimate goal of her disciplining is supposedly for her to assume the role of the white woman.³² So, when Gabriel urges Milly to show sympathy and compassion for

³⁰ Drawing attention to the implicit privilege of the light skin color, Claudia Tate has similarly asserted that the elite social status of some more privileged African Americans around the Civil War period is closely related to skin color. See Tate, 59-64.

³¹ Although the full-blooded old Cassandra is described as a figure of wisdom who gives judicious guidance and counsel to the insurgents, she still has the air of “some ancient sorceress or priestess, bearing her part in some heathen rite” (63; my emphasis); she is, after all, still part of this savage group.

³² Tate has observed that during the late nineteenth century, middle-class African American women were expected to exemplify the ideal of domesticity since this ideal had become the marker of social prosperity and political liberation for the black community. Although Alcott’s period is earlier than the post-Reconstruction era that Tate has written about, the task that Alcott assigns to Milly is pretty much the same.

his stepmother and sisters, he claims that it is a chance for Milly to prove that she is “the truer woman, the nobler mistress” (56). In order to become an ideal “white” discipliner, Milly, as her discipliner Gabriel has made clear, must develop the ability to feel sympathy for other people’s plights, just as the white Northern women Claudia and Faith do. In Alcott’s blueprint, Milly must learn to participate in the project of disciplinary intimacy by imitating the Northern white woman—a task that she, the racialized other, can never fully accomplish in the story. It is not surprising that Alcott eliminates the storyline of Milly halfway through the narrative; the dilemma that Milly embodies is simply too complicated to solve in Alcott’s fictional world.

The fact that Milly receives discipline from Gabriel, a white man who was once disciplined in the North according to the Northern white woman’s dictates, makes her become indirectly a pupil of the Northern white woman. However, Milly’s peculiar position as a woman of color foreshadows the failure of this educational plan, and exposes the problem with the disciplinary project; that is, the one and only criterion of the Northern woman’s project is still whiteness. In following the ideal of Northern white womanhood, Milly must show sympathy for the Southern white women who do not show any sympathy for her and who are even partly responsible for her wrongs—an impossible task indeed. Whereas Milly must help to preserve a white household from falling apart in order to prove herself a qualified upholder of sentimental values as well as a legitimate member of the national household, this household obviously still views whiteness as the highest criterion by which to judge whether one models “true” womanhood.

Nevertheless, instead of presenting the mixed race Milly as a malleable, disciplinable other, Alcott portrays her in a more ambivalent light, and thus exposes the

problem of the disciplinary project. She complicates the story by showing that Milly's consent to save the Southern white women does not, at least not entirely, stem from sympathy and compassion. Even though Gabriel urges Milly to show compassion for the white women in order to prove herself "the truer woman," in the end it is Milly's love for Gabriel that makes her agree to save them: only after Gabriel asks "for my sake you will save us?" does Milly answer "yes" (57; my emphasis). This incident at least indicates that Milly cannot be subsumed into the white woman's disciplinary project so neatly, a fact that not only demonstrates the problematic nature of this project, but also shows Alcott's own ambivalence, uncertainty, and possibly self-critique. In the end, Milly, the racialized other who has yet to wholeheartedly embrace the ideal of domestic womanhood, is not qualified to end the story and save the day. Nor can we be sure if Milly will live happily ever after with Gabriel. Her future fate still hangs in the air.

To conclude, just like in the cases of Paul and Robert, one encounters difficulties in subsuming Milly into the national household of the United States. Paul marries Claudia, and through her finds a country and a supporting community, but one cannot forget that outside this idealized imaginary little circle, people still do not tolerate inter-racial relationships. Robert uses Faith's last name to enlist in the Union army, and thus becomes the symbolic son of the Northern white woman as well as a national subject who fights for the cause of national unification; however, he has a dangerous side and the potential to commit violence and murder, and eventually must be put to rest for good. "An Hour" in a way can be viewed as a story about the "return of the repressed," in which all the specters buried or suppressed in the previous two march back: violence is staged; crises are imminent; and the material corporeality of the racialized black body is blatantly

displayed. Even though Milly finally agrees to save the white family for Gabriel's sake, her eligibility to join the national household is still a big question mark. Although all of the three racialized others seem to be saved by the Northern white woman's redemptive power, they cannot blend into the national household seamlessly; and that is the limitation of the white woman's disciplinary project envisioned by Alcott, a project that is still centered around whiteness. Whereas the Northern white middle-class woman can enjoy pleasures in deviating from the norm, she still has to help regulate and discipline racialized/foreign others and uphold the ideal of whiteness. Subverting as well as (self-)regulating, this double-edged force in both Alcott's self-representation and in her antislavery texts discloses an unsolvable dilemma and results in an incomplete project of disciplinary intimacy.

Alcott's Sensational Thrillers Vis-à-vis the Civil War

Compared to the wrestling between subversion and discipline in the antislavery narratives, Alcott's sensational thrillers, the majority of which were also composed during the 1860s, emphasize the subversion part more. As a matter of fact, most scholars have discussed Alcott's thrillers in relation to her more famous domestic novels or the domestic ideal of sentimental womanhood, contending that the gothic heroines incarnate the subversive undercurrents hidden beneath the surface of the ideal domestic picture portrayed in her domestic narratives.³³ According to them, the ideal of "little

³³ Judith Fetterley has declared that "Behind a Mask," one of Alcott's famous thrillers, "articulates a radical critique of the cultural constructs of 'femininity' and 'little womanhood,'" and exposes the idea of the little woman to be "the real fantasy" ("Impersonating" 2; 3). Karen Halttunen likewise has asserted that Alcott's gothic heroine puts on a "domestic" mask to pursue her ambitions "in flagrant defiance of the cult of domesticity" (240); and she has further linked this argument to the larger social context, contending that Alcott's move from the thrillers to her later domestic productions reflects "a major transition in American

womanhood” may simply be a “convenient” mask that middle-class women don for such reasons as economic survival and the accumulation of cultural capital.

While I agree with this line of argument, I contend that Alcott’s thrillers and domestic novels are not that opposite to each other, that they in fact share a lot of similar elements and concerns, and that the thrillers contain regulatory elements just as the domestic novels include subversive undercurrents. My opinion is that Alcott’s thrillers, just like her antislavery narratives and domestic novels, reflect the unstable relationship between discipline and subversion, sentiments and sensations, and domestic and gothic; it is only a matter of degrees among them. In other words, although one can use the thrillers to observe more closely the mechanism of the subversive female power in Alcott’s fictional world, one can still discern regulatory, disciplinary undercurrents behind the all-subversive plots and characters. Just as Mary Cappello has said, to designate Alcott’s domestic novels as “conformist” and the gothic productions as “her truly subversive texts” risks reducing “the multi-dimensional weave” of Alcott’s oeuvre, and may easily slide into the trap of simplistic bifurcation; after all, “processes of transgression and convention cannot be so readily dissevered” (60). Following Cappello’s view, I would like to discuss the interrelatedness between discipline and subversion in Alcott’s thrillers;

culture ‘from boundlessness to consolidation’” and “a larger Victorian quest for institutional restraints on the excesses of Jacksonian individualism” (250). Ann Douglas in her introduction to Little Women (Signet, 1983) has similarly claimed that “the sensationalist heroine and her author would seem to have just the freedom, the American individualism, if carried to extreme and un-American ends, Jo, and Alcott, forbid themselves”; that “An understanding of the thriller genre and Louisa’s response to it are essential to a fuller reading of Little Women” (53). Teresa Goddu also has pointed out that the mask worn by Alcott’s gothic heroine is “a mask of sentimentality” that the heroine cannot do without—if she wants to stay alive rather than being exorcised. Elizabeth Lennox Keyser has explicated the link between Little Women and “Behind a Mask,” arguing that the latter “exposes the contradictions and dangers inherent in the Cult of True Womanhood” (48). All in all, Alcott’s thrillers are generally viewed as critiquing or challenging the ideals of sentimentalism, romantic marriage, and the cult of true womanhood promoted in her domestic narratives. Fetterley even goes so far as to claim that “To read Little Women without benefit of Behind a Mask is to misread it” (“Impersonating” 2-3).

moreover, I would like to view these texts as not only closely connected to her domestic novels and antislavery narratives, but also related to some common topics that recent scholars tend to address in analyzing Alcott's domestic and antislavery works, such as race, nation, and the Civil War.³⁴ My overall goal is to show that it will be far more beneficial to see Alcott's entire oeuvre as an organic whole, in which all parts are echoing, interpenetrating, and interconnected to one another, rather than a straight spectrum, in which the thrillers and the domestic novels, the gothic and the sentimental, contrast with each other as clear-cut antitheses from two far ends.

In view of the fact that Alcott's non-sensational works produced during the 1860s are often discussed in light of the Civil War and the concurrent or ensuing national reconstruction process, I argue that one should situate Alcott's sensational texts in the political, cultural contexts of the war, the most prominent event that took place during her "sensational writing" period, and investigate how the subversive female power of the gothic heroines can be read in terms of the transformation that Northern middle-class white women went through during the war or because of the war.³⁵ Although Civil War researchers from early on have agreed that white women's contributions to the war were enormous, it was not until the mid-century that scholars began to shift their focus from "what women did for the war" to "what the war did for women"; that is, they began to emphasize the emancipatory, transformative power of the war for women, and concluded

³⁴ Among others, see Cappello, Lemire, Levander, Patterson, and Young.

³⁵ While Alcott's earliest published sensational story "Marion Earle" came out in 1858 (and there are still a couple of more earlier thrillers mentioned in her journals but still lost to the world), the majority of her thrillers were published between 1863 and 1870 either anonymously or under a pseudonym by Frank Leslie's illustrated story paper publications, *The Flag of Our Union*, and the Ten Cent Novelettes series. After 1870, Alcott basically stopped producing sensational stories; the only exception is *A Modern Mephistopheles*, which was a revision of one of her earlier gothic works and was published anonymously in Roberts Brothers' No Name Series in 1877.

that women became more active and self-reliant thanks to the war (Faust 228-30). Among the things that “the war did for women,” I want to expand on the transformation of the idea of “domesticity” in order to evaluate the influences of the Civil War on Northern white women and on Alcott’s literary production. Focusing on middle-class Northern white women, Jeanie Attie in “Warwork and the Crisis of Domesticity in the North” has stated that the Civil War “chipped away at the ideology of domesticity” in the North, since “in the course of warwork—the voluntary contribution of homemade goods to the Union Army—Northern women undermined assumptions about female household labor and challenged the gendered nature of Civil War nationalism” (248). According to her, as women became more and more indispensable in terms of their roles in housekeeping, in the production and the distribution of necessary wartime supplies, and even in keeping up the overall patriotic morale, they began to question the nature of female household labor and challenge the notion of the so-called “honorable,” “patriotic” sacrifice that women had to make for the nation. Attie further explains that the problem with this kind of gendered construction of nationalism is that it tried to “reconstitute household labor as non-labor, natural and emotional,” thus “mystifying women’s labor, bathing it in an aura of sentiment, calling it love and no work” (251). Once women’s labor was viewed as an expression of love that stemmed from female “natural,” “inborn” sentiments, and thus was not counted as real labor, they became inevitably trapped in a dilemma: even though their labor became more and more indispensable, it was nevertheless invisible. In response to that, many women began to oppose the gendered construction of “invisible” female labor. They came up with a different version of female patriotism, and showed interest and demanded visibility in political, military, and national matters. They “tried to

make public the nature of their real economic contributions not only to the nation but to their families and local economies as well” (Attie 255).

Putting Alcott’s sensational thrillers in this context, one can observe several correspondences between her textual motifs and the wartime influences on the perception of female labor and the marketplace. Some scholars have pointed out that many of Alcott’s thrillers show how nineteenth-century market forces penetrated the seemingly “private” domestic household, and exposed the domestic ideal of love and sentiments as false. According to Teresa Goddu, Alcott’s gothic tales, especially the 1866 “Behind a Mask,” unveil the fact that “the domestic realm is already the site of the market”; that without the veil of sentiments, the domestic sphere will be exposed to be the “site of wage-labor,” and the seemingly contented domestic little woman will turn out to be a “slave” (120; 121). From another angle, Brodhead has examined how nineteenth-century market forces influenced the woman’s production of story-paper fiction and domestic novels. Using Jo’s writing career as an example, he concludes that “The very idea of the decently domestic little woman, the concept on which the ethos of middle-class domesticity is founded, is mobilized against story-paper fiction...” (101); that is to say, from the viewpoint of the dominant culture (represented by Professor Bhaer), the “ideal” domestic woman writer should position herself in stark contrast to the “lower-class” story paper writer; she should write from the heart about everyday life without regard to making economic profits. In this light, the problem with sensational stories (besides dramatic themes and graphic description and all) was none other than the fact that they could make money, that they were blatantly created to make quick money in the marketplace—a goal that is completely the opposite to the whole idea of profitless,

spontaneous female labor of love. So, in order to become an exemplary domestic little woman, Jo must follow Professor Bhaer's advice, renounce her career of writing "cheap" sensational tales, and turn to produce domestic novels; immersion in sensational writing not only declassifies Jo, but also marks her as market-oriented, and thus not domestic and womanly enough. Market, profits, and labor values are the devils that must be barred from the door of the middle-class household; yet they are also the very devils that Alcott plays with in her gothic tales.

To sum up Goddu's and Brodhead's arguments, not only does Alcott tackle questions concerning the market and labor in her thrillers, but the act of creating the sensational tales itself already confirms the power of the marketplace and represents a slap on the face of the domestic ideal. On the one hand, her thrillers disclose the secret that female labor in the domestic realm is real labor, not a gratuitous gesture of love that requires no payment or compensation. On the other hand, the fact that Alcott had been composing thrillers indicates that she as a writer desired to make a profit in the marketplace, that she, at least at one time, did not write to promote moralistic teaching or domestic ideals; instead, she wrote them either for emotional release to unleash her anger and frustration or for economic gains to support herself and her family—and all these are the secrets that domestic novels cannot elaborate on. If Alcott's thrillers, as Fetterley has claimed, put into the spotlight "the amount of rage and intelligence that Alcott had to suppress in order to attain her 'true style' and write Little Women" ("Little" 370), this "rage" must have something to do with the marketplace, with her sense of inadequacy in the face of her family's economic predicaments; and the "intelligence" that she needed to suppress surely includes her acquired knowledge of the true value of female labor at

home and outside the home as well as her keen awareness that in order to stay within the “genteel” circle of domestic values, one has to make sacrifices, which possibly involve renouncing writing gothic tales and pretending that domestic labor is a non-labor of love.

The secrets disclosed by Alcott’s thrillers, I will contend, closely correspond to the quasi-feminist thoughts that erupted around the Civil War. During the war, some Northern middle-class white women not only devoted themselves to war work, but they also used the war as an opportunity to explore things before prohibited to them. They became more active and self-reliant; they sympathized with the slaves, engaged in the antislavery movement, and felt infuriated by the exploitation of labor both the slaves and they themselves faced. As a result, a subversive female power gradually sprouted and grew in this wartime context.

One can use Alice Fahs’s assessment of sensational war literature (covering subjects such as women spies, scouts, and cross-dressing soldiers) to examine the possibilities opened by the war for white women. According to her, even though only men could fight on the battlefield, “a study of Civil War cheap literature reveals...that sensational war stories often gendered the war as a set of ‘exciting,’ ‘thrilling,’ and ‘stirring’ adventures for both women and men” (230). Popular print culture proved to be a handier medium through which white women could imagine for themselves more active and subversive alternative roles in the war. Judging from this, it is hardly a coincidence that this emerging subversive female power brought about by the Civil War echoes the delineations of all the beautiful, passionate, determined, and devious female protagonists in Alcott’s thrillers. While Alcott’s thrillers seem to have nothing to do with the Civil War, Fahs’ argument about the connection between the sensational war writing and the female

subversive power propagated by the war is totally applicable to Alcott's sensational stories and her unorthodox gothic heroines. Published approximately around the same time and sharing similar subject matter, audiences, publishers, and circulation channels, the sensational wartime writing and Alcott's thrillers have a lot in common, especially their delineation of the subversive female power.

Although what Young has focused on is Alcott's Civil War writings, her thesis that the war implicates the white woman's inner civil war against gender norms can also be applied to the thrillers. The thrillers, just like Alcott's antislavery narratives, reflect the white woman's struggle between carnivalesque subversion and disciplinary order. The difference between them is that, while Alcott's antislavery works must uphold the ideal of female discipline as steadfastly as they can in order to reconcile the tension between female subversion and the national order, the thrillers are able to delineate the subversive power of the white woman more freely. In other words, because of its specific generic form, thematic content, and target audience, the thrillers can more extensively celebrate the subversive female power that the war helped to foster, whereas the antislavery and Civil War pieces or the later domestic novels must repress or de-emphasize female rebellion unequivocally. If domestication, as Kaplan argues, is an ever-ongoing, never-completing process, what the thrillers do is to highlight this incompleteness by putting female subversion in the spotlight, a task that Alcott's other texts can only slightly touch upon.

Judging from this, the unorthodox gothic heroine can be viewed as either the hidden side or the double side of the domestic heroine, who, even with a subversive spirit, must eventually surrender and show her absolute support of the ideal of disciplinary intimacy.

In contrast, the gothic heroine, less bounded by regulations imposed by the dominant ideology, can express feelings and emotions elsewhere suppressed in Alcott's works such as rage, the will to revenge, aggression, and wickedness. Furthermore, the gothic heroine can also provide a more nuanced understanding of Alcott's other works, and a more thorough examination of the discourses of "disciplinary intimacy" in terms of her entire corpus. I would argue that the thrillers in a way challenge or rewrite the idea of "disciplinary intimacy," since what is at work in the thrillers is a different kind of "discipline" not through love but through "deception masked as love." Likewise, the heroine herself becomes a different kind of discipliner; whereas in the domestic novels the female regenerative power heals the injured masculine body politic and puts everything back in order, in the thrillers either the household ends up a disorderly mess because of the invasion of subversive female power, or the heroine must be exorcised or killed off in order to set everything straight in the end. For example, in "Behind a Mask" Jean finally becomes the lady of an honorable household, which is ironically already partly shattered by her at that time, and thus the danger she symbolizes is at least precariously stalled; Pauline needs to face the disastrous consequences of her revenge as her punishment for breaching the ideal of female sentimentality; and Virginia in "V.V.; or, Plots and Counterplots" (1865) refuses to accept the punishment forced upon her by committing suicide. The gothic heroines, just like the domestic heroines, also feel the pressure of discipline upon them, but they either die or choose to be disciplined to a limited extent; the ideal of disciplinary intimacy triumphs in a much more ambiguous and uncertain way in the thrillers. All in all, one should not forget that the gothic heroines and the domestic heroines are in fact not that different in Alcott's fiction, that they all harbor a

rebellious spirit even though facing different endings. The difference between them is simply a matter of degree, which was pretty much determined by the generic conventions and targeted markets at that time.

In this sense, love and deception, discipline and rebellion, ideal femininity and deviousness—they are nothing but two sides of the same coin, and this is exactly the lesson that Alcott’s thrillers teach one about her other narratives. The thrillers show how easily these categories can change and slide into each other: love can be deception disguised as love; the deference to discipline can stem from suppressed rebellion; ideal femininity can be a mask used to disguise unorthodoxy and deviousness. Even though the subversive female power in the thrillers also has to be checked and somehow straightened out in the end, it can develop more fully here and die out in a more ambiguous, equivocal way. The thrillers can therefore better disclose the secret messages suppressed in Alcott’s other works.

I would like to turn to the war’s effects on the rewriting of national ideologies in order to further explore the mechanisms of female subversive power in Alcott’s thrillers. Just as Young has argued, the Civil War as a multiple cultural symbol not only points to the internal civil wars within individuals in terms of gender, but it also can be used “as a point of departure to create new allegories of nationhood” (17). In this sense, these new allegories being created are in fact new gendered national allegories; that is, the meanings of womanhood and manhood were renegotiated to establish new allegories of nationhood in response to the war. For instance, in Alcott’s antislavery stories, manhood is sentimentalized and racialized in order to reconstruct a more egalitarian vision of the

national household, where both middle-class white women and racialized men can participate and thrive.

It is true that at first sight the thrillers seem to have nothing to do with the renarration of U.S. national allegories. Most of these thrillers are set in foreign countries such as France, Britain, and even Russia. Moreover, the settings are mostly de-nationalized and de-contextualized, like blank backdrops or imaginary places, without in-depth descriptions and indispensable functions; concrete delineations concerning national matters, political affairs, and public spaces are also scarce, if not non-existent. Even so, I would argue that the thrillers' challenges to gender norms should prove that they are in fact closely related to the renarration of national allegories. Since gender and nation are inextricably connected in Alcott's other works such as her Civil War writings, it makes sense for one to reconsider the possibility of viewing the intense treatment of gender relationships in the thrillers as implicated in the question of reconstructing nationhood. In my opinion, the sensational thrillers can be seen as a parallel world to Alcott's other more domestic- or discipline-oriented works that advocate the ideal of disciplinary intimacy in a national/domestic setting. That is to say, the thrillers tell a different story by showing us what might have happened if female subversion could have permission to run its full course. This argument echoes Elmer's claim that the sentimental and sensational are complementary, interdependent cultural modes. In Alcott's case, her sentimental domestic works and sensational gothic tales do complement one another and depend on one another to narrate a different story and an alternative ending. While Alcott's thrillers emphasize the power of female subversion more, her domestic- or discipline-oriented works concentrate on the domestic/national order and discipline more;

they represent “the road not taken” for each other.

Since in Alcott’s fictional world the domestic household can generally be viewed as an epitome of the larger national household, disorder in the domestic realm in the thrillers may very well indicate problems concerning political issues and national affairs. For instance, slavery imagery permeates the gender war in the thrillers; that is, the gender relationship in the thrillers is often coded as the conflict between master and slave and conqueror and the conquered. In “V.V.” Victor disguises himself as an Asian Indian “servant” to help the femme fatale Virginia carry out her con game, and is described as a “devoted slave” to her (139). Virginia’s tattoo “V.V.” on her wrist in a way resembles Paul’s disfigured tattoo “M.L.” on his palm, since both marks symbolize other people’s possession of their flesh: while Virginia claims that the tattoo is Victor’s mark upon her, Paul’s tattoo consists of the initials of his previous owner, a grisly reminder of the master’s ownership of the slave. Virginia’s last word “I have escaped!” as well as her determination to die rather than endure a life of confinement likewise also resonates with a runaway slave’s yearning for freedom.

Besides “V.V.,” “Taming a Tartar” (1867) also uses languages and imagery related to slavery, and delineates a more complicated picture of the connection between Alcott’s antislavery narratives and sensational stories. The gender war between the English lady Sybil and the Russian prince Alexis is portrayed as a competition between two strong wills reluctant to be “tamed” or “conquered” by the other party; as a result, their relationship is not centered around love but around control and “who the master is.” Moreover, the prince is portrayed as a slave-owner kind of man who is “supremely masterful” (586), especially in the scene in which he tries to discipline his dog Mouche

with “whip in hand, evidently in one of the fits of passion which terrified the household” (589)—a scene strongly echoing Gabriel’s taming of the black slave Mose. In fact, as a Russian prince, Alexis does own a lot of serfs, whose rebellion toward the end of the story strongly echoes the slave insurrection in “An Hour.” This resemblance, in my opinion, not only further exemplifies the interconnection between Alcott’s antislavery narratives and thrillers, but also shows that serfdom in Russia can be read as an allegory to slavery in the United States, and Alexis, possibly the Southern slave owner. However, Alexis the master is also the principal racialized other who needs to be disciplined. In other words, he has two identities and functions in the story: on the one hand, he is the master who is reminiscent of the popular portrayal of the U.S. Southern farmstead slave owner: powerful, demanding, and merciless in his relationships with other people; on the other hand, he is the racialized other whose savage traits and violent temperament need to be civilized by the English white lady.

After Sybil successfully accomplishes this disciplinary mission by making the Russian prince agree to liberate all his serfs, her conversation with Alexis is illuminating: “Come with me to England, that I may show my countrymen the brave barbarian I have tamed” (616). Here, Russia, the “savage” country where serfdom still exists (although the story was in fact abolished in 1861), is juxtaposed against England, the land of civilization, where the Slavery Abolition Act was passed almost thirty years ahead of the U.S. in 1833. This juxtaposition, in my opinion, not only shows Alcott’s fascination with the Orientalist theme of taming and civilizing the East that was popular in creative works at her time,³⁶ but it also parallels the relation between the slave-owning South and the

³⁶ See the entry “Orientalism” in *The Louisa May Alcott Encyclopedia*, edited by Gregory Eiselein and

abolitionist North in a certain way. That is to say, Sybil's civilizing of Alexis not only can be viewed as the white woman's disciplining of the racialized other, but it can also be said to parallel the Northern white woman's taming of the Southern white man in Alcott's imagination. Printed in 1867, "Taming a Tartar" was published at a time when Northern postwar woman's novels on the war extensively celebrated the "moral" North's triumph over the "evil" South (Sizer 227); a time when the question of intermarriage between blacks and whites was on the political center stage and became the preoccupation of several novels written by Northern white women writers (Sizer 234-40).³⁷ Judging from this, this sensational tale set in Paris and Russia can be read as an allegory of the North-South relation in Alcott's blueprint. The English lady Sybil, as an independent woman "all alone in the world, fond of experiences and adventures, self-reliant and self-possessed..." (584), can easily be categorized among other unorthodox Northern white women such as Claudia and Faith. Just like them, she successfully accomplishes the goal of the disciplinary project, and even brings home a trophy to display her success to her countrymen: a tamed, domesticated, once-savage racialized other as well as a reformed, sentimentalized, once-masterful "Southern white man," who is now qualified to join the new kind of feminized Republic that Alcott imagines. Even though Sybil is the heroine of a sensational story, she, in terms of textual functions, goals, characterization, and even looks, is obviously more in alignment with the Northern white women in the antislavery narratives than with the passionate sensational heroines with Southern

Anne K. Phillips. In the editors' opinion, Alcott's interest in Orientalism "should be seen in the context of important political events, such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1870, as well as in the more general context of contemporary fascination with the East" (248).

³⁷ In *The Political Work of Northern Women Writers and the Civil War, 1850-1872*, Lyde Cullen Sizer discusses three post-war novels that center around the subject of interracial marriage: Lydia Maria Child's *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), Anna Dickinson's *What Answer?* (1868), and Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict* (1868).

features.

To sum up, even if the thrillers do not address questions concerning nation, politics, and slavery directly, they at least tackle them indirectly by using slavery imagery to code gender relationships, and by disclosing the secret corner as well as the alternative ending of the white woman's disciplinary project. I would further argue that exactly because the thrillers are usually set in some foreign country with fantastical, unreal delineations, and do not directly allude to political issues and the United States itself, they can deal with the double-edged force of domestic discourses in a different, freer, and more subversive light. Unlike the domestic novels and the antislavery narratives that must put discipline above subversion unequivocally, the thrillers can focus more on the subversion part, and do not need to elaborate on the final "bringing everything back to order" part. They show people what kinds of role women can play and how subversive a woman's power can be. By critiquing gendered norms and reimagining the white woman's place in the society, they participate in the collective task of rewriting national ideologies around and after the Civil War.

Subversive Sensational Heroines and Hispanicized Racialized Heroes

Finally, I would like to briefly examine the genealogy of Alcott's subversive heroines in order to further probe the correspondence between Alcott's thrillers and her other works in terms of their uses of Southern exoticism and Spanishness. Just as Alcott portrays her mixed race men as beautiful, mysterious, even dangerous Spaniards, she likewise uses elements of racialized others, Spanishness, and exoticism to encode female subversion. Elbert, by linking the antislavery protagonist Milly with Ottila (the impulsive

Southern beauty in Moods as well as the possible precursor of Pauline) and the gothic heroines such as Pauline, Virginie, Jean, and Cecil, has designated the passionate, even dangerous Spanish-looking heroine as one of Alcott's distinct signatures across her various genres (Hunger 182). It is true that most of her rebellious heroines have Spanish or Southern features and characteristics (the prominent and reasonable exception is Sybil, who is, after all, the discipliner rather than the disciplined in her wrestling with the Russian "barbarian" prince).³⁸ Whereas white female characters in Alcott's other works discipline racialized/foreign others and perform self-discipline in order to hold a reconstructed household together, the Spanish-looking subversive gothic heroines themselves incarnate the threat of the foreign/racialized to the "home." Just as I have previously asserted, the idea of Spanishness is used in the antislavery narratives to represent the racialized others' attractiveness and savageness and to distinguish them from the white women who, even inscribed with traces of unorthodoxy, still play the role of the discipliner. In contrast, the gothic heroines symbolize deviousness and otherness themselves. Since they can never be the discipliner, they can only serve as the possible target of disciplining in Alcott's disciplinary project, and have no choice but to put on the racialized Spanish mask.³⁹

³⁸ Some other gothic heroines who have Southern features or Spanish descent include Rose St. Just in "Perilous Play," who has a Spanish mother and an English father; Helen in "Mysterious Keys" who is a fiery, passionate Greek lady; and Clotilde in "Double Tragedy" who has a "fiery Spanish heart" that cannot be controlled (269). Even the Scottish blonde Jean Muir once puts on theatrical makeup and costumes that make her look like a Southern beauty with darker skin and revengeful temperaments.

³⁹ If one takes into account the specific nature of the American gothic, the reason for the extensive use of exoticism and racial elements in Alcott's sensational stories is clearer. Race has always been an important part in the American gothic. According to Justin D. Edwards, "the American gothic, like the nation itself, is haunted by slavery" (xviii). He further explains that "disruptions in the stable categories of race, nationality, class, and gender...result in a dread that is often represented by gothic discourse, contributing to the development of American gothic discourse" (xxx), a dread of not being able to identify someone or something because of the blurring boundary. In my opinion, Alcott's gothic thrillers exhibit the same fear. One can observe this fear in the precarious, ever-sliding boundary line between "little women" and "femme

Judging from this, these passionate, subversive heroines may even stand closer to Alcott's racially ambiguous men than to their more domestic and sentimentalized sisters in a certain sense. After all, both the light-skinned mix-raced men and the impulsive sensational heroines are assigned a Spanish identity; and they both appear to be attractive and dangerous at the same time. Yet what really brings them together is their otherness as juxtaposed against the dominant ideology, or what Nelson calls "professional/managerial white national manhood"; as a result, they share the same destiny of being disciplined, "purified," or exterminated from the mainstream viewpoint. Their fates, nevertheless, are different, especially in the cases of the heroines in the sensational thrillers. In the majority of the thrillers, there are no middle-class white women to uphold the ideal of disciplinary intimacy and to lead the lost and the errant back to the "right" track. In contrast, the white gothic heroine herself is the lost and the errant; racially white yet donning a Spanish mask, she embodies nineteenth-century fears of foreignness, otherness, and racial degradation. She also exemplifies what Kaplan calls the "traces of foreignness that must be domesticated or expunged" within the "interiority of the female subject" (43). Alcott's disparate treatment and delineation of sentimental heroines and sensational heroines indeed testify to Michael Paul Rogin's account of the ambivalence toward white women in Jacksonian America, an ambivalence that in the end can only be resolved "by splitting femaleness into passionate and uncontrolled demons, who had to be destroyed, and feminine enforcer of civilized values, who had to be protected" ("Liberal" 150).

Even though Alcott practically gave up sensational writing after 1870 and even

fatales"; and in racial crossings such as that of Victor, who disguises himself as the Indian servant Jitomar, or that of Jean, who darkens her skin and dresses herself up as an exotic Southern beauty. The genre of the sensational gothic provides a fertile ground for Alcott to explore the interconnections among gender, race, and nation.

made her alter-ego Jo commit to the same choice in Little Women, she confessed later that she still believed her “natural ambition [was] for the lurid style,” which she abandoned not only because the success of Little Women made her wealthy enough to stop engaging in “blood and thunder,” but also because she was afraid of offending the good taste of old Concord, which probably included her father and Emerson (Pickett 107). Yet the persistent presence of sensational impulses, of traces of foreignness and otherness, still lingered in Alcott’s fictional world even after 1870, which is what I am going to examine in chapter two.

Chapter Two

The “Domesticated” Western Hero and U.S. Westward Expansion in Alcott’s Little Men and Jo’s Boys

In chapter two, I would like to discuss the character Dan in Alcott’s Little Men (1871) and Jo’s Boys (1886) to bring the issue of U.S. westward expansion into the discussion and to further probe the problematic aspect of the white woman’s disciplinary project. As the sequels of the world-famous Little Women, these two novels recount how the former unruly tomboy Jo, now the new matriarch, educates and disciplines white boys and girls at the experimental co-educational school Plumfield, and what her various students turn out to be like in their adulthood. Among them, the “wild” orphan Dan proves to be the toughest case for “Mother Bhaer” Jo. In my opinion, the difficulty of this task is due to the fact that Dan is precariously situated at the junction of several different positions. He is not only a white man who goes West as a missionary to disseminate U.S. philanthropist expansionism and to “protect Indians”; but he is also an ambivalently racialized “wild” other who needs to be disciplined by the white woman’s gentle rule but who can never completely fulfill this goal. He is not only a westbound walker/pioneer who epitomizes the spirit of westward expansion, but he also stands for the injured Civil War hero whose wound can only be healed in the western land of regeneration and hope. Finally, he is not only a dime Western hero who ought to keep away from the domestic world, but he also serves as a well-disciplined disciple of the white heroine in a domestic novel. Through all these complicated, sometimes self-contradictory roles that Dan plays, in this chapter I want to observe how the West and westward movement affected and

conversed with the dominant discourses in the post-bellum U.S. as well as how the disciplinary project of white womanhood continued to tame racialized others, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, in order to renegotiate nationhood, manhood, and womanhood after the Civil War.

Another important goal of mine is to probe the interconnections between the Civil War and westward expansion and, furthermore, to situate both of them in relation to the U.S. general perception of the foreign as well as the broader global picture of U.S. imperialism in the nineteenth century. Just as Amy Kaplan has argued in her effort to break down the boundary between “domestic” and “foreign” in the nineteenth century U.S., dominant representations of race and nation at home were intricately intermeshed with imperialist conquest beyond the border. Accordingly, the Civil War along with slavery was an international as well as domestic event and thus must be viewed in connection to westward expansion and East-West topography (“Left” 7), whereas representations of U.S. imperialism should also be mapped out “through a North/South axis around the issues of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow segregation” (Anarchy 18). All in all, the Civil War and westward expansion affected and shaped each other, and challenged the arbitrary division of “domestic” and “foreign.” Seemingly two separate events, they were in fact intricately linked with each other as they both exemplified the ideology of manifest destiny in the nineteenth-century United States. In this light, racialized minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexicans who played important roles in either or both of the events were likewise profoundly interconnected, since their representations as the nation’s outsiders resembled, echoed, and shaped one another as nobody could be exempt from the influences of dominant

racial discourses and popular evolutionary theories around that period.¹

I will first recount the general perception of the West and westward expansion in the nineteenth-century U.S. and thus set up the bigger cultural, social, and political stage in which Alcott put on her domestic drama. Then I will turn to Thoreau's 1862 article "Walking," and elaborate on the picture of westward expansion that this piece presents as well as Thoreau's influences upon Alcott's delineations of the West and Dan. After that, I will begin to discuss Dan and the two novels. First, I will focus on Dan's double role as both the discipliner and the disciplined, on how he can simultaneously be viewed as an imperialist Thoreauvian walker and a racialized wild other and what kinds of roles that several white women play in this process of domestication. Second, I will look at how Dan's disciplinary westbound journey can be interpreted as a regenerative story of an injured Civil War veteran, and thus further explore the interconnections between the East-West axis and the North-South axis. Finally, I will examine the complicated dialogue between the dime Western and the sentimental literary tradition in the postbellum years by explicating Dan's ambivalent position as a Western hero trapped in the domestic novel. My overall goal is to highlight the importance of Dan as a character in examining Alcott's literary career and political visions in the contexts of nineteenth-century U.S. imperialism and expansionism.

U.S. Westward Expansion and the Civil War

¹ Whereas in this chapter I mostly use "Indians" instead of Native Americans or indigenous American people, I am aware of the racist, imperialist connotations of this term. My reason for using it is for the sake of historical coherence and clarity since what I discuss is nineteenth-century people's perception of the imaginary collective people "Indians" instead of Native Americans in reality. This choice of term highlights the fact that what is under discussion here is nineteenth-century people's imaginary construction rather than real-life issues concerning actual indigenous peoples.

The West held an important place in the nineteenth-century U.S. national imagination and expansionist policies. Starting from the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, the United States expanded its territory westward, annexed Texas in 1845 and the Oregon Territory in 1846, and gained its current southwestern territory, including California and New Mexico, in the wake of the U.S.-Mexican war in 1848. This practice of marching into the West, according to Reginald Horsman, can in fact be traced back to the European myth of Aryans following the sun westward and bringing civilization along the path, a myth that became popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Horsman's words, "Throughout European history the West was thought of as the region in which lay the land of eternal youth and happiness and as an arena for the destiny of nations"(83). Therefore, in moving West, nineteenth-century Americans perceived themselves as inheriting this European legacy and fulfilling the "destiny of nations." By becoming the "Providential Nation" chosen by God, they justified their expansionist act as carrying out a sacred mission as well as fulfilling the manifest destiny of the United States; this myth of Aryans enabled them to view themselves as good-willed missionaries/explorers, not evil-minded conquerors/invaders.

Nearly a century after the Louisiana Purchase, the importance of the West and westward expansion in U.S. history was reinforced and consolidated by historian Frederick Jackson Turner in his famous thesis "The Significance of the Frontier," first delivered at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Written at a time when the western frontier was said to be officially closed, Turner composed this piece to reinstate the significance of the West, and to contradict two dominant schools of historians at his time, who interpreted U.S. history either in terms of the slavery

controversy or in terms of the nation's English or Teutonic origin (Smith 291-92). By maintaining that the West as well as the democratic spirit and frontier individualism it symbolized constituted the most important part in the construction of U.S. history, Turner not only reconceived the postbellum national consolidation in terms of infinite expansion, but also reinforced the national myth of westward expansion: that is, white American pioneers went deep into the West, tamed the wildness, superimposed their will on the vast, "uninhabited" virgin land, and, in the process, reinvented themselves as ideal national subjects of the United States. In this description, on the one hand, the West became a "virgin land" devoid of human inhabitants, a "free" land awaiting Americans to fulfill their manifest destiny through occupation and conquest. On the other hand, westward expansion was reconfirmed as an indispensable part in the construction of U.S. nationhood, since the nation, in Turner's words, experienced a "perennial rebirth" as the frontier expanded, and renewed itself with fresh energy and possibilities to furnish the American character.

This growing centrality of the West in creating "Americanness" during the last few decades of the nineteenth century can be readily observed in popular cultural forms such as dime novels, magazines, and newspapers. In Christine Bold's argument, the growing popular interest in subjects related to the West stemmed from the fact that the eastern establishment needed to find a new cultural form to reassert their power and consolidate the nation in face of the shrinking of available land, the influx of immigrants, the intensifying black-white racial controversy, and unbridled urbanization and industrialization. The creation of the all-American West, in this sense, helped to advance white patriarchal power and to solidify the "larger patterns of nationalism, imperialism,

and modernity” (“Frontier” 204). Richard Aquila has similarly asserted in his introduction to Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture that “By the turn of the century...popular culture spotlighted positive images of the American West, providing comforting memories and a clear national identity for nostalgic Americans facing rapid change at century’s end”; that the pop culture West offered “vicarious thrills and escape from economic and social concerns” for the city dwellers back East (8-9). All in all, thanks to Turner and other major political and cultural figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, Frederic Remington, and William Cody, the West as an open, uninhabited land awaiting its destined cultivator, the American, has become one of the most enduring U.S. national myths.² And Turner’s picture of white pioneers marching into the West dominated academic as well as popular perception of the West up until the 1960s.³

In view of the fact that the U.S. in the second half of the century was critically

² According to Bold in “‘The Frontier Story’: The Violence of Literary History,” the 1893 Columbian Exposition represented the conjunction of the five figures who are “generally credited with forging the definitive image of the frontier West”: politician Theodore Roosevelt, the future president of the United States in 1901; novelist Owen Wister, the author of the bestselling novel The Virginian (1902); artist Frederic Remington, who illustrated both Roosevelt’s and Wister’s writings and who became the best-known artist of Western cowboys and Indians; the showman William Cody, who invented and popularized Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show; and historian Frederick Jackson Turner (201).

³ According to Quintard Taylor in In Search of the Racial Frontier, “Until the 1960s the images of the West centered on Frederick Jackson Turner’s ideal of rugged Euro-American pioneers constantly challenging a westward-moving frontier...” (19).

More recent historians have challenged Turner’s contention and envisioned different angles from which to examine the West and western history. According to Patricia Nelson Limerick, “The rigidity of the Turner Thesis left it particularly vulnerable to a great expansion of scholarship, accelerating in the 1960s and afterward,” when historians began to study particular western places, people, and events, especially the history of ethnic minorities such as Indians, Hispanics, and Asians (22). Limerick herself denounces the Turner Thesis as “ethnocentric [Anglo-American] and nationalistic,” and calls for a “new western history” (21). Moreover, in contrast to Turner’s claim that the West symbolizes a process of moving the frontier westward, Limerick resituates the West as a place, and the history of the West as “a study of a place undergoing conquest and never fully escaping its consequences” (26). For information about the “new western history,” see Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West (1992); Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., Trails: Toward a New Western History (1991); and William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, eds., Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past (1992).

defined by the Civil War and postbellum problems, one should assess the popularity of the West and Western pop culture on both political and cultural levels in terms of this all-important war. While several scholars, just as I have recounted in my “Introduction,” have explicated the relations between westward expansion and the Civil War, here I want to particularly bring up Kris Fresonke, since his allusion to Thoreau, the focus of the following pages, offers an interesting angle by which to probe the connections among westward expansion, the Civil War, and the construction of national values. According to Fresonke in West of Emerson, westward expansion played an important part in “tautening, and then breaking off, relations between slaveholding and free regions”; and in the end it resulted in the Civil War, a fact that proves that “endless expansion into redemptive western Nature was bound to go bad, and so reveal itself not as redemption, but as what Thoreau called murder to the state” (16). The Civil War in this sense must be viewed as an unavoidable result of the incessant marching into the West, as reflecting the imperialist U.S. blueprint that made possible the suppression of racialized minorities within and without the territory. This war, accordingly, was not simply an internal sectional conflict centered around the issue of slavery; rather, it reflected the accumulative tensions accompanying the acquisition of the vast western territory in an international arena. All in all, white Americans’ grand project of marching into the West rebounded upon itself in the Civil War; the attempt to expand national territory ended up splitting up the nation.

Ironically, if the “endless expansion into redemptive western Nature” was bound to go bad and incur the Civil War, the redemptive function of the West helped the wounded nation back on its feet in the postbellum years; that is, the West became a symbol to redeem the injured body politic and to reunite the split-up nation in the wake of the war.

The positive images of the West were appropriated in the postbellum years to cover up the mess of the Civil War that can partly be attributed to the relentless westward expansion of the first half of the century. Just as Turner's frontier manifesto and Bold's and Aquila's arguments show, in face of the failure of Reconstruction and the heightening racial, social, and economic problems, the West provided a conforming collective national memory and constructed an image of national consolidation in terms of infinite territory expansion. Since the nation experienced "a perennial rebirth" as the frontier expanded, the renewed nation surely could disregard and toss out old baggage such as the slavery past and racial conflicts, and turn to concentrate on propagating national greatness in terms of the expansionist logic.

The connection between westward expansion and the Civil War also shows how the arbitrary regional categories of East, West, North, and South were affecting and infiltrating one another and thus created ambiguity and fluidity along the seemingly clear-cut regional borders. The ongoing movements of people within, between, and across regions and borders further add to this ambiguity. As people moved, they challenged and extended regional demarcation; they brought their own contexts and rules into the regions and intentionally or unintentionally challenged and even rewrote the contours of them. In this sense, the nineteenth-century United States in many ways echoes Mary Louise Pratt's theorization of the "contact zones," where "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power..." (34). Whereas white Americans extended their territory westward and thronged into lands which they assumed to be open and uninhabited, their interactions with and suppression of non-white population not only highlighted the "asymmetrical relations of

power” in terms of political influences, economic resources, and cultural capitals, but they also exposed the myths of the open frontier and good-willed missionaries/explorers as false.

Thoreau’s Paradoxical Views of the West and Native Americans in “Walking”

The abovementioned issues, especially the general perceptions of the West and westward expansion, can be observed in Henry David Thoreau’s 1862 piece “Walking,” an article that, in my view, amply illustrates Thoreau’s aestheticization of the U.S. expansionist act of seizing the western land and expelling Native Americans, even to the point of justifying it. While the article extols and mythologizes the spirit of freedom symbolized by the West and the Native Americans residing there, it, in a paradoxical way, also views their disappearance as inevitable and in fact necessary for the long-term development of the nation. This paradoxical viewpoint, in my opinion, profoundly affects Alcott’s delineations of Dan and the West in Little Men and Jo’s Boys. Through Thoreau, one of her important friends and mentors, Alcott not only learns to become a Thoreauvian westbound walker, who eulogizes the “wild” West yet upholds its eventual cultivation, she also transforms Dan into the mouthpiece for Thoreau’s view that urges people to look for “Americanness” in the wild West and that emphasizes American roughness over European sophistication. Yet Dan’s role as a Thoreauvian walker, I would argue, is precariously maintained, since he is not only a conqueror/discipliner of the wild but also a racialized/disciplined other. He can never seamlessly fit in with Thoreau’s blueprint articulated for white Americans, who, as legitimate descendants of European colonizers (such as Columbus) and English pilgrims, triumphantly marched into the West and

self-righteously transformed it into part of the United States.

Although Thoreau in “Slavery in Massachusetts” (1854) declares that the cruelty of the slavery system in the United States spoils his walk and makes him harbor thoughts that are “murder to the State,” in “Walking” he illustrates a different, even contrasting, type of walking and national ideology that echoes U.S. imperialist, expansionist endeavors. As a result, his aestheticizing endorsement of westward exploration, juxtaposed with his well-known abolitionist stance as well as the publication year of the article, ends up creating an implicit tension in “Walking.” Written at a time when the Civil War dragged on to the second year, “Walking,” in glorifying the West and the nation’s westward expansion, ironically fails to recognize the imperialist, racist stance that westward walking/expansion and the system of U.S. slavery shared, a stance that involved the exploitation of non-white people’s labor in the name of racial and national development. In this light, even though the article barely touches upon the slavery issue and presents a Utopian picture of racial relations where Nature’s red and white children live harmoniously together, and where “no fugitive slave laws are passed,” Thoreau’s advocacy of white people’s natural right to go West and seek regeneration and adventure there problematizes and even contradicts his widely known antislavery stance, which is strongly demonstrated by his essay on John Brown and “Slavery in Massachusetts.”

While I do not mean to label Thoreau as an imperialist or to ignore the abolitionist sentiments expressed in his articles, I do want to draw attention to the complex, and even contradictory tensions in his thought that were generated in response to some of the most pressing issues of this time period.

“Walking” demonstrates these complex, unresolved tensions. Even though this essay

can generally be seen as an ode to westward expansion, it presents different, even conflicting views concerning Nature, Indians, and the enterprise of westbound walking. On the one hand, Thoreau views Nature as the Holy Land to be redeemed as well as a virgin land to be cultivated, a wild Nature which he further specifies can only be found in the West or the Southwest. In his delineation, “every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels” (1803). Walking thus becomes a metaphor for the crusades, the original meaning of which refers to the well-known medieval military campaigns conducted in the name of Christendom and European civilization, whereas the walker becomes the crusader, a select class as well as an imperialist conqueror. Even though the direction of the medieval crusades is eastbound instead of westbound, their spirit echoes that of nineteenth-century U.S. imperialist conquerors: both groups strive to conquer and impose their wills on the land and on cultural, racial, or religious others.

On the other hand, while Thoreau views the act of conquering the wildness in Nature as necessary, paradoxically he also emphasizes and praises the value of the “wild,” claiming that “in Wildness is the preservation of the world” (1813). He even designates wildness as one of the criteria by which to judge the merits of a nation: “Little is to be expected of a nation, when the vegetable mould is exhausted, and it is compelled to make manure of the bones of its fathers” (1816). According to him, one has a lot to learn from wildness since it represents a land of freedom, progress, and opportunities; and the United States, as a nation abounding in wild Nature, is thus destined to prosper in the world and exceed the “civilized nations” such as “Greece, Rome, England” (1816). The vast, wild western land, in this sense, becomes the very proof of U.S. exceptionality.

Thoreau further explicates this argument by claiming that the cultures too early weaned from the breast of Nature, “this vast, savage, howling mother of ours,” can only create limited civilizations such as England—a description that brings about a rather ambiguous effect (1819). Whereas the beautiful savage mother is loved by her children, it is already predestined that they will be and must be weaned from her and her savageness in order to develop civilization. The reason may be that here Nature is not only wild but also savage, and thus represents the opposite of civilization and in fact can be potentially detrimental to it. In order to arrive at the apex above all the other civilizations, one must find a way to keep the spirit of wildness residing in Nature without letting oneself be devoured by the savage monster.⁴

These two different attitudes toward Nature and the U.S. western wildness constitute a paradox in “Walking.” First, this theorization of wildness is paradoxical in the sense that “open” wildness or “virgin” land never exists in the first place as Native Americans had already been there for a long time before white men came. Furthermore, while the wildness in Nature is to be praised and valued, it is also portrayed as dangerous and so eventually must be conquered and destroyed. Its wildness, although held in high esteem, is doomed to disappear for the sake of civilization and national expansion.

Even though this paradoxical interpretation of wildness can possibly be traced back to the fact that “Walking” was originally composed of two lectures (“Walking” and

⁴ See Daryl Jones, *The Dime Novel Western* for a discussion of the two contradictory, antithetical attitudes toward Nature: one is Romantic; the other is utilitarian and materialistic (16-18). Besides, Thoreau’s double take on Nature/western wildness also fits in with Aquila’s account of the diversified images and meanings concerning the West. According to Aquila, the West “eludes definition” and “evokes numerous images in the American mind”: foremost is the image of the “mythic West as a Garden of Eden,” a land of opportunities and abundance; second, the mythic West as a “faraway, romantic, and exotic land...a place of adventure and thrills”; finally, “a dark side to the mythic West” as a place that holds the “possibility of abysmal failure through dashed hopes, broken dreams, financial ruin, or even tragic death at the hands of brutal bad guys or unrelenting forces of nature” (2-3).

“Wildness”) that had different emphases, I will argue that this paradox is implicated in the U.S. expansionist imagination of wildness itself.⁵ According to the expansionist logic, one could safely and aesthetically extol wildness exactly because the process of taming/civilizing would begin the moment when the appellation of “wildness” was given by the white explorers who claimed to “discover” it; that is, the highly idealized notion of wildness in the nineteenth-century U.S. already implies its eventual disappearance in itself. So there is always an implicit tension in Thoreau’s delineation between these two ideas: Nature to be feared and conquered versus Nature to be praised and cherished. No matter how Thoreau glorifies the beauty of the wild West, he participates in the U.S. imperialist project of designating westward movement as humanity’s natural tendency and comparing it to reconquering the Holy Land. Similarly, although Thoreau defies the “lawless” U.S. government and protests the excesses of his time such as slavery and the U.S.-Mexican war, he still situates himself as a patriot by linking patriotism with the ability to appreciate the seemingly “apolitical” natural wildness: “my patriotism and allegiance to the State into whose territories I seem to retreat are those of a moss-trooper” (1822). He can be a patriot as long as the United States is a country of wildness where he can serve as a moss-trooper, despite the fact that the logic behind the acquisition of this “wildness” is not very dissimilar from those behind the imperialist conquest of Mexico and the Fugitive Slave Law that he detested and protested.

This kind of paradox can also be observed in Thoreau’s delineation of Native Americans. Just as Nelson has observed in “Thoreau, Manhood, and Race,” Thoreau’s fascination with indigenous American peoples, as seen in Maine Woods, Week on the

⁵ See Fresonke for a discussion of the origin of “Walking” (133).

Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Walden, and his voluminous Indian Notebooks, is “a manifestation of a habit developing more generally in the nineteenth-century United States,” a manifestation that involves “the reduction of more than 2,000 diverse indigenous cultures and nations to one stereotype: the Indian.” What this stereotype testifies to, in Nelson’s words, is “European-based cultural beliefs both positive and negative”: “romanticized primitivism” versus “intolerable savagism” (79). In a similar vein, Lucy Maddox has argued in Removals that although Thoreau “values the Indians for their primitiveness and their naturalness,” what really attracts him most about the Indians is “their distance from the realities of life in nineteenth-century America” (149); that is, whereas Thoreau praises “the mythologized Indian,” he maintains that the extinction of “the living Indians” is inevitable (150). In sum, one can conclude that from Thoreau’s viewpoint, no matter how noble the native “savage” is, he is still savage and thus is doomed to disappear and leave the open, uncultivated virgin land to the care of the United States, the nation descended from the crusaders and blessed by providence.⁶

“Walking,” as one of Thoreau’s last pieces, demonstrates exactly his paradoxical view of Native Americans. On the one hand, in his ode to wildness and Nature, Thoreau tries to imagine a mythologized, utopian, and egalitarian picture in which “The pines

6 See Horsman’s Race and Manifest Destiny for a discussion of the development of Indian policies by the U.S. government, especially chapter ten, “Racial Destiny and the Indians.” According to Horsman, although at first some believed in the “improvability” and “assimilability” of Indians, “after 1830 neither the mass of the American people nor the political leaders of the country believed that the Indians could be melded into American society” (190); and by 1850 the American public and American politicians, influenced by scientific race theories, “now believed that American Indians were doomed because of their own inferiority and that their extinction would further world progress (207). In Horsman’s opinion, what best illustrates this turn of events is the Indian Removal Act of 1830 that sought to relocate all the Native American tribes to West of the Mississippi River. Indian Removal “was not an effort to civilize the Indians under more favorable circumstances...rather it was an act to allow white Americans to occupy all the lands they wanted east of the Mississippi River” (199). All in all, the general opinion after 1830 was that Indians were destined to extinction.

have developed their delicate blossoms...as well over the heads of Nature's red children as of her white ones..." (1823). Praising non-white people in general, Thoreau also lauds the primitivism of "Hottentots" and "Northern Indians," and even goes so far as to claim that "A tanned skin is something more than respectable, and perhaps olive is a fitter color than white for a man—a denizen of the woods" (1814). Yet on the other hand, it soon becomes clear that what Thoreau has in mind is nothing more than a highly idealized version of wildness. Native Americans can never be incorporated into his "select class," his "family of the Walkers," since they lack the ability to prosper in the civilized world and thus are destined to be replaced by the white American farmer: "the farmer displaces the Indian even because he redeems the meadow, and so makes himself stronger and in some respects more natural" (1816; my emphasis).⁷ In the next paragraph, Thoreau further explicates the doomed fate of his "Indian": "The very winds blew the Indian's cornfield into the meadow, and pointed out the way which he had not the skill to follow" (1816). In this way, Thoreau rationalizes the "inevitable" extinction of Indians and even helps to justify the U.S. governmental policy of Indian removal. Noting that the best heirlooms for Americans to pass from father to son are agricultural implements "rusted with the blood of many a meadow, and begrimed with the dust of many a hard-fought field" (1816), Thoreau aestheticizes and legitimizes the banishment of Indians, the bloodshed in the battles between whites and Indians, and the U.S. occupation of the western land; and in this way he participates in consolidating the national myth of manifest destiny. The American farmer, in his view, has every right to take up the land of

⁷ In West of Emerson Fresonke quotes this passage and artfully links it to Andrew Jackson's Farewell Address, in which the president rejoiced that the progress of the States would no longer be hampered by Indians (5).

wildness and usurp the entitlement of being “more natural” from Native American people, since the former can better “tame” the wild land and turn it into a meadow full of life.

Wildness makes a nation praiseworthy exactly because the colonizing nationals can thus have or, more precisely, “create” a vast range of “virgin” land to cultivate and civilize.⁸

As a close family friend to the Alcott family, Thoreau knew Louisa May Alcott from the time she was a small girl, and was closely associated with her in her childhood and young womanhood. Alcott’s views of the West and Native Americans explicated in her juvenile fiction clearly reflect Thoreau’s influences. Among her young adult novels, Jo’s Boys, in Fred Erisman’s words, especially offers “a view of the West Thoreauvian in its scope and nature” (303); and the character Dan’s “rough purity, his freedom, and his grace constitute a compelling testimonial to Thoreau’s West” (307).⁹ In the following pages, I would like to look at exactly what kind of “view of the West Thoreauvian” is represented and how the compelling testimonial is constituted in Jo’s Boys and its prequel Little Men.

Becoming the Discipliner: Dan as a Thoreauvian Westbound Walker

The young Alcott used to follow Thoreau along with other children on nature walks through fields and woods, and learned from him knowledge about insects, birds, and trees (Urbanski 270). Yet she learned far more during these walks than facts about the natural world; she, I would argue, also learned to become a westbound walker/explorer like

⁸ As for Thoreau’s views on Indians, see Richard F. Fleck, ed., The Indians of Thoreau: Selections from the Indian Notebooks; Robert F. Sayre, Thoreau and the American Indians; and Nelson, “Thoreau, Manhood, and Race,” 79-82.

⁹ As for Thoreau’s influences on Alcott, see Marie Olesen Urbanski’s “Thoreau in the Writing of Louisa May Alcott” and Fred Erisman’s “Thoreau, Alcott, and the Mythic West.” While my discussion of Dan in relation to Thoreau benefits from both of the works, I focus on the issues of race and imperialism that were either ignored or only slightly touched upon in these two articles.

Thoreau himself and his ideal crusader. For instance, Alcott invested her earnings in railroad stocks after the war on the advice of her mother's cousin Samuel Sewall, investments which, in Elbert's opinion, "embody contradictions" since the railroads brought white settlers and explorers further West (supposedly including Ted and Laurie who take the train to bring the injured Dan, the future missionary, back East in Jo's Boys), and aggravated the plight of Native Americans, whose cause Alcott felt "genuinely and deeply sympathetic with" (Hunger 267). She also endorsed the work of the Children's Aid Society to send orphans from the streets of New York city to live with "decent" rural families in the West, thus in practice participating in the U.S. expansionist project of moving further West (Strickland 151). Besides that, Bronson Alcott, Louisa's father, went to the West several times, a place that in his view was shaping the new ideal American character, to disseminate his philosophy on education and spiritual reform to the "rough" westerners.¹⁰ He not only referred to the Midwest as his "Bishopric," but also believed that he was destined to serve the West just as Emerson had served the East (Dahlstrand 298, 300). Although Alcott herself never went West, she obviously shared her father's as well as Thoreau's view of the West as a place symbolizing freedom, progress, and regenerative power, as shown in her children's literature such as Little Men, Under the Lilacs (1878), and Jo's Boys.

Likewise, her overall delineation of "Indians" corresponds with the contemporary paradoxical tendency of dichotomizing Native Americans into the idealized noble savage

¹⁰ Mr. March's fantasies about "rough" westerners in Jo's Boys is obviously copied from Bronson's own impressions. Upon hearing Dan's dream of building up "Dansville" in the West, Mr. March, a character possibly based on Bronson, responds: "We could easily plant a new college there. These sturdy westerners are hungry for learning and very quick to see and choose the best" (59). To Bronson, the West clearly symbolizes a land of spiritual freedom and regeneration.

and the horrifying heathen barbarian, a narrative convention that began with James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking series and that affected numerous writers later. Although Alcott's characterization of "Indians" sometimes questions the contemporary stereotype, she, generally speaking, follows this widespread racist dichotomy of "good" and "bad" Indians that was possibly introduced to her by Thoreau, among others. Textual examples include an anecdote about an Indian attack on white settlers recounted by Miss Celia in Under the Lilacs; the 1884 short story "Onawandah," in which the noble savage Onawandah rescues a white girl, who is his friend as well as his protector, from the hands of some "bad" Indians; and Dan's prejudicial distinction between peace-loving and hostile Indians in Jo's Boys.¹¹

No character illustrates Alcott's paradoxical views on westward expansion and Indians better than Dan, an orphan raised and disciplined by the former unorthodox tomboy Jo in Little Men and Jo's Boys. In my opinion, as a racially ambivalent, wild character who frequently moves between the East and the West and finally becomes a missionary devoting his life to "saving Indians," Dan is precariously situated at the nexus of several different subject positions. The ambiguity about him is profoundly related to the double role that he plays—the white discipliner as well as the racialized disciplined. Just like Alcott's other unorthodox protagonists, Dan must be disciplined in the name of the sentimental project of white womanhood in order to be transformed into a suitable national subject; however, just like them, he also falls short of this disciplinary ideal and

¹¹ As for the dual image of the Indian, see Horsman, Race and Manifest Destiny: "From the beginning of English settlement in America, there had been a dual image of the North American Indians. There had always been both an admiration for the supposed simple life as well as hatred for 'savage' violence" (103). Also see Michael Paul Rogin, "Liberal Society and the Indian Question": "The concept of the Indian was split into the noble savage and the 'starved wolf'" (144).

thus must be “handled” and “contained” in some other way. In this sense, his eventual marching/escape into the West is not simply a regenerative journey for him to heal his wound and renew his energy; it also symbolizes a way for the dominant culture to expel the dangerous other from the domestic/national home and to engage in the imperialist task of “civilizing” the wild, the racialized, and the unorthodox.

Dan makes his first appearance as a wild, rough, undisciplined boy, and throughout the two novels he is often associated with nature and wild animals. When the young Dan stays at Plumfield, he likes to rove about in the woods; after he leaves Plumfield, he mainly keeps to mountains and prairies and shuns big cities. In a way Dan resembles Thoreau, since they both cannot resist the call of Nature and enjoy strolling in the woods. Dan’s love of freedom, wildness, and adventures also links him to Thoreau’s view of the West as an idealized place of hope, regeneration, and possibilities. In Alcott’s description, “At twenty-five he [Dan] was very tall, with sinewy limbs, a keen, dark face, and the alert look of one whose senses were all alive; rough in manner, full of energy, quick with word and blow, eyes full of the old fire, always watchful as if used to keep guard, and a general air of vigor and freshness very charming to those who knew the dangers and delights of his adventurous life” (JB 54). The adult Dan looks just like a combination of Thoreau’s westbound walker and the popular Western hero: vigorous, free, energetic as well as rough, lonely, audacious. No wonder his adult life is inseparable from the West, and he even ends up dying there.

This portrayal of Dan corresponds to Bronson Alcott’s image of the West, which symbolizes “progress, hope, and a realization of dreams for himself [Bronson] and his country” (Dahlstrand 298; my emphasis). More importantly, Bronson’s view points out

another important aspect of the idealization of the West; that is, the West as the all-American West, a place symbolizing not only individual regeneration but also collective hope and future for the post-war nation—a point later reinforced and consolidated by Turner in his frontier thesis, in which he idealizes the nineteenth-century westering frontier as an evolving space projecting a “model” white Anglo-Saxon national character and a unifying collective experience for the postbellum country embroiled in urban unrest, class and racial divisions, and imperialist expansionism. It is in this context that Bronson claims that the West is “‘truly American’ in spirit and deed” in contrast to New England, which can only gestate “New Englishmen” instead of “true” Americans (Dahlstrand 298-99). It seems that Alcott’s Western hero Dan, who prefers western wildness to European sophistication, incarnates Bronson’s ideal of the “true American” that can only be cultivated in the West—an argument that also echoes Bold’s and Aquila’s claim that the all-American West provided a comforting collective memory and a clear national identity for people in the postbellum years.

As a matter of fact, Dan’s appreciation of the American West over Europe, not surprisingly, also echoes the nativist sentiments disclosed in “Walking,” in which Thoreau asserts that he, as an ideal walker, “must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe” (1810). When Bess, the rich, unearthly “princess” in the March family as well as Dan’s secret love object, claims that all the beauty and art of the world are in Rome, Dan’s response is rather Thoreauvian: “Rome is a mouldy old tomb compared to the ‘Garden of the gods’ and my magnificent Rockies” (67). A few sentences later, he sounds even more like Thoreau’s mouthpiece: “I do think people ought to see their own country before they go scooting off to foreign parts, as if the new world wasn’t worth

discovering” (68; my emphasis). Dan’s proclamation has several implications. First, just like Thoreau, Dan values the westward journey into wildness more highly than the eastward journey toward Europe, and American roughness more highly than European sophistication. In this sense, both Dan and Thoreau are reminiscent of seventeenth-century England Pilgrims who fled England (the Old World), crossed the ocean westward, and established settlements in the current Massachusetts (the New World), settlements that would later become New England, the center of the United States for many white Americans. They, just like the Anglo-Saxon “Founding Fathers,” engage in searching for a “new” world and in constructing a national character different from that of the “outdated” European establishments.

Moreover, Dan’s ode to the West also makes him a descendant of the pilgrims and Thoreau’s disciple in terms of shared imperialist sentiments. Just like Thoreau’s westbound walker, Dan believes in the “right” of white Americans to occupy and populate the western land. Designating the West as the “new” world as well as American people’s national territory, Dan finds it worth “discovering” as if the West is an empty, unoccupied space waiting to be “discovered” by its predestined owner—the U.S. white expansionist pioneer. For example, in Little Men, the young Dan intrepidly claims: “I may go to sea, or out west, or take a look at California” (97). Published in 1871, more than twenty years after the gold rush began and California became a part of the United States, Little Men presents a popular picture of the West around that period: a land of gold and opportunities for rough, undaunted, risk-taking people, a land that the adult Dan in Jo’s Boys will eventually march into in order to fulfill his childhood dream, first to try out gold-digging and farming and later to devote himself to missionary work. All in all,

Dan's vision of the West not only reflects Thoreau's and Bronson's influences on Alcott, but it also stems from the general expansionist ambiance in the nineteenth-century U.S. By becoming a westbound marcher, Dan articulates a general expansionist sentiment and a collective national vision, and thus proves himself to be worthy of the entitlement of a pilgrim's descendant as well as a qualified U.S. national subject.

A scene in *Jo's Boys* similarly illustrates how this popular picture of the West was disseminated in the nineteenth-century United States. On his first homecoming to Plumfield, Dan describes his western adventures to his eastern friends and envisions with them the possibility of establishing "Dansville" out West. After hearing Dan's words, the boys all want to follow in Dan's footsteps "to start at once for California and make fortunes" (59); various plans to set up school, newspapers, and hospital in the imaginary Dansville ensue as well. One can say that Dan, in his efforts to convert other people into westbound walkers, partakes of the collective work of mythologizing the West and popularizing westward expansionism. His later account of the two different kinds of Indians, the Montana Indians who love peace and need help versus the Sioux who take delight in fighting and do not deserve help, also falls into the formulaic dualism (noble savage versus heathen brute) that was popular in contemporary U.S. imperialist thinking. Judging by this, Dan is indeed one of Thoreau's select class engaged in westward exploration and expansion.

To sum up, in extolling the West, Dan establishes himself as a kindred spirit of Thoreau's, a true American in Bronson Alcott's blueprint, and a descendant of the so-called most "American" Americans, the New England Pilgrims.¹² I will further argue

¹² In my opinion, Alcott herself was aware of the correlation between Jo's "little men" and the New

that Dan not only can be said to follow in the footsteps of Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and the seventeenth-century Pilgrims, but he can also be viewed as inheriting the legacy of Christopher Columbus and other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century white European navigators who sailed forth to the “New World” and claimed to “discover” a piece of America. It is not a coincidence that Thoreau uses Columbus to illustrate and justify white Americans’ urge to head West in “Walking”: “Columbus felt the westward tendency more strongly than any before. He obeyed it, and found a New World for Castile and Leon” (1811; my emphasis). It is also not a coincidence that several decades later Turner refers to Columbus’ sailing into the “New World” as the harbinger of the westward expansion of the United States (37). All of them belong to the select class of white people that Thoreau describes as “the family of the Walkers,” a distinguished group which expands over centuries and across continents, but into which native Americans as well as Nature’s other non-white children can never be incorporated.

Thoreau’s influences on Alcott’s portrayal of Dan can also be observed in Mr. Hyde, Dan’s friend and tutor who first introduces the young Dan to the beauty of Nature. Not surprisingly, it is Thoreau who serves as the very prototype for Hyde, a naturalist who lives in the woods nearby Plumfield, and who can “tell all the wonderfulest things about fish and flies, and the Indians and the rocks” (147).¹³ In this sense, what Thoreau is to Alcott is similar to what Hyde is to Dan. Through Thoreau/Hyde, Alcott/Dan learns to be a westbound walker who gathers and categorizes foreign specimens, including Indians,

England pilgrims, since in “Thanksgiving,” the final chapter of Little Men, Jo specifically addresses her boys as “my pilgrims,” a usage that can be referred back to March sisters’ love of Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress in Little Women. Later I will elaborate on the ambivalence in viewing Dan as one of the descendants of the pilgrims.

¹³ According to Urbanski, Thoreau serves as prototypes for several characters associated with Nature in Alcott’s writings, including Mr. Hyde in Little Men, Adam Warwick in Moods, David Sterling in Work, and Mac Campbell in Eight Cousins and Rose in Bloom (269).

along the way. For these walkers, Indians are objects of natural study, similar to animals, insects and rocks; they are not original inhabitants of the land and certainly not culturally and racially equal to white Americans. No wonder Dan, as Hyde's disciple (thus Thoreau's disciple by association), is later appointed the curator of the "Laurence Museum," a children's museum sponsored by the wealthy, adventuresome Laurie, where "a queer Indian idol," "a fine Chinese junk in full sail," along with a snake's skin, a big wasps' nest, a large turtle-shell and an ostrich-egg, are on display. This exotic description points to the fact that in the U.S. contexts of nineteenth-century scientific racism, the status of Indians as racialized others is similar to that of wild animals: merely objects of study suited for museum collection and scientific inquiry, not assimilable future national subjects. According to Caroline F. Levander, the Laurence Museum "dramatically redefines the boys' understanding of their relation to the natural world," just as natural history museums popular during the 1870s strove to inculcate a new view of the environment in order to "encourage national progress" as well as to "represent, and thereby reinforce, the new scientific evolutionary model" (43).¹⁴ Through the makeshift natural museum, Dan, along with other little men, learns the "proper" categorization of things according to the scientific evolutionary model, a lesson that prepares them for serving as suitable national subjects in the future.

Dan's association with both the museum, the place to display disparate species and to reinforce the evolutionary framework, and the naturalist, the person to collect those

¹⁴ See Levander's discussion of nineteenth-century museums and her citation of Kevin Walsh, Eileen Hooper, and Tony Bennet (43). I also want to draw attention to the fact that the trend of American International Expositions that started off with the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia shared the same imperialist goal to create a new order of things and to promote the ideal of white supremacy and national progress. See Robert W. Rydell, All the World's a Fair.

species and to propagate scientific racism, foreshadows his future fate as a global imperialist explorer. After accompanying Mr. Hyde on a geological research trip to South America, the grown-up Dan first tries sheep-farming in Australia (a British colony at that time), and then goes to California (a land acquired by the United States not very long after the U.S.-Mexican War) to dig up gold mines. After he goes back East to visit old friends at Plumfield for a short while, he heads toward the West again, intending to try out farming there, but ends up in jail for killing a scoundrel. Leaving jail, Dan resumes his westbound journey, saves twenty men in a mining accident, and returns home an injured hero. To atone for his previous crime of murder, Dan decides to head back West and engage in missionary work to help his old friends the Montana Indians; and in Alcott's words, "he lived, bravely and usefully, among his chosen people till he was shot defending them..." (316). Dan's life illustrates the itinerary of Thoreau's westbound walker; he plays the multiple roles of the pioneer, the missionary, the discipliner, and the imperialist.

Serving as the Disciplined: Dan as a Multiply Racialized Other

As one of Thoreau's westbound walkers, Dan likewise exemplifies the paradoxical, double-edged attitude toward Nature and the wild; that is, while he means to conquer/discipline wild Nature and make it useful for humans and the nation (such as by mining, farming, and exploiting), he is also a man who loves and even identifies with Nature and wildness. However, what makes Dan an extremely ambivalent case and what substantially differentiates him from other walkers is that Dan himself is often described as "wild," as enjoying being with animals more than with human beings, and is even

compared to wild animals such as horses, hawks, and wild buffaloes several times. Furthermore, Dan's wildness is racially coded. Although he is assumed to be white, his supposed racial whiteness is ambivalently shaded by physical "brownness" or "darkness." For instance, Dan is portrayed as "square, and brown, and strong" (LM 156); he has a "keen, dark face" and a "shaggy black head" (JB 54); his hand is described respectively as "the big, brown hand" (LM 244), "one strong, brown hand" (JB 54), and "the brown fist" (JB 226). If whiteness in Little Men, as Levander has convincingly argued, is associated exclusively with middle-class values in contrast to brownness that indicates children's "savage," "uncivilized" origins, the dark, brown Dan can never quite successfully finish his social evolution from the "savage" to the bourgeois citizen as other little men do (40).

Besides general pigmentary terms, Alcott also alludes to various non-white peoples to articulate Dan's wildness and otherness, which include Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards, and Africans.¹⁵ References to Indians abound in the description of Dan in Jo's Boys. Jo often thinks that Dan has Indian blood in him (53); Dan's pride in hiding his true feelings and inner self from others is compared to that of an Indian in "concealing pain or fear" (110). In the prison, it is "with the dumb despair of an Indian at the stake" that Dan tries to face his plight and lets his "lawless spirit" be "tamed" (180). He calls the "peaceful" Montana Indians his brothers, friends, and chosen people (even though he despises the "militant" Sioux), and yearns to go straight to them once his prison life is over so that he can "hide his disgrace" and "heal his wounds"; and in the end he even dies defending

¹⁵ Whereas the image of the Mexican and that of the Spaniard were sometimes overlapping and interchangeable in the nineteenth-century U.S., here I follow Alcott's usage (one is regionally specific; the other is more general) and discuss these two categories separately. See George Mariscal, who claims that "the deep-rooted opposition Anglo/Spanish" in the 19th century "would mutate into Anglo/Mexican" (9).

them (226).

Dan is also likened to “Mexicans.” On his first homecoming trip back East in Jo’s Boys, at Demi’s request, Dan puts on his Mexican-styled outfit, possibly acquired when he was gold-mining in California, for a photo shoot: “he took well, and willingly posed in his Mexican costume, with horse and hound, and all wanted copies of these effective photographs” (78; my emphasis). Later at one of his homecoming parties, Dan dons his Mexican clothing again, and admits that he feels quite “at ease in the many-buttoned trousers” (80). On the one hand, Dan’s ease with his Mexican costume as well as the “effectiveness” of his photos further testifies to his “otherness,” especially because one of the common assumptions in the nineteenth-century U.S. about Mexicans was that they were a “mixed, inferior race with considerable Indian and some black blood” (Horsman 210). On the other hand, the incompatible combination of the Mexican outfit and Dan’s allegedly “white” identity problematizes his claim to be quite at ease in the costume; it also indicates the ambivalent racial status of Mexicans in the nineteenth century, since some Mexicans, usually of higher social status and of European heritage (mostly Spanish), could make a tentative claim to whiteness—in contrast to other racial minority groups such as Native Americans, blacks, and Chinese.¹⁶ This piece of a Mexican outfit shows how the dichotomy of Mexicanness and whiteness is challenged and precariously situated in Dan—a white person who can “effectively” pose as an authentic Mexican, a Mexican-looking man who is, nevertheless, alleged to be racially white. His manifold roles as both the white discipliner and the racialized disciplined testify to the complexity

¹⁶ See Horsman’s account of the 1849 debate over which Californians were “white” and thus were entitled to the right to vote (278). Also see Tomas Almaguer, Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California.

of the notion of Mexicanness in nineteenth century America.

Dan's exotic Mexican photographs also echo Laura Wexler's argument about how "the documentary photographic display" of racialized minorities had become a tool for "public instruction" since the mid-1880s (106). Using the example of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Wexler illustrates how Native Americans were recruited to convene a "spectacular simulacrum of Plains culture"—a culture already threatened by the military invasion and educational reform imposed by the white society (106). In this light, the so-called "revival" of tribal traditions not only already implies the marginalization and even death of these traditions, but it also reflects the cultural imperialism of white Americans who tried to "make sense" of the marginalized cultures by orchestrating racial dioramas and photographic displays and thus instructing people on how to "read," "decode," and "recode" the racialized others. Dan's Mexican-flavored photos can similarly be categorized within this "spectacular simulacrum" of cultural imperialism, since his photos likewise amplify the visual aspect of the "expansionist imperial project of sentimentalism" in Wexler's argument (101). That is to say, his Mexican photographic display in a domestic novel is "effective" not only because he makes a believable, "authentic" Mexican, but also because he makes and masks as a safe, tamed, manageable racialized object of discipline in the eyes of the domestic audience. Contained within these "effective" photos that are meant to disseminate "public instruction," Dan, along with his unorthodoxy, ambivalence, wildness, and racialized profile, is "safely" captured, congealed, and explained by the camera lens; he becomes an exotic, aesthetic object to be appreciated and consumed at a safe distance by his eastern friends and by the readers of Jo's Boys. No matter how "wild" this problematic character is, one can set one's mind at

ease that his otherness/Mexicanness, at least at this moment, is straightened out and made sense of by these effective photographs and, by extension, the instructive domestic fiction—despite the fact that Dan will eventually take off this piece of Mexican clothing, break away from the explanatory framing power of the camera lens, and resume his ambivalent status as the white yet wild other.

Besides the Indian and the Mexican, Dan is called “the Spaniard” by some eastern girls in another party scene that is reminiscent of Paul’s debut in the antislavery novel “M.L.”: “in spite of his [Dan’s] silence, the girls found out his good qualities, and regarded ‘the Spaniard,’ as they named him, with great favor; for his black eyes were more eloquent than his tongue...” (76). Dark and mysterious in appearance, the wild, unorthodox Dan is romanticized, exoticized, and Hispanicized, just like other exotic, sensational, and potentially dangerous racialized and exotic characters created by Alcott. The nickname “Spaniard” puts Dan within the genealogy of Alcott’s racialized and exotic protagonists and thus further implies his status as a potentially dangerous intruder/outsider. It also foreshadows that Dan, just like other Hispanicized protagonists, will play a double role in the future—as both a lovable, identifiable national subject and a fearsome, unpredictable racialized other.

Lastly, painted as dark and brown, Dan can also be associated with Africans in Jo’s Boys.¹⁷ He once plays the role of Othello with Bess as Desdemona in a family tableau vivant, an incident that not only foretells the failure of this love affair but also reinforces Dan’s position as a dark, racialized outsider doomed to retreat from the domestic center

¹⁷ In fact, it is my opinion that in reading about Dan, one cannot help but recall that in the last scene of Little Women there is “a merry little quadroon,” who studies at Plumfield despite racist people’s protestation, yet who simply disappears in the two sequels without any explanation at all. In view of Dan’s ambiguous racial identity, it is possible that this quadroon boy is the precursor of Dan.

stage. Besides that, during his first homecoming trip, Josie (May's youngest daughter) claims that Dan is "big and black as a villain in a play," and asks him to play Arbaces, an Assyrian king whom Josie mistakes for an Egyptian: "We wanted a dark man for the Egyptian; and you [Dan] will be gorgeous in red and white shawls" (57). Whereas this error probably points to Alcott's own false knowledge, it also strongly indicates that as far as Josie, or Alcott, is concerned, it does not matter much what nationality or ethnicity Arbaces really belongs to; this name is simply used to evoke a general idea of some dark, exotic figure that suits Dan well.¹⁸ This incident further reinforces the fact that racialized others could easily become interchangeable with one another, just as some people in the nineteenth-century U.S. assumed that there existed a close affinity between Mexicans and African Americans as well as between Mexicans and Native Americans (Horsman 210, 216). From the viewpoint of the dominant white society, all the racialized others were not that different from one another since each of them, just as Nelson has argued, was simply part of the general otherness that the white nation imagined and constructed in order to define itself. This explains Dan's chameleon-like accessibility to all the different kinds of racialized masks: he can successfully play the roles of the Indian, the Mexican, the Spaniard, Othello the Moor, and Arbaces the "Egyptian" all in the very same novel. His wild nature and dark features associate him with various forms of racial otherness.

To conclude, besides serving as missionary and discipliner, Dan also plays the roles

¹⁸ Josie's mistake is reminiscent of Laurie's stereotypical portrayal of Egyptians in *Little Men*. Using the tone of a storyteller, Laurie narrates his adventures in Egypt to the highly interested "little men and women," adventures that include sailing up the river with "handsome dark men to work his boat" as well as shooting alligators and appreciating "wonderful beasts and birds" (LM 156). Dark Egyptians and foreign beasts are "categorized" by Laurie, the founder of the Laurence Museum, as being on the same level; they are merely entertaining elements in some exotic adventure story, just as they can adequately serve as the exotic items on display in a natural museum. Through stories and museums, Laurie "educates" future national subjects by passing on imperialist knowledge.

of the wild, the disciplined, and the racialized outsider. It is true that he is a westbound walker, but his walk does not exactly fit in with Thoreau's blueprint. Just like his formulaic assumption about two different kinds of Indians, Dan himself also has two sides: he is the disciplined as well as the discipliner, the racialized other as well as the white pioneer. If Dan can be viewed as the all-American hero who epitomizes the positive image of the West in the national imagination during the postbellum years, his problematic double identities also point to the loophole or the dark side of this idealized picture of the West delineated by the dominant culture; that is, the racial minorities in the shadow of nineteenth-century U.S. expansionist imperialism, as shown by all the different racialized masks that Dan "effectively" wears.

White Women's Disciplinary Project concerning Dan

The person to undertake the task of disciplining Dan is none other than Alcott's alter-ego, Jo March, the rebellious heroine in Little Women and the capable matriarch in the two sequels. It is Jo who announces in the beginning of Jo's Boys that Dan is "still untamed" and full of "wayward impulses, strong passions, and the lawless nature," and may need some hard lesson in the future to fulfill the goal of self-discipline (65, 66). This disciplinary project that Jo foretells for Dan is exactly the subject matter of the Dan-centered chapters. Considering Dan "a bad specimen" on their first encounter, Jo at the start is determined to tame this "wild" boy (LM 79). Because she knows Dan "hated restraint of any sort, and fought against it like an untamed creature," she uses kindness, persuasion, and gentle rule, or in Brodhead's words, "disciplinary intimacy," to tame him

(LM 90).¹⁹ This method does work since it turns out that Dan is “more tamed by kindness than he would have been by the good whipping which Asia [the black cook] had strongly recommended” (LM 91).²⁰ Even though the adult Dan claims that he still feels “like a hawk in a henhouse,” he nevertheless obeys Jo’s gentle rule and gradually learns to view himself as a horse “in harness” that needs “a heap of taming” (JB 109, 107).

Furthermore, Jo also becomes the orphan Dan’s surrogate mother through her gentle rule. By claiming that Dan shall be her oldest son, Jo conquers the “wild” boy’s heart completely (LM 186); and from then on Dan begins to address Jo as “mother” from time to time. Later, worried that her “wild” boy might learn some bad ways in the wide world, Jo appeals to Dan’s memory of his biological dead mother to keep him on the right track (JB 111-12). Giving Dan a book about the knight Sintram written by the German romanticist Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, Jo asks Dan to remember Sintram and his love for his mother whenever moods and passions threaten to claim him and cloud his good judgment. All in all, by resorting to motherly influences, Jo tries to discipline Dan, her “little Spartan” as Mr. Bhaer jokingly calls (LM 141), just as Alcott’s antislavery heroines discipline the racialized others by becoming their surrogate mothers.

In Levander’s argument, Jo’s disciplining of Dan as well as her disciplining of other little men and women reflects the contemporary thought that white middle-class children

¹⁹ Explicating Alcott’s use of the cultural configuration called “disciplinary intimacy,” Brodhead has asserted that “the works of Alcott’s that continue to be read not only reactivate a philosophy of disciplinary intimacy little changed from its classic articulations in the 1840s and 1850s: they make this philosophy their founding mythology or privileged system of truth” (70-71). See 70-74 for Brodhead’s full discussion of the Little Women series in terms of disciplinary intimacy. Following Brodhead’s contention, Young further argues that Jo’s use of this model of disciplinary intimacy results in feminization, as the little men “are feminized into adulthood...by their psychic imitation of female self-control” (102).

²⁰ This description also indicates that only the white woman knows how to “properly” enforce discipline. In Little Men and Jo’s Boys, people of color such as the African American cook Asia (whose name further implicates her minority status) and Laurie’s black coachman Peter can only make good servants, following white people’s instruction instead of instructing/disciplining others themselves.

were savage and animal-like, and therefore needed discipline in order to become suitable nationals in the future²¹—a point echoing Kaplan’s contention that the metaphor of manifest domesticity was not only about how to extend female influences outward to “infantilize the colonized,” but it could also be used to regulate the threat of foreignness within the home, that is, “to portray white children as young savages in need of civilizing” (“Manifest” 32). In other words, in the nineteenth-century project of manifest domesticity, not only were racial minorities infantilized, but white children were also barbarized; their representations were closely implicated with each other. However, Dan is a special case. Different from his cohorts, Dan is savage in a double sense: he is savage not only because he was once an animal-like white child in need of discipline, but also because he is a problematically racialized other. As a result, the adult Dan still needs to struggle with his wildness and temper and to receive the lesson of disciplinary intimacy taught by white women. Due to his double identities as the racialized/disciplined and the discipliner/pioneer, he can never truly “grow up” to become an eligible national in the fictional world of *Jo’s Boys*; he has no choice but to stay as one of the “little men.”

One can tell from textual evidence that Dan’s forever “little man” status has everything to do with his role as a racialized wild other. Alcott deliberately emphasizes Dan’s “brownness” or “wildness” whenever he deviates from the “norm” and needs the white woman’s gentle discipline most. When Jo persuades the young Dan to learn to control his passions and wild nature, it is his “big brown, hand” that she is holding in hers (LM 245). When the imprisoned Dan, growing more and more moody, bad-tempered, and

²¹ According to Levander in her discussion of *Little Men*, in the second half of the nineteenth century, American children gradually became identified with “savages” and with the nation’s “savage” origins; as a result, the success in disciplining and civilizing children, especially boys, represented the progress of the nation as a whole (32-37).

violent, intends to break out of prison, it is a little talk about penitence and submission given by a white middle-aged woman who reminds Dan of Jo that saves him from committing further wrong. A later scene that takes place in jail echoes the previous hand-holding scene between Jo and Dan—even though this time the white woman involved is not Jo. When Dan is soon to be released from prison, he looks at his clenched “brown fist,” and remembers penitently the man it killed as well as “a certain little white hand” that has laid in it confidingly (226); this little white hand belongs to Bess, Amy and Laurie’s beloved daughter, another white woman who has disciplined Dan for a long time, and who now guides him along the path of penitence in imprisonment. All in all, by highlighting Dan’s brownness and his penchant for losing his temper and committing violence vis-à-vis the white woman’s power of disciplinary intimacy, Alcott reinforces Dan’s status as a savage in need of the white woman’s gentle rule.

In a way, Jo’s disciplinary project concerning Dan is succeeded and even carried out more effectively by her niece Bess. In Alcott’s description, the power of Bess’s gentle rule is already all-conquering when she is small. When Jo contentedly tells Laurie that her favorite fancy is to observe how well the influences of her little women work upon her little men, she especially points out that the young Bess plays the role of the “lady,” “polishes them [the little men] unconsciously,” uses “her gentle influence to lift and hold them above the coarse, rough things of life, and keep them gentlemen...” (LM 329; my emphasis). Even though the wealthy Bess cannot exactly represent middle-class white women, her capability to impose gentle rule makes her the rightful successor to carry out Jo’s disciplinary project.²² And that is part of the reason why Dan cannot help but feel

²² See Strickland’s Victorian Domesticity for a discussion of the social-class bias in Alcott’s writing (154).

drawn to Bess; her gentle rule is indispensable to him since he needs her to subdue his “otherness” so that he can somehow find a way to participate, albeit awkwardly, in the domestic world of the March family and the domestic novels.

As the little men and women grow up and march into the wide, wide world, Bess’s gentle influence on Dan weighs more and more, even to the point of exceeding Jo’s. Caged within the prison, Dan’s interest gradually turns from Sintram’s tale of filial love, his former favorite, to a more romantic, sentimental love story called “Aslauga’s Knight,” also written by Fouqué, because the blonde spirit Aslauga whom the hero falls in love with reminds him of Bess.²³ In that story, the knight Froda receives an ancient book that tells the story of Aslauga, the blonde queen of Denmark. Infatuated with the dead queen, he begins to feel her spectral presence by his side. She becomes “his guide and guard, inspires him with “courage, nobleness, and truth,” and finally leads him to paradise after he dies; and the two of them become one forever and ever (JB 299). Dan later admits to Jo that it is the thought of Bess mediated through the story “Aslauga’s Knight” that helps him get through the dismal prison life (304). Bess becomes his spiritual guide and guard just as Aslauga does for Froda. After the injured Dan returns home a hero, in his sick bed he asks Bess to read “Aslauga’s Knight” to him, a request that takes Bess by surprise since she can hardly imagine Dan would care for “this romantic German tale” that has no fighting in it and is “very sentimental” (298). In my opinion, Dan’s love of this sentimental tale constitutes the very proof that Dan’s wildness is gradually tamed by Bess’s sentimental gentle rule. It is his devotion to Bess that helps him unearth “the streak of sentiment and refinement which lay concealed in Dan like the gold vein in a

²³ See Christine Doyle for a discussion of the allusions to Fouqué in Jo’s Boys as well as German influences on Alcott’s production of the Little Women series.

rock,” a hidden temperament which he, in Jo’s view, inherits from his dead mother (299). Through the help of all these white women, including his biological mother, Jo, the white lady who gives a lecture in prison, and finally Bess, Dan becomes “Aslauga’s Knight,” who upholds the ideal of sentimentality and obeys the white woman’s gentle guidance. It does seem that the wild other is eventually conquered by the white women and incorporated into the sentimental tales, including both “Aslauga’s Knight” and Jo’s Boys.

Even so, the taming of Dan’s wildness is still precariously maintained within the sentimental story structure. Although his love for Bess enables him to discipline himself, he can neither be with her nor win her love. He is, after all, a dangerous, wild, and racialized other, and can only serve as an outsider in the domestic novel.²⁴ In other words, even if Dan is eventually tamed by the white woman’s sentimental discipline, he as a potentially dangerous and problematically racialized other still cannot turn into the leading figure in charge of the future of the nation/home; he can become Jo’s son, but he can never transform into some decent lady’s husband and have a family and children of his own in the national household.²⁵ As the grown-up Dan gradually replaces mother’s love with romantic love as his guiding strength (as shown by his turn of interest from “Sintram” to “Aslauga’s Knight”), the problematic position that he occupies in a domestic narrative becomes more and more obvious.

As the matriarch of the March family as well as the guard of domestic values, Jo herself forbids the fulfillment of Dan’s love: “The conviction of this sad yet natural fact

²⁴ Dan’s outsider status as well as his unsuitability to be a married man also has to do with his role as a lonely Western hero in a domestic novel, a point that I will recount later.

²⁵ The same problem occurs in the case of Robert in “My Contraband.” Yet, since Dan is at least generally assumed to be racially white, his tragic ending makes Jo’s Boys an even more politically conservative work than “My Contraband.”

came to Mrs Jo with a pang, for she felt how utterly hopeless such a longing was; since light and darkness were not farther apart than snow-white Bess and sin-stained Dan” (300; my emphasis). From Jo’s viewpoint, it is a “natural” fact that the dark outsider Dan cannot be with the white princess Bess, the rightful successor of Jo’s disciplinary project. Since Dan is considered to be potentially dangerous to the welfare of the domestic household, Jo even has to contrive with Amy to skillfully send Bess away in order to prevent some possible harm from being done. After Dan finally leaves for the West, it is telling that Amy feels “glad to be at home and find no wolves prowling near her sheepfold” (313; my emphasis). Here Dan is compared to a wolf that poses a potential threat to the peaceful domestic world, and thus must be driven out to the West, the natural habitat for wild animals like him in the New England imagination.

Even the westward exile does not seem to be enough. Jo further sentences Dan to lifelong solitude: “she felt that...this hapless affection might do more to uplift and purify him than any other he might know. Few women would care to marry Dan now, except such as would hinder, not help, him in the struggle which life would always be to him; and it was better to go solitary to his grave...” (305). From the white matriarch’s point of view, Dan cannot have Bess; nor can he have any other mate. The wild other is still a child/son to be disciplined and reformed. The most pressing task for him is to follow the white woman’s maternal dictates and try to grow into “adulthood” (even though it is a task that he can never fully accomplish); it is not to start his own family.

Since Dan is still a “little man” who has not matured enough by Jo’s standard (just as foreign or racialized others were generally viewed as “children” who needed guidance in the nineteenth-century U.S.), her experimentation on him, the boy whom she viewed as

“a bad specimen” when they first met, has not ended yet. Just as Jo concludes toward the end of Jo’s Boys, “the seed had fallen on very stony ground with my poor Dan; but I shall not be surprised if he surpasses all the rest in the real success of life” (315). Dan’s final task is to meet this expectation of Jo’s; and to fulfill this mission, he needs to be sent into exile in the wild West, where he can “safely” continue harboring his unrequited love and live his mateless lonely life. After all, even though he has somehow been tamed, he still embodies otherness and may pose a danger to the peaceful domestic world; thus it becomes necessary to send him off and let him continue the disciplinary lesson somewhere else. In the end, Dan draws his last breath fighting as a missionary for Indians, an assignment further confirming his wholehearted upholding of the disciplinary project of white womanhood. He dies “with a lock of golden hair upon his breast, and a smile on his face which seemed to say that Aslauga’s Knight had fought his last fight and was at peace” (316). The only way for the wild other to maintain a place in the domestic realm is to become “Aslauga’s Knight,” who fights his battle in deference to the white woman’s gentle rule, and who can only be united with his beloved blonde spirit after he dies. Dan’s otherness, as Young has pointed out, is “too explosive for the text”; as a result, “Alcott’s ‘Othello’ has no place in her disciplined and whitened body politic” (104).²⁶

²⁶ Dan’s final fate serves as an interesting contrast to Paul’s story in the antislavery narrative “M.L.” Whereas the racialized Cuban ex-slave Paul can have the white U.S. woman Claudia’s love as well as his own family and a supporting community, Dan can only be sent into exile and live a mateless life. The difference can possibly be traced to the fact that the slavery background of “M.L.” is set outside the U.S. , so the interracial, cross-class relationship between Paul and Claudia seems less explosive. The other reason, in my opinion, lies in the fact that Alcott wrote “M.L.” at a time when she was still experimenting with different kinds of genres that include elite literature, domestic novels, and sensational stories; and she often combined all these elements in a single piece of work. Accordingly, she might have more freedom in handling more politically sensitive issues and non-domestic materials, such as exoticism, femme fatales, racialized others, miscegenation, and interracial love in her earlier writings. The success of Little Women made her a writer of children’s literature who was supposed to uphold the ideal of domesticity without reservation, and as a result might have restrained her creative freedom and political progressiveness.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the middle-class white woman and the wild other, just as I have recounted in chapter one, is more complicated, and is not confined to the hierarchical model in which the white woman serves as the discipliner and the wild other serves as the disciplined. Instead, besides playing the role of the discipliner, the white woman also needs to impose self-discipline since there are, in Kaplan's words, "traces of foreignness" in the interiority of the female subject "that must be domesticated or expunged" ("Manifest" 43). Based upon this argument, I would like to reassess and problematize the white woman's role in the two sequels of the March trilogy and in the contexts of U.S. westward expansion.

Jo's (Self-)Discipline and U.S. Imperial Westward Expansion

On the one hand, the West in Jo's Boys symbolizes a free land for middle-class white women, since in Alcott's delineation, it not only promotes gender equality but also sanctions the franchise for women. When the "New Woman" Nan laments over the fact that women cannot vote, Dan immediately urges Nan to go West as she can vote there as much as she wants, and even can become mayor or alderman if she likes (JB 68). Just as Erisman has pointed out, Alcott, a firm advocate of women's suffrage herself, was probably aware of the fact that white women in Wyoming and Utah were the only group of U.S. women that had the right to vote at the time when she was composing Jo's Boys (309). It stands to reason that Alcott praises the ideas of freedom and gender equity symbolized by the West through the mouth of her most unrestrained character: Dan. Through Dan as well as the values he represents, Alcott tries to imagine a gender egalitarian western Utopia where new visions and possibilities abound, where the tomboy

Nan, another “wild” character and possibly another alter-ego of Alcott, can launch her career along with Dan. Even though Nan does not go West with Dan in the end, the West as a land of hope and equality where both the wild racialized other and the unorthodox white woman can freely prosper remains a vivid image in the text.

On the other hand, although the middle-class white woman appreciates the wild West and the spirit of freedom it represents, she could still participate in prolonging the expansionist myth of manifest destiny; that is, in violating minority peoples’ land and freedom. In Alcott’s fictional world, it is the white woman Jo who is in charge of the task of taming the wild (whether in herself or in others) and of disseminating imperialist ideas of westward expansion. Jo’s approval and even encouragement of Dan’s association with the naturalist Mr. Hyde illustrate this point. Discussing with Dan the farmer Page’s depreciatory view of Mr. Hyde, Jo claims that “a naturalist’s work was just as interesting, and perhaps just as important as” a farmer’s work (LM 147). In view of the fact that the role of “farmer” serves as a significant cultural ideal in U.S. literary and national traditions, Jo does hold Mr. Hyde and naturalists in high esteem.²⁷ Similar in spirit to her old habit of exclaiming “Christopher Columbus!” whenever she feels shocked or excited (a habit that has lasted from her girlhood to motherhood), Jo’s appreciation of naturalists and, by extension, the evolutionary model upheld by them implicate the white woman’s involvement in imperialist and expansionist enterprises.

Furthermore, by cultivating and civilizing the little men and then sending them off to all over the world, the white woman Jo, who never leaves New England all her life, takes part in the global expansionist project of the nineteenth-century U.S.—“Jo was so used to

²⁷ One of the famous examples is Crèvecoeur’s 1782 Letters from an American Farmer.

fitting boys off for all quarters of the globe that a trip to the North Pole would not have been too much for her” (JB 27). After the little men grow to manhood, Ned departs to Chicago as a lawyer; Franz to Hamburg as a merchant; Nat to Leipsic and London as a musician; Emil to Europe and the ocean as a sailor; and the future missionary Dan to South America, Australia, California, and finally to Montana. These boys, following Jo’s gentle rule, grow up to become new pilgrims and embark on global pilgrimage. In this sense, Dan’s frequent westbound journey and his eventual missionary trip should be viewed in the context of this nineteenth-century global expedition and migration; the demarcation line between the domestic and the foreign was not that clear-cut after all.

This notion of global pilgrimage can in fact be traced back to the reenactment of John Bunyan’s allegorical novel Pilgrim’s Progress by the March sisters in Little Women. For the young March sisters, the idea of pilgrimage symbolizes a rite of passage to attain patience and self-control for the construction of a wholesome domestic/family life.²⁸ In a similar grain, only after the little men go through the domestic Bunyanesque pilgrimage to learn the lesson of self-discipline taught by the white woman, can they be fully prepared to embark on the global pilgrimage of cultural, political, and economic conquest. In this light, even though the white woman is for the most part confined within the domestic realm, she, through her disciplinary teaching, can still become an imperialist pilgrim/walker who marches into the world and the wild West, not only with love and appreciation but also with the intention to tame and to conquer.

Yet the white woman’s role as the discipliner is problematized by the fact that

²⁸ See Anne K. Phillips for a discussion of the idea of pilgrims in the sentimental tradition in general. According to her, “the power of the pilgrims as embodied in Little Women” in fact “stems from the sentimental tradition” in which protagonists find power and satisfaction through self-reliance and self-control (214).

domestication, just as Kaplan has illustrated, is an uneven, precarious process. Whereas female influences can be extended outward to civilize the wild and the foreign, foreignness can also be brought inward into the home and endanger the domestic/national household. This potential danger not only comes from the racialized other, but in fact can also be likened to the latent foreignness or the subversive potential within the white woman herself. In this sense, the racialized other is dangerous also because he bears similarities to the white woman and may trigger her latent wildness to the point of no return. Accordingly, even though the unorthodox woman may have more chances to prosper and to achieve equality in the wild West, even though she may explore other possibilities of life by deviating from the norm and associating with other wild, deviant, and even racialized characters, Alcott chooses not to follow this dangerous, yet more radical direction. She would not let Nan (a wild, unorthodox New Woman just like the young Jo) go West with Dan; nor would she entertain the possibility of pairing Nan and Dan, the two kindred spirits, together. Instead, Alcott focuses on delineating Dan's disciplinary relationships with the more "orthodox" white women, such as "Mother Bhaer" Jo and Bess.

As the former "unorthodox" and the present "orthodox," Jo plays a distinctive yet ambivalent role of identifying with and disciplining Dan at the same time. Just as Young has asserted, as Jo transforms into the matriarch of Plumfield in charge of the little men, "Jo's own topsy-turvyness" is displaced onto the 'topsy-turvy heads' of boys..." (102). In other words, by disciplining Dan, Jo displaces her inner foreignness onto him and engages in her own self-discipline. Her relationship with Dan in fact repeats that between Marmee and herself. When Marmee admits to the young Jo that she was once as wild as

Jo and even now still needs to discipline herself from time to time, she uses herself as an example to urge the young Jo to practice self-discipline. The adult Jo, now “Mother Bhaer,” takes over Marmee’s job, and devotes herself to transforming the little men into proper national subjects; and Dan, as later incidents show, becomes her most challenging task.

Yet in a way, Dan is also her most personal task, since Jo and Dan, the former disciplined and the current disciplined, share a lot of things in common. Their relationship consists in identification as well as discipline. Jo often views Dan as her alter ego as well as a kindred spirit. She once confesses to Professor Bhaer that “I was [like him] in spirit...I seem to know by instinct how he feels, to understand what will win and touch him, and to sympathize with his temptations and faults” (LM 141). Since Dan reminds Jo of her former self, disciplining him thus becomes a way of imposing self-discipline. Furthermore, since Jo is generally acknowledged to be Alcott’s alter ego, one could maintain that through disciplining Jo and through Jo’s disciplining of Dan, Alcott engages in self-discipline as well, self-discipline that is necessary for her to curb her wildness and passions and to turn into a well-disciplined little woman, especially in deference to her father’s wishes.²⁹ No wonder Martha Saxton calls Dan “Louisa’s favorite character and alter ego” in Little Men—he is, after all, Jo’s alter ego and beloved son as well as the heir to her wildness (371).

Just like Dan, the young Jo in Little Women is repeatedly associated with wildness and the color “brown”; for example, in the opening pages of the novel, she is portrayed as

²⁹ See Halttunen, Brodhead, and Young for a discussion of Bronson Alcott’s disciplining of Louisa May Alcott.

“rough,” as “very tall, thin and brown, and remind[ing] one of colt.”³⁰ One would immediately notice the similarity between the words Alcott uses to illustrate the young Jo (such as “brown,” “colt,” and “rough”) and the portrayal of Dan; the young Jo is just as wild and untamable as Dan. It comes as no surprise that the two sequels make no mention of Jo’s brownness. What Jo’s brownness reflects is her unorthodox wildness that distinguishes her from “normative” white womanhood; once she makes a successful transition from the untamed tomboy to the white middle-class matriarch, her brownness naturally fades out of the picture. That is where the differences between Jo and Dan lie; whereas she can successfully tame her wildness, “shed” her brown skin tone, and become a discipliner upholding domestic values, Dan’s wildness is barely tamed, and thus he needs to be driven out of the domestic realm in the end.

To sum up, Little Men and Jo’s Boys are not only about the education of (white) children and their maturation into adults, but they are also narratives about how the white woman manages and tames wildness, racialized otherness, and non-whiteness both in others and in herself—a point exemplified by Jo’s self-discipline and her disciplining of all the semi-savage little men (with the racialized Dan as the toughest case); and by the racial hierarchy in the self-appointed “egalitarian” utopia of Plumfield, in which blacks play unimportant menial roles such as cooks and coachmen, and only whites can play

³⁰ Jo’s brownness, according to Michelle Ann Abate, likens her to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s well-known character, the naughty, unruly black slave girl Topsy. Quoting Hazel Carby and Patricia Hill Collins, Abate contends that since people in the nineteenth-century U.S. “associated whiteness with such traits as civility, decorum, and self-control, and blackness with the characteristics of unruliness, impulsiveness, and excess” (62), all of Jo’s “non-white” traits, such as her brown skin tone, her passionate outbursts, her rebellion against gender norms, and her topsy-turviness, connect her to the uncivilized Topsy. Also see Young, who uses the idea of topsy-turviness to connect Stowe’s Topsy with Alcott’s reconstruction of a feminized nation consisting of masculinized women and feminized men. According to Young, “Alcott...inherits from Stowe both a topsy-turvy self and a feminized nation and the corresponding tension these models establish between carnival and discipline” (70).

leading roles and serve as employers/discipliners (or the future ones).

Dan as an Injured War Veteran and a Western Hero

I would like to further examine the ambivalent position of Dan by turning to discuss the seemingly “scarce” allusions to the Civil War in the March trilogy. By doing so, I not only want to argue for the prominent role that the war actually plays in the novels, but I also intend to look at Dan as both the injured war veteran and the Western hero, and thus situate the discussion in the complex interconnections between the Civil War and westward expansion, and between the North-East axis and the East-West axis.

In view of the fact that the March trilogy, published respectively in 1868/69, 1871, and 1886, attracted a vast readership and that Alcott was often “praised as a quintessentially ‘American’ writer,”³¹ one wonders what the almost nonexistent presence of African Americans and the obscure allusions to the Civil War in the novels suggest about U.S. society and racial discourses in the post-bellum years. Although at first sight these three domestic novels seem to have little to do with the war, part one and part two of Little Women are in fact respectively set during the Civil War and right after the war; as for the two sequels, whereas the narratives take place approximately around the time of their publication and thus are somewhat at a distance from the war, the image of the

³¹ As for Alcott’s quintessential Americanness, see Barbara Sicherman, “Reading Little Women: The Many Lives of a Text.” In Sicherman’s opinion, “Although often considered a ‘new England writers,’ she [Alcott] was also praised as a quintessentially ‘American’ writer, a sign both of new England’s dominance in the American literary tradition and of Alcott’s prominent place within it” (645). Also see Sicherman’s quote of the early twentieth-century New England writer Franklin B. Sanborn, who deemed Alcott very American in “her humor, her tastes, her aspirations, her piety” (645, no.1). Ann Douglas has similarly emphasized Alcott’s Americanness, claiming that in composing Little Women, Alcott was “writing about a family that offered an analogy and possibly a corrective to America” (“Introduction” 48). Stern in Louisa May Alcott: A Biography also calls Little Women “a domestic novel that reflects American home life for the enjoyment of American youth” (quoted from the Norton Critical Edition of Little Women, 434).

war still looms large, especially in Jo's Boys. All in all, I follow Young's assertion that the Civil War "became a defining presence in her [Alcott's] writing for the next twenty-five years" after she ended her short career as a nurse serving in a Union army hospital (71), and my goal here is to explicate this "defining presence" in relation to Dan.

A couple of scholars before Young have explicated the importance of the war in Alcott's composition of Little Women. Judith Fetterley is probably the first to point out the war connection by claiming that the Civil War is "an obvious metaphor for internal conflict" within the white woman herself ("Civil" 370). In her opinion, Jo's taming her temper at home can be likened to facing Confederate soldiers on the battlefield; so, even though Jo "March" does not really get to "march" into the battlefield as she wishes, she engages in the tougher task of self-discipline.³²

Other scholars have approached the topic of the war connection from angles such as capitalism, race relations, and the reconstruction of the home/nation. Ann Douglas views the self-sufficient happy family of the Marches as "America's last completely self-reliant enterprise" in the face of the nation's "shift from small, economically self-supporting units to the interlocked, interdependent large structures of full-scale capitalism" in the post-Civil War era ("Introduction" 61). Janice M. Alberghene, in view of the absence of black bodies in Little Women, has argued that although the United States did not become one big equalitarian happy family that embraced black communities by the end of Reconstruction, the story of the "white" Marches implies that happiness could still be

³² In "Waiting Together: Alcott on Matriarchy," Nina Auerbach points out that the last name March "suggests militancy, as when Louisa departed for the Civil War more as soldier than as healer: 'I was ready, and when my commander said "March!" I marched'" (20). While I agree that the name "March" has a strong war implication, I, following Young's argument, contend that Alcott came to the war also as a healer with the intention of nursing the injured nation back to health and transforming it into a new kind of feminized Republic inhabited by disciplined little women and feminized little men.

found in the white family; that is, by focusing on the reunification and enlargement of the white March family, Alcott “has effectively whitewashed the Civil War, the battle of wage labor vs. slave labor,” and turned it into an internal war of “four white girls struggling between duty and desire” (364, 365). Household bliss thus becomes a symptom of national amnesia; the success of the reconstruction of the white family covers up the disorder and the intensifying racial conflicts in the national household.

There are several critics who focus on the reconstruction of home values and the renegotiation of national ideologies in Alcott’s interpretation of the war in Little Women. Quoting Jane Nylander, David H. Watters maintains that by the end of the war, “a romanticized image of the New England home with a family gathered around the fireside provided ‘a sense of continuity—a firm ground from which one could set forth to face whatever life had to offer in the city, the Far West, or abroad’” (191). This argument partly explains why Little Women, along with its two sequels and Alcott’s other juvenile novels, became so popular at the time, and why they were even said to represent American life in general. The sense of loss after the war could only be quelled by realigning with a wholesome home life, and the social turbulence in the postwar era could only be faced through nostalgically reimagining an ideal, united domestic household—and these, in Watters’ opinion, were the needs that Alcott’s domestic series had met (191).

Whereas Watters focuses on the March girls’ reconstruction of the domestic household, other scholars have observed explicit parallels between the little women’s maturation and the rebuilding of the national household. Douglas claims that Alcott was rewriting national history in Little Women by delineating “a house conflicted but not

divided, a family that offered an analogy and possibly a corrective to America” (48). While “this corrective,” in Douglas’ view, means “a feminist American dream” as shown by the well-matured March women (“Introduction” 62), it, in Young’s argument, consists in regenerating the post-war nation through disciplining male citizens into self-disciplined “little women,” a task that the adult Jo will devote herself to in the two sequels. According to Young, in Alcott’s disciplinary blueprint, the lesson of self-mastery taught by the white woman becomes the very way to achieve national regeneration after the war (102).³³

Young further argues that Jo’s Boys “reemphasizes the symbolic importance of the Civil War to this small world” that Jo imagines for her little women and men through the image of the injured Civil War soldier. This novel, in her opinion, is “haunted by narratives of Civil War injury,” an argument exemplified by a little play enacted by Plumfield residents that features an injured soldier who finally reunites with his mother in a wartime hospital (103). This episode shows that memories of the war were still vivid and present even if the war had already ended two decades ago.³⁴ Even Plumfield itself, as Young has convincingly demonstrated, can be viewed as “a well-run hospital for the male psyche,” where Jo, the chief nurse, disciplines her little men, and creates a new set of feminized national values (102).

Most important of all, the Civil War, in Young’s opinion, also “functions as a significant frame” for one of the novel’s major characters: the Western hero Dan (103).

³³ Also see Anne Dalke, “‘The House-Band’: The Education of Men in Little Women.” According to Dalke, Little Women is less about the reinvention of girlhood than “the opportunities provided by the strength and stability of the March matriarchy for reinventing manhood”; that is, the sons, husbands, and fathers in the novel are “reeducated by the women they love,” and “rework masculinity on a female model” (557).

³⁴ Meg’s account of the war to her son Demi, in my opinion, similarly illustrates the significance of the war in Jo’s Boys: “I hope there will never be another war in my time, for I should have to let you go, and I never want to live through the same experience we had with father” (JB 166).

Building on Young's argument about Dan's role as one of Alcott's injured soldiers, I want to further highlight the maternal female influence in affecting and transforming this role. Imprisoned and downhearted, Dan is inspired by a philanthropist white lady's story about two wounded soldiers in a hospital during the late war, in which the one who believes more in patience, submission, and self-rule gets to live while the other dies repenting of his former obstinacy (JB 185). The moral message that the white lady means to disseminate is that this prison can be seen as "a hospital for soldiers wounded in life's battle," where the wounded one, such as Dan, must learn penitence and submission in order to begin anew—if, the lady argues, not for their own sakes, at least for "that of the dear mothers, wives, and children, who wait and hope so patiently" for them (JB 186). Using this little story, Alcott not only sentimentalizes and aestheticizes Civil War experiences from the viewpoint of the 1880s, but she also transforms the war into a tool for carrying out the white woman's disciplinary project of feminizing nationhood and male subjects in the post-war years. The war becomes a disciplinary instrument and an aesthetic symbol for reconsolidating, unifying, and feminizing the white nation, whereas one of the original goals of the war, emancipation, seems to fade out from the picture.

This argument, in my opinion, testifies to David Blight's contention that in the post-war years, the forces of reconciliation and reunion overwhelmed the emancipationist vision in the national culture, and trumped and suppressed the issue of race. The Civil War story told by Silas, a servant at Plumfield who has a "big red face," also illustrates this point. At the children's request, Silas tells them how he, when serving in the Union army, once saved a Confederate soldier on the battlefield; and he concludes the story with a sense of comfort that "he and his enemy forgot their feud, and helped one another like

brothers” (LM 299). Again, the reunion of the North and the South holds the spotlight, while the issue of race is suppressed, a point echoed by Silas’s ambivalent racial identity hinted by his “big red face.” Silas’s never-addressed racial status creates a counter-narrative in his little tale of national reunion and brotherly love; behind Silas’s glamorizing and aestheticizing of his Civil War experiences, there loom race issues left unnarrated and unsolved. All in all, in the March trilogy, post-war controversies such as regional tensions and racial conflicts are superseded by the story of national unification advanced by the white woman’s disciplinary project.

Moreover, this postbellum story of national unification is framed and mapped out by a positive, aestheticizing portrayal of the West and westward expansion. By likening the global traveler Dan’s disciplinary journey and westbound pilgrimage to the story of an injured Civil War soldier, Alcott finds a way to connect the war to U.S. westward expansion and the North-South axis to the East-West axis in the Little Women series. More specifically speaking, in Alcott’s delineation, Dan, as an injured soldier in life’s battle, finally learns to tame his wildness with the help of the white woman’s disciplining by participating in the imperialist sweep westward across the nation. I would like to delve into this argument in two parts: one is the white woman’s disciplinary project in the postwar contexts; the other is the function of the West in patching up the injured postbellum nation as symbolized by the Western hero and the injured soldier Dan.

In Alcott’s blueprint, the injured soldier Dan, symbolizing the disorderly post-war national body, needs the white woman’s guidance to recover from the trauma; that is, he as well as the nation must receive lessons of sentimentalizing and feminizing to be able to reimagine home and home values in new ways, ways that situate white women as

discipliners and chief caretakers in charge of the nation as well as a whole republic of sentimentalized, feminized men. In this sense, Dan's eventual western missionary not only testifies to the success of Jo's disciplinary project but also endorses the white woman's ability to solve the dilemma of the postwar nation. From Alcott's point of view, only when the home front is reconsolidated through this kind of mechanism of feminization, can the nation more effectively handle the dramatic social and political changes in the post-war years, such as westward expansion, encounters with non-white minorities within and beyond the borders, the influx of immigrants, and intensifying urbanization and industrialization.³⁵

Whereas it is true that the popularity enjoyed by the Little Women series can be attributed to the idealized, wholesome vision of home and home values promoted in the novels that became extremely important in face of all the dramatic changes in the postbellum era, one should not forget that this revisionary project of Alcott's also consists in her progressive belief in the prospects of the new sentimentalized, feminized nation. Her domestic novels not only show that national reunion and domestic consolidation, albeit disparate at first sight, are actually inextricably interrelated to each other in the post-war era; more importantly, they also show that the house divided, whether national or domestic, must be reunited and reconsolidated through the mechanism of feminization in order to start off toward new missions and new heights—such as the collective marching into the West, whether armed with swords or packaged with missionary

³⁵ For example, Dan's case illustrates the white woman's vision of westward expansion; the egalitarian Plumfield and Dan's eventual role as an Indian missionary represent the white woman's solutions to the postwar controversies concerning racial minorities; the inclusion of Professor Bhaer and his two nephews into the March family symbolizes the acceptance of German immigrants (whereas Irish people are portrayed as poor or lowly in Little Women); Jo's critique of city life, the trend of money-making, and industrialization in Jo's Boys reinforce the author's fascination with the wild West.

goodwill.

Dan's eventual mission in the West, in this light, represents part of Alcott's answer to predicaments plaguing the postbellum nation: that is, go West in order to regenerate oneself and to "purify" one's wildness as well as to disseminate the spirit of the new, feminized Americanness delineated in the white woman's disciplinary project. This solution offered by the white woman in fact echoes Turner's extolling of the West as a collective symbol of national consolidation in place of the sectional conflict symbolized by the Civil War; it also reminds one of Thoreau's composing his ode to the westward walker during the high time of the sectional conflict. However, while in all of the three texts the vision of national unification is mapped out by suppressing race issues and by imagining infinite territorial expansion into the West, Alcott's project has a gender dimension to it. In her delineation, the injured soldier/nation, symbolized by Dan, is revived not only by the West, but also by the white woman's nurturing and disciplining. All these contribute to the complicated role that Dan plays: besides being ambivalently portrayed as both white and racialized, he also occupies a strategic position at the nexus between the North-South axis and the East-West axis, between Civil War memories and westbound imperialist endeavors, between the injured soldier and the Western hero, and between the disciplined "little woman" and the romanticized macho man.

Alcott's Ambivalence: Negotiations between Domestic Novels and Dime Westerns in the Postbellum Years

Dan's double identity as both the disciplined little woman and the masculinized Western hero, in my opinion, also reflects an ongoing complicated dialogue between the

domestic novel and the dime Western in Jo's Boys.³⁶ To fully address this point, I want to discuss the relation between domestic novels and dime Westerns both in general and in the particular case of Alcott, and then try to situate this relation in the post-war cultural and social contexts.

According to Gregg Camfield in “The Sentimental and Domestic Traditions, 1865-1900,” although literary historians at one time have generally assumed that the sentimental formula reached its peak before the war and was succeeded by realism after 1865, and although most literary critics working on nineteenth-century sentimental literature still focus on the antebellum period, sentimental and domestic traditions persisted in the post-bellum years, and infiltrated many disparate genres, forms, and ideas, including literary realism, local color writings, children’s literature, political criticism, religion teaching, class and race theories, and the widespread nostalgia over antebellum ideals. The long-lasting popularity of Alcott’s Little Women series precisely testifies to the persistent presence of sentimental and domestic traditions in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This period of time also witnessed the flourishing of another genre: the dime Western. According to Bill Brown, the dime Western had thrived “from 1860 to 1900” (1).

³⁶ Whereas dime novels cover various kinds of subject matter, I will focus on dime Westerns in my discussion. After all, the Western takes up a significant portion of the dime novel industry. According to Daryl Jones, all the other types of dime novels were “outstripped in popularity by the Western” (7-8). Quoting Philip Durham, he further claims that “approximately three-fourths of the dime novels deal with the various forms, problems, and attitudes of life on the frontier, and that more than half are concerned with life in the trans-Mississippi West” (8). Similarly, John R. Milton asserts that “the frontier West with its wildness and romance...became the setting of most of the dime novels” (10). Charles Bragin, the dean of dime novel collectors during the 1930s and 1940s, notes that the term “dime novel” means paper-covered “lurid literature of the [American] west, detectives, bandits, etc.” (quoted from LeBlanc 14). Edward T. LeBlanc maintains that the earliest dime novels feature “American subjects” such as “historical fiction, biographies, or novels of the contemporary American west” (15). See Jones for an excellent introduction to the dime novel Western. See LeBlanc for a short history of the dime novel. Also see Ramsey and Derounian-Stodola; Vicki Anderson 61-125.

Daryl Jones has similarly noted that “almost all Westerns written between 1860 and 1902 appeared as dime novels or story papers printed on cheap pulp paper...” (4).³⁷ In view of the fact that sentimental and domestic traditions infiltrated so many different forms in the second half of the nineteenth century, one wonders what kind of connection they might have with the dime Western. I would argue that the relation between these two presents an on-going dialogue that more or less starts from entanglement and similarities to division and antithesis. During the early years of the dime novel industry, the sentimental domestic tradition and the dime Western, just like the sentimental and the sensational in Jonathan Elmer’s argument, often crisscrossed each other’s path. Elements of the sentimental form appeared in the early dime novels, just as sensational elements can often be observed in sentimental/domestic writings. For example, Colin T. Ramsey and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola contend that early dime novels, “particularly those of the 1860s, followed their story paper predecessors’ inclusion of various genres in order to reach as broad an audience as possible” (267). Using Ann Sophia Stephens’ Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter (a 1860 dime novel reprinted from its 1839 serialized version published in the middle-class women’s magazine Ladies’ Companion) as an example, they put into the spotlight the existence of sentimental elements within the early dime novels.³⁸ In a similar vein, June Johnson Bube discusses the diversity of

³⁷ John R. Milton also asserts that “the golden years of the cowboy began at the end of the Civil War,” and that by the time when the cattle industry declined in the 1880s, the cowboy was “already established as a romantic hero...” (15). He further notes that “four simultaneous phenomena which had a great deal to do with the development of the modern western”: “the first dime novel was published in 1860, the cattle industry began to thrive shortly after the Civil war, Bret Harte’s famous stories ‘The Luck of Roaring Camp’ and ‘The Outcasts of Poker Flat’ were published in 1868 and 1869, and gold was officially reported in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1874” (9).

³⁸ Whereas Jane Tompkins’ focus is on twentieth-century Western novels and movies, her argument can shed some light on the current discussion. In West of Everything, Tompkins illustrates what Ramsey and Derounian-Stodola calls “a surprising thematic connection between twentieth-century Western novels and nineteenth-century domestic ‘sentimental’ novels” (267) by arguing that these two genres share a

subject matter in early dime Westerns written by women during the 1860s—novels that in their best moment “place women’s experiences and women characters as agents and main actors at the center of their exciting, risky western adventures”—in contrast to the “predominantly male world of danger, physical trials and combat, capture, rescue, and violence” that characterizes the dime Western in the 1870s and 1880s (68, 66).³⁹ All in all, the early dime novels in the 1860s presented a more diversified, complicated world where female characters could play more active roles and promote female virtues in the wild West, where sensational and sentimental elements were blended together to offer both entertainment and social critique—even though later the motif of the woman’s sentimental teaching and discipline would gradually fade out from the picture of the Western and be displaced by a predominantly masculine portrayal of the West.⁴⁰

On the other hand, sensational elements can also be found in postbellum domestic novels. Alcott’s March trilogy immediately comes to mind as an example. As a novelist whose writing career roughly corresponds to the flourishing period of the dime Western, and who, albeit well-known for her children’s literature, engaged in sensational writing at

disciplinary model that mandates both the sentimental heroine and the Western hero suffer their plight with patience (125-27). Yet on the other hand, Tompkins generally maintains that the twentieth-century Western arose in reaction to the nineteenth-century domestic novel. In her argument, the twentieth-century Western can be viewed as “the antithesis of the cult of domesticity that dominated American Victorian culture,” since this genre was created against the women’s invasion of the public sphere that took place between 1880 and 1920 (39). Whether one agrees with Tompkins’s assumption about the causal relationship between the two genres, they do seem to be antithetical in terms of scenery, plots, subject matters, and characterization. This argument, in my opinion, does not contradict and even somewhat corresponds to my assertion that the relation between the nineteenth-century dime Western and the domestic novel starts from entanglement and similarities to division and antithesis. All in all, whereas the early dime Western produced during the 1860s contained more domestic, sentimental motifs, these motifs gradually disappeared in the later dime Western and its offspring, the twentieth-century Western.

³⁹ In Bube’s account, eight women authored about a fifth of the early dime novels published during the 1860s; however, most of them stopped writing dime novels after the 1860s (68; 83, no.4).

⁴⁰ The argument that female characters play more active roles in early dime novels echoes Alice Fahs’ interpretation of the sensational Civil War literature, which, in her opinion, portrayed more active, transgressive roles for women during the war (230-32). Also see my earlier account about the connection between the war and the subversive female power in chapter one.

one time and even published three dime novels herself, Alcott makes an interesting case for one to examine the conjunction between the sentimental/domestic tradition and the dime Western after 1860.⁴¹ Her delineation of both Jo and Dan exactly testifies to the influences of the sensational form of writing on her domestic children's literature. Jo's non-whiteness and her topsy-turvy traits, in Abate's words, "provide another bridge between Louisa May Alcott's domestic fiction and sensational tales," since exoticized characters with brownish skin and passionate nature have always been a signature mark in her sensational works (79). In this light, Jo, with her brown skin tone and unorthodox behavior, can be viewed as a kindred spirit as well as a successor to the train of femme fatales in her sensational thrillers, three among which were once published in the form of the dime novel. Yet what differentiates Jo March intrinsically from Jean Muir, the heroine of "Behind a Mask," is that the former, albeit with the same initials, is after all the leading lady of a domestic novel who must submit to the teaching of disciplinary intimacy in the end. Symbolizing the convergence of the sentimental and the sensational, Jo, a quasi-sensational heroine trapped within a domestic novel, strives to become a sentimental one and succeeds in the end, as proven by her eventual renunciation of sensational writing and her transformation into the respectful matriarch in the two sequels. She is both similar to and different from Dan, a Western hero trapped within a domestic novel, who likewise strives to achieve self-discipline, but who has no choice but to leave the domestic realm for good in the end.

It is worth noting that Little Women, the only stage for the young, wild Jo to try out

⁴¹ Alcott has three thrillers published in the form of the dime novel: "V. V.: or, Plots and Counterplots" (c. 1870), "The Skeleton in the Closet" (1867), and "The Mysterious Key, and What it Opened" (1867). See Madeleine B. Stern, "Dime Novels by 'the Children's Friend'" for a thorough discussion.

her sensational potential, was composed around 1867-68, a time, in Brodhead's opinion, when the American literary field was undergoing major rearticulation, and when Alcott was still experimenting with an array of different literary possibilities in response to several reading publics and models of authorship available to her (80). Even though Little Women upholds a disciplinary ethos and consolidates literary hierarchical divisions by putting a stop to Jo's sensational writing, and even though Alcott practically stopped writing "blood and thunder" tales after 1870, her ties with these sensational elements have left a distinct mark in her works, as embodied by Dan, the wild, impulsive, exotic hero, walking right out of the dime Western. Her obvious appreciation of Dan is sharply set against this character's tragic ending, a fact that further illustrates Alcott's ambivalent attitude toward the dime Western as well as sensational writing.

Judging from this, Alcott's so-called denunciation of dime novels needs further elaboration. I will first examine the possible reasons for this denunciation, and then problematize the argument by situating the "domesticated" Western hero Dan in the discussion.

Critics usually use Alcott's 1875 juvenile novel Eight Cousins to exemplify her disapprobation of dime novels.⁴² In the chapter titled "Good Bargains," the sensible Aunt Jessie harshly criticizes the "popular stories" devoured by her two juvenile boys, claiming that "with much that is attractive to boys, I find a great deal to condemn in them [these popular stories], and other parents say the same when I ask them" (195). This view that the dime novel is detrimental to the mental health of juveniles must be discussed in the social and cultural contexts of Victorian America. According to Nancy Cott, after the

⁴² See Strickland 142; Stern, "Louisa Alcott's Self-Criticism," 176.

Civil war, there emerged “longings to return to prewar conventions and resume the familiar customs of home” (Public 78). Anne C. Rose in Victorian America and the Civil War has likewise contended that the disruptions and uncertainty brought by the war made Victorian Americans reassert the importance of home, and even spurred people to “create new symbols that expressed their devotion to family” (184). These are the contexts in which Alcott composed her postwar juvenile novels. At a time when the culture desperately needed “new symbols” to reaffirm its adherence and devotion to the family, Alcott’s domestic novels satisfied this need. Her ever-watchful Victorian parents and surrogate parents, just as Strickland has maintained, “seek to prolong childhood dependency by keeping children, both boys and girls, within the confines of the household far beyond the time of home leaving honored in colonial America, a trend increasingly evident among those who read her books”; and one of the important methods for these “good” parents to achieve this goal is to “protect their children from precocious experience with sex, alcohol, and sensational novels” (135-36; my emphasis). In view of this, Strickland concludes by calling Alcott’s juvenile fiction “a vehicle for the spread of social purity, focusing particularly on the dangers of dime novels, sex, and alcohol” (141-42). All in all, as a bestselling novelist whose influence reached different generations and who was generally viewed as the best illustrator of the U.S. middle-class domestic life, Alcott reimagines and propagates the picture of the ideal, “evil-free” U.S. American home in postwar Victorian America through her literary works.⁴³

It is revealing that her juvenile fiction was often acclaimed in contemporary reviews as either amply expressing the author’s or the character’s “sympathy” or successfully

⁴³ See Beverly Lyon Clark, ed., Louisa May Alcott: The Contemporary Reviews for the contemporary views on how Alcott’s juvenile novels illustrated the middle-class domestic life.

drawing out the reader's "sympathy." If sympathy in the nineteenth-century United States, as Glenn Hendler has recounted, is "an emotional response to reading or seeing an expression of another's feelings," an ability to feel "right" and to imagine oneself in others' position, one can argue that through reading her novels Alcott's readers learned to feel in the "right" direction dictated by the author (3); that is, not only to feel for the characters, but also to feel with them and identify with their thoughts and values. Judging from this, it is no wonder that contemporary reviews often claimed that Alcott's juvenile literature reflected American life for the enjoyment of the American family; what her works did was exactly to elicit and channel people's sympathetic identifications in the "right" direction. After the publication of Little Women, as Alcott became more and more famous and influential, she might have begun to feel that it was her responsibility to create the "right" kind of sympathetic identification for her readers, to narrate "proper" Victorian home values for American middle-class families to follow. And this might be one of the reasons why she condemned sensational dime novels harshly in her 1875 novel.

One of the other possible reasons why Alcott began to take a stronger stand against the sensational dime novel can be attributed to the harsh criticisms directed at the dime novel industry during the 1870s. These criticisms mostly came from educators, publishers, and upholders of domestic values and narratives, and gradually deepened the division between the dime novel and the domestic novel—a trend that reinforces Brodhead's contention that literary distinctions between high and low literatures became hardened after the 1860s. Vicki Anderson, in discussing nineteenth-century dime novels targeted at juveniles, claims that "by the 1870s, the tales [dime novels] were universally criticized

for their immoral and perverse subject matter” (73). She accordingly calls Alcott’s critique of the detrimental effects of the dime novel in Eight Cousins as “dropp[ing] a bombshell” in the heightening editorial and cultural war against dime novel writing (67).⁴⁴ As a writer who also targeted juvenile readers, Alcott was obviously aware of the contemporary trend of policing juvenile dime novels along with the sensationalism they promoted, and she supported this trend through the mouth of the well-respected white character Aunt Jessie. After all, the dime novels that Aunt Jessie specifically lashes out at are written for juvenile readers, novels that “can do no good to the better class of boys, who through these books are introduced to police courts counterfeiters’ dens, gambling houses, drinking saloons, and all sorts of low life” (196).

Alcott’s stance against the dime novel can also be examined in terms of a problem that white female authors in the postbellum U.S. generally encountered. According to Naomi Z. Sofer, between “1860 and 1880,” a transitional period in which many white women writers tried to change their images from cheap literature producers to serious artists, these writers “self-consciously examined and revised the two models of authorship” available in the marketplace: “the popular female author and the romantic male genius” (32). In other words, women writers needed to, first, revise the assumption that popular women writers only wrote for quick money and had no artistic ambitions, and second, challenge the highly masculinized model of the romantic genius by showing their own ability to claim and reappropriate it. Sofer not only specifically situates Alcott as an important member of this “transitional generation” which she specifies as “[white]

⁴⁴ Alcott’s target was supposedly the popular dime novel writer Oliver Optic, whose real name is William T. Adams, and his excessive use of sensationalism and slang in his juvenile series stories. In Eight Cousins, Aunt Jessie points out that she is unsatisfied with “these optical illusions” provided by the dime novels (196; emphasis not mine). See Anderson for a discussion of Optic and Alcott (65-68).

women writers who came of age professionally in the 1860s”; but she also maintains that Alcott accomplishes both of the goals by imagining “an artistic community powered by a mixture of self-reliance and philanthropy,” such as the all-female community of artists in her 1870 novel An Old Fashioned Girl (32, 49). All in all, it was highly likely that in revising the general, formulaic assumption that popular women writers cannot be serious artists, Alcott had a lot more to consider; she needed to think of her middle-class audience as well as her current status as a respectable “children’s friend”; she also needed to respond to the trend of policing sensationalism in the 1870s and defend the Victorian domestic ideal. As a result, Alcott might feel the need to distance herself from and even criticize the “unserious,” “immoral” dime novel writing and its sensationalism that were deemed detrimental to Victorian family values and the mental health of juveniles.

Furthermore, as a devoted disciple of Emerson as well as a dutiful daughter to Bronson Alcott, Alcott was bound to give up the “lurid style,” her “natural ambition,” in order to uphold the literary high taste and the ideal of moral propriety promoted by her mentors (Pickett 107). One should also look at this choice of hers in relation to the fact that literary distinctions among elite literature, middle-class domestic novels, and low-class works, just as Brodhead has argued, were hardening after the 1860s whereas before they were more fluid. Alcott simply needed to take a side in her literary career at this point; and the success of Little Women as well as the tutelary model imposed upon her ever since she was a child made this choice a pretty easy one. To sum up, although Alcott committed herself to sensational writing during and even before the 1860s, a period when sentimental and sensational forms and elements often infiltrated one another in literary works, later in the 1875 Eight Cousins she took a moral stance against it via

the sympathetic character Aunt Jessie. Her choice not only reflects her personal circumstances, but it was also made in response to the social, cultural environments at that time.

Dan's Dilemma: A Dime Western Hero Trapped within the Domestic Narratives

Although this argument about Alcott's stance against the dime novel, generally speaking, applies to Jo's Boys as well, and although Alcott's career basically fits in with the hypothesis that the relation between the dime Western and the domestic novel starts from entanglement and similarities to division and antithesis, I contend that Dan's case is more complicated and in fact adds ambiguity to Alcott's allegedly negative stance toward the juvenile dime novel. As a Western hero stuck in a domestic narrative, Dan not only symbolizes the critique and even the disciplining of the dime Western by the ideology of domesticity, but he also represents the sensational undercurrents, the "lurid style" that the author once claimed to be her "natural ambition" but that she must give up to argue for domestic values. Although Dan's failure to blend into the domestic world and his eventual death seem to imply the final triumph of the ideology of domesticity, Alcott's (as well as her mouthpiece Jo's) obvious identification with and appreciation of Dan complicate the moral lesson that this disciplinary tale is supposed to convey.

Whether or not Alcott's delineation of Dan can be viewed as a rebuttal to the dime Western on behalf of the disciplinary domestic model generally promoted by the Little Women series, she is certainly engaged in a complicated conversation with this genre in the last volume of the March trilogy. Allusions to the dime novel abound in Jo's Boys, such as Josie's reference to Margaret Blount's 1870 Maniac Bride and, of course, Dan's

western adventures that abound with formulas and imagery borrowed from the dime Western.⁴⁵ In view of Bronson Alcott's frequent westward tours and the popularity of the dime Western as well as Alcott's past experience in producing sensational thrillers and dime novels, it is likely that Alcott was not unfamiliar with Western formulas, general characteristics of the stereotypical Western hero, and the contemporary perception of the West. One must bear in mind the fact that Jo's Boys was written at a time when U.S. society was going through rapid and tremendous transformations such as industrialization, urbanization, the emergence of big enterprises, class polarization, the influx of immigrants, and the decline in the general quality of life; at a time when the entire nation had turned to look westward for the fulfillment of American promises and more and more people, among them newly arrived immigrants, went West to fulfill their American dreams in face of the unknown wildness and the non-white inhabitants there. And this new and uncertain way of life not only contributed to the long-lasting popularity of the Little Women series that reinstated the importance of home and a wholesome home life, but it also resulted in the ascending fervor over the dime Western, which, in Jones' opinion, offered "needed diversion" for the common folk and provided them "a world where the grim realities of everyday life did not intrude" as well as reassurance that the ideal, utopian world of comfort, happiness, and equality was still a possibility (12, 137, 166). In this sense, the March trilogy and the dime Western, as products growing out of the same turbulent period of time, share purposes that were not very different from each other. What both of them were trying to do is find a way to cope with current social problems by reimagining a safe, satisfying world in contrast to the dismal reality—even

⁴⁵ A contemporary review of Jo's Boys, presented in the form of an anecdote, has reported that "There's a lot about Dan in the new book...some regular Wild West adventures, too" (Clark 366).

though the ways they achieved this goal were distinctly different.

In my opinion, the tension between this shared purpose and the disjunctive narrative motifs and styles is illustrated by the complicated role that Dan plays. Whereas Dan brings about feelings of appreciation, fascination, and identification just as the faraway western land of happiness and opportunities did in the mind of the eastern audience, his story also represents the apprehension over the wild West and the unorthodox racialized other, the anxiety over the tumultuous present and the unknown future, and the fear of something unexpected that could turn one's life upside down and that should be disciplined and taken under control. In this light, Dan's problematic role strongly echoes the nineteenth-century contradictory views of Nature that I have recounted earlier: Nature as the object of love versus Nature as the object of discipline; romantic appreciation versus materialistic exploitation.

Even though Jo's Boys seems to denounce the dime Western by killing off the Western hero Dan, the ideal that Dan represents, such as the western spirit of freedom and energy as well as the profound yearning for a better world, is still deeply admired in the text, and is in fact not very dissimilar from the ideal that the domestic novel upholds. Their difference is that, even though both the dime Western and Alcott's trilogy try to narratively imagine a safer, happier, better world in a turbulent time, the dime Western does it in the wild, unknown, and "dangerous" West (the periphery) and Alcott's domestic novels do it in a comparatively safer domestic environment (the center). And since Dan cannot be allowed to fulfill his destiny as a Western hero in a domestic narrative such as Jo's Boys nor can he become thoroughly tamed, he has no choice but to leave the stage for good in the end—no matter how positively and appreciatively he, along with the

western spirit he stands for, is portrayed. This dynamic between the center and the periphery, between family life and frontier life, and between adherence to stability and yearning for adventure, is displayed in Dan, and in the wrestling between the domestic novel and the dime Western in Jo's Boys.

This is the dilemma that Dan is in: a Western hero trapped within a domestic novel; in other words, a precariously “domesticated” Western hero. As a solitary wanderer with a strong sense of justice and integrity, Dan matches Brown’s description of the dime Western hero: “The heroic, self-reliant individual—unimpeded by urbanization, industrialization, and mechanization” (30). Yet Dan’s story also obviously falls short of the Western formula that was devoted to adventure and thrills; rather, it can be viewed as a deliberate adaptation of the Western by the domestic novel in order to domesticate and controvert the values presented by the Western. In Brown’s description, some common characteristics of the Western include homosocial bonding between men; rescue of “good” women from villains’ hands; the restoration of order in the end through multiple weddings that assert “the priority of settler community, of civilization, over the ruggedness of frontier life” (36).⁴⁶ In this light, although Jo's Boys does have a positive Western hero, it contradicts the Western paradigm every step of the way. The novel emphasizes family bonding, particularly the mother-son relationship as the title “Jo’s Boys” indicates; the one that needs rescue most becomes the Western hero himself as the “wild” other Dan needs to be disciplined by the white woman; although the narrator refers to several future weddings at the end of the story, the Western hero Dan remains

⁴⁶ See John G. Cawelti’s Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture for more on the dualistic model of civilization and wildness, a tradition that he has traced back to Cooper’s Leatherstocking stories. Also see Bold, Selling the Wild West.

single and dies alone. Dan does not get to save any dame; nor does he get to have his own wedding, let alone family and descendants; his most significant relationship is established with certain white women but not with his pals. As a misplaced and displaced Western hero in a domestic novel, he must first be tamed and then be sent West (a natural habitat that befits his “wild” nature) to ensure the safety of the domestic realm. Even so, it seems that the taming of the Western hero is not enough to ensure the victory of the domestic novel over the dime Western; he must be killed off once and for all. Dan’s story is the bloodless, quiet murder hidden in the seemingly peaceful domestic world of Jo’s Boys. He is the sensational current that must be submerged; the unstable element that must be eliminated; the extra beat that does not fit in with the rhythm of the domestic novel and that may in fact destroy the entire harmony; the “wild” other that looms over the national household and that must be managed and even gotten rid of; and the Western hero who can never be thoroughly domesticated and who thus cannot live a long, happy life in a domestic narrative.

The conversation between Dan and Jo’s youngest son Ted right before Dan leaves for good exemplifies Alcott’s authorial critique of the values presented in the dime Western as well as her effort to tame the Western hero and the Western genre as a writer of children’s literature. As an energetic young man who admires Dan and longs to take part in some western adventure himself, Ted enthusiastically tries to make a guess at what Dan has done out West, an experience Dan has refused to talk about since it involves his accidental killing of a scoundrel and the resulting imprisonment. In Ted’s imagination, “Out there [the West] they have wild doings, and it’s my belief you were in some of ‘em. I don’t mean robbing mail, and Ku-Kluxing, and that sort of thing; but defending the

settlers, or hanging some scamp, or even shooting a few, as a fellow must sometimes, in self-defense” (311). Dan’s reaction is telling. In face of Ted’s excitement over life in the “lawless” West and his total approval of violence and killing if necessary, Dan, on the contrary, feels a strong sense of disgrace and remorse, and decides to keep quiet without giving Ted any detailed account. Ted’s tale in fact pretty much matches what really happened; however, whereas Ted narrates it from the viewpoint of an infatuated reader of dime Westerns, Dan, the subdued Western hero, becomes the mouthpiece for the ideal of domesticity, preaching instead the importance of patience, repentance and atonement. When the excited Ted claims that he himself wouldn’t mind “popping at some of those bloodthirsty blackguards” in the lawless West, Dan tries to guide Ted in the “right” direction (just as Jo used to guide him) by reminding Ted that killing, under any circumstance, is not right and should be the last resort, and it is definitely not as heroic and thrilling as the dime Western would have its readers believe it is; thus he claims: “Yes, I was in the right; but I wish I’d been out of it” (311-12). In sum, although what Ted describes is pretty close to the actual event, his account must be rectified and transformed into a moral lesson. By instructing Ted, Dan, the disciple under the gentle rule of the white woman, is following the lesson that he has received and is preparing for his future missionary task. The Western hero is turned into a preaching missionary by the white woman’s disciplinary project of sentimentality. No matter how appreciatively his wildness is presented, he still needs to become a “tamed” missionary to be able to precariously fit in with the domestic realm.

Even though Dan in the end is somewhat tamed and becomes even more determined to uplift himself to meet the white woman’s expectations, a sense of uncertainty,

incongruity, and even danger surrounding him as a “domesticated” Western hero can still be observed in the text, especially in Jo’s vigilant management of Dan’s love affair and her prediction of Dan’s future fate. Whereas Jo successfully convinces Dan that he is not an appropriate mate for Bess, she also maintains that he is not suited for any other decent domestic woman in the world. The reason not only lies in the fact that he is a wild racialized other who has not yet finished his disciplinary lessons, but it is also related to his misplaced role as a Western hero in a domestic narrative. In Jo’s view, “it was better [for Dan] to go solitary to his grave than become what she suspected his father had been—, a handsome, unprincipled, and dangerous man, with more than one broken heart to answer for” (305). It is not a coincidence that Dan’s father looks exactly like the kind of man abounding in the dime Western, and that is the fate the white woman Jo prohibits her “Spartan” from falling into. Through Jo’s disciplining of Dan and her managing of his love affairs, Alcott is trying to discipline the Western and the Western hero in terms of the ideology of domesticity—despite the fact that Dan can only be precariously tamed not only due to the unquenchable sensational undercurrents and the uneven process of domestication (as exemplified by the white woman’s problematic identification with and appreciation of the wild other), but also because of the surprising similarities of the dime Western with the domestic novel in terms of the ideal world of hope and happiness that both of them crave (this is one of the reasons why Dan as an emblem of that ideal world can never really be condemned in Alcott’s fiction). No matter what, the Western hero Dan is still forever the outsider in the domestic narrative.

In fact, Dan’s mateless destiny is already foreshadowed in the beginning of the story. Once Dan, in response to Jo’s eager inquiry about his love life, jokingly asks Jo what if

he brings home “an Indian squaw”—with his eyes resting on “a marble bust of Galatea gleaming white and lovely in the corner” at the same time (JB 55). Although Jo’s answer is positive, it comes with qualifications and smacks of reservation: “Welcome her heartily, if she was a good one” (55). First, the white matriarch is the one to determine whether or not the “Indian squaw” is a “good one” and thus deserves the white woman’s welcome into the family. Second, as readers all know, no “Indian squaw” ever appears in the story and Dan ends up alone. Jo’s seemingly progressive answer yields no actual result, and the Western hero still has no choice but to continue his unrequited love for the milky-white ivory statue of Galatea/Bess. Just like the imaginary “Indian squaw,” Dan needs to be a “good one” in order to get the white woman’s approval and to find himself a seat, as unstable as it may be, in the domestic home.

Another incident similarly shows Jo’s as well as Alcott’s disciplining of and apprehension about the Western hero. Early in the story when Dan first returns home, Jo, looking at the tableau vivant in which Dan and Bess play Othello and Desdemona, says that she is glad Dan is soon going away since he is “too picturesque to have here among so many romantic girls” (83), a conjecture proven by the great favor that Dan has received from the eastern girls who nickname him “Spaniard” (76). In the mind of the domestic matriarch, the Western hero is not suitable for domestic maidens no matter how exotically attractive he looks, just as dime Westerns are not supposed to be a proper read for decent middle-class white women. In the end, the Western hero Dan is mired in dilemmas in the domestic novel; he cannot marry domestic heroines since he is not disciplined and civilized enough for the domestic/national home; nor can he keep on living his unrestrained, wild, “Western” life or be completely “domesticated” in a

domestic narrative. To sum up, Dan's unsuitability as a marriage partner not only stems from the fact that he, a supposed white man who can convincingly play Othello (and Arbaces and some Mexicans), is an ambivalently racialized other, but it can also be attributed to his problematic position as a Western hero mired within a domestic narrative. The "domesticated Western hero" is after all an oxymoron, since the Western hero can never be fully domesticated, just as Dan can never be put in the role of husband/father in a domestic environment.

As a matter of fact, Dan's position as a Western hero itself already substantially lowers the possibility of his ever getting married, since the Western genre often focuses on lone males interacting outside the home and the bounds of marriage. Yet this position not only marks him as an outsider to the domestic world, it also connects him to the whole genealogy of American cowboys and frontiersmen that are often associated with queerness. Probing "the rather wide variety of sexual and erotic discourses used and practiced by cowboys and other frontiersmen," Chris Packard in Queer Cowboys argues that "the cowboy is queer: he is odd; he doesn't fit in; he resists community; he eschews lasting ties with women but embraces rock-solid bonds with same-sex partners; he practices same-sex desire" (3). Even though Dan only partly fits in with the abovementioned description, I will argue that he has the full potential to become the typical cowboy were he a protagonist in a dime Western instead of a domestic narrative; after all, he is already a "queer" character in Jo's Boys in the sense that he serves as the outsider who can never quite blend into the domestic center stage. Both Dan's already existent queering and his potential queerness also further associate him with Jo, the tomboy figure who once swore off marriage, and Alcott, a topsy-turvy woman who

exhibits “masculine identification” and “female object-choice” in Young’s description (80).⁴⁷ In this sense, Dan’s mateless destiny not only certifies the white woman’s disciplinary power, but it also implicates the exact opposite, that is, her potential to deviate from the norm and perform her queerness—a fact that further illustrates the unexpected, uneven process of domestication; the identification between Dan and these two unorthodox white women; and the persistent existence of sensational undercurrents in the project of disciplinary intimacy.

To conclude, Jo’s taming of Dan not only signifies how the white woman disciplines the wild racialized other, but also shows how the sentimental literary tradition tries to domesticate the dime Western and the Western hero. Even though sensational and sentimental elements are intertwined in Alcott’s writing in the 1860s, even though the young Jo’s topsturviness in Little Women makes her closer in spirit to Alcott’s subversive sensational heroines, later the literary division hardens, and the last episode of the March trilogy announces the triumph of sentimental discipline over sensational impulses, as proven by the Western hero Dan’s entrapment, displacement, and his eventual death. The ambivalence and incongruity surrounding Dan, however, reflects Alcott’s own ambivalent take on sensational writing, and even discloses some surprising similarities between the dime Western and the March trilogy. On the one hand, no matter how much Dan is appreciated by Jo and by the author herself, he still must be banished from the center stage of the domestic drama and be put to death. On the other hand, although his banishment and eventual death may indicate the author’s deference to the ideology of disciplinary intimacy, the fact that he can never be thoroughly tamed and incorporated

⁴⁷ See Roberta Seelinger Trites, “‘Queer Performances’: Lesbian Politics in Little Women”; Young, Disarming the Nation, 80-81.

into the domestic world also paradoxically reasserts Alcott's deep appreciation of her sensational Western hero and the values that he represents (so she would rather let him die than make him live a tamed life). In this sense, Dan is similar to some of Alcott's gothic femme fatales, who shine and die like meteors without succumbing to disciplinary regulation; he symbolizes what Jo used to be and the road eventually not taken by her; he is the remains of the "lurid style" that Alcott gave up in deference to the moral values of her time.

Missionary in the West and Thanksgiving in the East

Dan's final journey into the West is the last jigsaw puzzle piece to be put into the white woman's disciplinary blueprint. By marching into the West, Dan, the former pupil under the white woman's gentle rule, transforms himself into a missionary for Indians. It seems that the "wild" boy finally matures enough to follow the white woman's footsteps to discipline other "wild children" in the nation. Through all the past lessons he learns from the white women, he eventually turns from the disciplined into the discipliner. In this sense, Dan's missionary work to protect his "chosen people" replicates Jo's persistent attempt to tame the wildness in Dan; in the same grain, the Montana Indians under Dan's protection are reminiscent of his former self whose wildness needed the white woman's close supervision. Although Dan can barely play an active part in the center stage of the domestic/national drama, by transforming himself into a mouthpiece for the white woman, he finds an alternative way to serve the country as a national subject, albeit in the periphery instead of the center. Just like Stowe's Topsy who eventually turns into a "civilizing" agent doing missionary work in Africa, Dan becomes an imperialist

missionary who devotes himself to disseminating the gentle rule of the white woman in order to tame other “wild” children.

I would further argue that it is not a coincidence that it is Laurie who sponsors Dan’s missionary trip—Laurie who once engages in imperialist exploration himself in Egypt and who later narrates to “Jo’s boys” all the exotic stories about Egyptians, just as the grown-up Dan describes his western adventures to his eastern friends; Laurie who founds the Laurence museum, the very emblem of evolutionary theory and imperialist expansionism, and who names Dan the chief curator. In a way, Dan can be viewed as a twin or a kindred spirit of Laurie. On their first meeting, Laurie admits that he quite likes the “wild lad” since the young Dan fulfills his old dream of running away from home (LM 157). Yet the most important link between Dan and Laurie is that they are both pupils under the white woman Jo’s rule, a point that is made clear by Laurie’s declaration: “I’m the first boy Mrs. Jo ever had to take care of, and I was such a bad one that she isn’t done with me yet” (159). As the first wild boy that Jo disciplines, the all-grown-up Laurie testifies to the success of the disciplinary project of the white woman in bringing up a perfect national subject who can participate in U.S. imperialist conquests and carry on the white woman’s mission by funding missionaries to go West. Successfully disciplined into a national subject by the white woman, Laurie in turn helps Dan to embark on his missionary work in order to discipline more “wild children” like Dan and himself.

By sending the wild other Dan West to serve as a missionary, Alcott is following another popular myth that Indians are “children” and thus need to be either educated by “benevolent” missionary or conquered by military forces. Whereas Dan stereotypically classifies Indians into two different groups (innocent and peaceful versus violent and

militant), both groups can be viewed as “children” in the contexts of the nineteenth-century U.S. Just as Michael Paul Rogin argues, many nineteenth-century writers found innocence and violence in Indians “inextricably related—as innocence and violent loss of self-control would be in children” (“Liberal” 144). From the nineteenth-century evolutionary point of view, the arbitrary division between “good” Indians and “bad” Indians corresponds to the double side of children: innocence and violence; yet unlike children, Indians lack the ability to grow into adults, and so their only fate is to be eliminated and driven into exile. No matter how tamed and disciplined they are, they still have no place in the domestic/national household. The nineteenth-century “benevolent” missionary work, just as Wexler has shown, did not necessarily result in equality; rather it more often than not reinforced racial stereotypes and hierarchy. In this sense, Dan’s westward missionary trip, just like Thoreauvian walking, is an imperialist pilgrimage as well as a white-centered crusade.

This kind of racial prejudice and white supremacy implied in western missionary work is exactly the problem with the seemingly progressive, egalitarian utopia of Plumfield back East and with the white woman’s disciplinary project as a whole—a point that reinforces the interconnections and interpenetration between the East and the West, home and the periphery. Although Plumfield is described as a place that believes in the “right of all sexes, colors, creeds, and ranks to education” and that adds “prosperity and honor to the nation,” it still adheres to racial hierarchy by designating whites as masters/discipliners and non-whites as servants/the disciplined (JB 242). Judging from this, the “prosperity and honor” that Alcott’s ideal co-educational, egalitarian school offers to the nation are limited, since it is after all a fantasy centered upon whiteness.

The final chapter titled “Thanksgiving” in Little Men illustrates the same point. Explaining the origin of Thanksgiving to his little cousin Robby, Demi, the eldest son in the March family, states that “the country was once all full of Indians, and bears, and wild creatures” and that “The Pilgrims killed all the Indians, and got rich; and hung the witches” (319). Just as Nelson has described, the national manhood centered upon whiteness situates and defines itself against a general otherness, such as non-white minorities and unconventional women. In the same grain, here the westward marching of the pilgrims has no place for racialized others (such as Indians) and unorthodox femme fatales (such as witches). It stands to reason that the whole “pilgrim” conversation is carried on among the boys (the future pilgrims), Mr. Bhaer (the current pilgrim), and Mother Bhaer/Jo (the pilgrim’s well-disciplined wife as well as the thoroughly reformed former witch); girls and non-white servants have no part in circulating and renarrating the national story of Thanksgiving. Just as Kaplan has claimed, “Thanksgiving’s continental scope endows each individual family gathering with national meaning” (“Manifest” 35); when nineteenth-century households across the continent (including the March family) celebrate Thanksgiving and propagate this national myth that rationalizes the invasion of the whites, they reimagine and reconsolidate themselves as a providential nation destined to march into the world. That is what Jo’s boys set out to accomplish—to kill the Indians and to hang the witches; their thanksgiving gathering at Plumfield back East prepares them for a future expansionist journey around the world. Home and the periphery influence and infiltrate each other; what takes place out West influences what happens back East, and vice versa.

Although Dan participates in the “pilgrim” conversation and later even becomes the most exemplary pilgrim among Plumfield graduates, who actually embarks on the westward journey, his status is still dubious. He is situated at the nexus of several different identity positions: a white imperialist pilgrim as well as a racialized other; an injured soldier as well as a westbound pioneer; an exotic dime Western hero as well as a disciplined son of a domestic heroine. What strings his multiple identities together in Alcott’s blueprint is his position as the disciplined pupil under the white woman’s gentle rule. His accomplishment and failure thus reflect the merits and problems of the white woman’s project of disciplinary intimacy. Though somewhat tamed, Dan still poses an implicit threat to the domestic world and therefore must be put to death in the end. His inability to survive in the domestic story highlights the limitation of the white woman’s disciplinary project, and of Alcott’s renarration and feminization of national manhood and ideologies.

Chapter Three

Regional Writing, National Memories, and Transnational Undercurrents:

Ruiz de Burton and Atherton Rewrite the Histories of Californios/Californians

In chapter two, I illustrated how Louisa May Alcott, the northeasterner who never set foot in the western territory, drew on contemporary discourses of the West to articulate a different set of feminized national ideologies in the postwar years. Building on this analysis, I want to further focus on the West, specifically California, not only in terms of materials or story settings but also in terms of the authorial perspective. In the following two chapters, I will discuss two California-based authors, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and Gertrude Atherton, who mapped out their literary visions of the West and California in the seventies and eighties and during the turn of the century and the first half of the twentieth century respectively; and who physically engaged in transregional, even transnational, movements between the East and the West and between the United States and other countries. By amplifying and comparing their disparate interpretations of California and the postbellum nation, I mean to probe the problematic relations among regions, the nation, and the transnational, especially those refracted by race, ethnic, gender, class, and transnational issues. During a time period when the Northeast was said to dominate political, economic, and cultural understandings of the nation, these two writers, by engaging in a complicated conversation with regional histories, national ideologies, and transnational undercurrents in which nineteenth-century California was implicated, offered their alternative, California-oriented insights into the postwar United States. That, in my opinion, is where their importance lies.

I will situate my discussion in relation to several political, cultural phenomena and events, including literary regionalism in the postwar era; contemporary myths concerning Spanishness, California, and the West such as the Spanish Fantasy Heritage and the California Fable; and U.S. imperial conquests such as the 1846-48 U.S.-Mexico War and the 1898 Spanish-American War. In the next chapter, I will focus on the turn-of-the-century moment and further examine Atherton's appropriation of the California Fable by looking at how Kaplan's notion of manifest domesticity can be reevaluated through this turn-of-the-century "Californian" lens, that is, in connection with interracial/interethnic, transregional, and transnational encounters in the specific contexts of California in particular and the U.S. Southwest in general. At the end of chapter four, I will conclude my discussion by examining the collective phenomena of nostalgia and amnesia in the last decades of the nineteenth century vis-à-vis Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's writings. Historian C. Vann Woodward has claimed that the late nineteenth century was one of those notorious "twilight zones"—"period[s] that became favorite breeding places of mythology" (quoted from Silber 4), periods in which people, by producing myths, struggled with memories and forgetfulness, nostalgia and amnesia. In what follows, I want to explore the myths that were shaping people's memories and amnesia about California in the last decades of the nineteenth century and how these two authors intervened in this process.

The Maid of Monterey versus California's Daughter

While both Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's lives are intimately intertwined with California, they epitomize different ethnic and cultural consciousnesses and even

different generations. Ruiz de Burton was born in 1832 to a prestigious upper-class family in Baja California, which was at that time governed by the newly established United Mexican States (Mexico) that claimed independence from Spain in 1821. In 1848, she became a citizen of the United States after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that concluded the U.S.-Mexico War, when the defeated Mexico lost one-half of its territory, including Alta California, to its strong and aggressive North American neighbor. The life of Ruiz de Burton was forever changed by this military and political outcome. Whereas her name was passed on via the popular wartime ballad, “The Maid of Monterey,” which described a beautiful Mexican maid taking pity on Mexicans and Americans alike on the battlefield and which was said to be inspired by her beauty,¹ she would marry Captain Henry S. Burton, United States Army, in 1849, who was in charge of the 1847 U.S. invasion of La Paz, Baja California, and would accompany him to Monterey and San Diego and later to various locations on the East coast during the Civil War. During her decade-long sojourn in the East, Ruiz de Burton not only had access to Northeastern high society but also became friends with eminent Southerners such as Mrs. Davis, the wife of the defeated president Jefferson Davis. After General Burton died of malaria in 1869, the widow returned to San Diego, only to find herself embroiled in never-ending land litigation with Anglo-American squatters, who shamelessly occupied Mexican land on the basis of unjust U.S. land laws. All these diversified life experiences not only provided Ruiz de Burton with unique insights into the East and the West, the Republican-dominated North and the Democratic-controlled South, and the U.S. and Mexico, but they also enabled her to indict the hypocrisy of the U.S. government and its

¹ See Sanchez and Pita, “Introduction,” The Squatter and the Don, 11-12.

discriminatory policy against Mexican Californians. While Ruiz de Burton is the first known Mexican American to write novels in English, her works, regrettably, had been forgotten in the next century until Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita discovered the two novels and had them republished in 1992 and 1995.

When Ruiz de Burton died in poverty at the age of sixty four in 1895, Gertrude Atherton was a thirty-nine-year old widow, and was still struggling for recognition in local, national, and European literary circles. Born in San Francisco in 1857, she was the daughter of Thomas Ludovich Horn, a New England businessman, and Gertrude Franklin, a southern belle as well as a lineal descendant of Benjamin Franklin. Her parents' divorce left the young Gertrude to the care of her maternal grandfather, Stephen Franklin, a gentleman and entrepreneur, who sympathized with the South and who exerted great influence on his granddaughter's intellectual development and political orientation. At the age of twenty, Gertrude eloped with one of her mother's suitors, George Atherton, and then married into the prominent Atherton family, who always prided themselves on having Spanish blood (George's mother was a Chilean) and being among the first aristocrats in the Bay area. This combination of New England, Southern, and Spanish legacies in Gertrude Atherton's background profoundly shaped her consciousness as a California woman writer and influenced her portrayal of her willful, intellectual, and adventuresome California heroines. Called "California's daughter" by her biographer Emily Wortis Leider, Atherton enthusiastically engaged in composing literary and non-literary works about California until she passed away in 1948. Among her fifty something books, there are eighteen novels, three collections of short stories, and three historical narratives focusing on California materials (McClure, "Love Story," 101).

Whereas Atherton used to hate the provinciality and constriction of California—a fact that must have a lot to do with her suffocating ten-year marriage and with the harsh criticisms bestowed on her earlier novels in the local literary circle—the “exoticism” of California materials in her narratives, nonetheless, helped her embark on her literary career in Europe and became a central theme which she went back to again and again during her lifetime.

On the one hand, despite the obvious differences between them, Ruiz de Burton and Atherton share lots of things in common, especially their ambition to write a different kind of California history against the official northeastern version that marginalized the West. In addition to that, the similarities between these two authors also include their affirmation of Spanish culture and Europeanized cosmopolitanism (although in different ways and for different purposes); their profound sympathy, even identification, with the defeated U.S. South; their self-positioning as members of the upper-class society in California; and their firm belief in the necessity of letting the intellectually and morally superior take charge of public affairs.

On the other hand, their rewritings of California history differ intrinsically from each other; their appropriations of Spanish heritage, European sophistication, and southern chivalry also serve disparate purposes. While Ruiz de Burton strives to rewrite history from the viewpoint of the conquered and dispossessed upper-class Californio population and critiques New England values, Atherton in a slightly later period aims to renarrate California identity by subsuming northern, southern, and Spanish traditions all into this seemingly “comprehensive” project of renarration. This distinction, in my opinion, is subtly reflected in the two authors’ respective designations, “the maid of

Monterey” and “California’s daughter”: one stands for the Mexican maid who was caught within a historical city that had served as the capital of California under the flags of Spain and Mexico and who was embroiled in the confrontation between two countries and two cultures, and the other highlights the “integrated” regional identity that Atherton was trying to mold for the turn-of-the-century U.S. California. This distinction can also be observed from their respective regional backgrounds: one, who was born in Baja California and lived in San Diego half of her life, stands for southern California that had remained hispanized even after the U.S. occupation until the eighties, and the other represents Northern California that was flooded with Anglo-Americans ever since the discovery of gold and thus gradually lost touch with its Spanish heritage.² In this sense, whereas Ruiz de Burton puts Mexican identity as well as the question of ethnicity/race at the forefront in her narration of the ideal “white” womanhood and “white” nation, Atherton rewrites the question of ethnicity/race as that of regional characteristics; in her blueprint, she as well as her California heroines serve as daughters of the new U.S. California, the modern American Eden, where the violence of “past” imperial histories will be forgotten and transformed into a romanticized object of nostalgia in praise of the proudly striding nation at the turn of the century. To sum up, even though both authors were concerned with rewriting national ideologies through a California perspective and appointed a certain kind of upper-class “white” women to carry out this task, they did it differently: Ruiz de Burton wrote from the viewpoint of the *Californios*, the Mexican Californian land-holding gentry, and Atherton, from the viewpoint of *Californians*, a

² See Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* for a discussion of the different fates of Northern California and Southern California after the U.S. occupation (49-50). Also see Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 3-30.

more integrated regional identity said to subsume various traditions of this land.³

These similarities and differences and, more importantly, what they tell one about the complexity of the nineteenth-century United States, are what I want to amplify in this chapter. But first I would like to discuss U.S. literary regionalism in the nineteenth century and to situate both Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's works in relation to this popular discourse and its critical history. I want to do this not only because these two authors' time periods correspond to that of nineteenth-century literary regionalism, but also because the rise of U.S. regionalism was closely connected with the transforming relations between regions and the nation in the more and more transnational post-war world. Since both Ruiz de Burton and Atherton were deeply concerned about the role that California could play for the nation (despite the fact that Ruiz de Burton was more interested in Mexican California), it is imperative to look at them in terms of literary regionalism. My purpose is not to determine whether these two authors should be

³ About the definition of Californios, see Carey McWilliams, North from Mexico, 44-48, 88-92; McWilliams, Southern California, 49-69; and Leonard Pitt, The Decline of the Californios. According to the "Glossary of Ethnic Terms" at the end of Pitt's book, "Californio" means "native-born Californian of Spanish-speaking parents" and was "in widespread use from the 1830's to the 1880's" (309). This term also has class-related implications, meaning "'high-class' Mexicans," "a special category of 'native Californians'" (McWilliams, Southern 55)—a distinction made by the *gente de razon* [the people of quality] to set themselves apart from landless working-class Mexicans during the Mexican period of California; it was only later, approximately during the seventies and eighties, when the *gente de razon* lost their land and power that they begin to be called Mexicans, and "the old practice of referring to them as Californios or native Californians was abandoned" (Southern 63). Also see Andrea Tinnemeyer, Identity Politics of the Captivity Narrative after 1848 for the definition of Californios: "The term *Californio* describes a wealthy landowner born in California who boasts of pure Spanish ancestry. Mestizos, biracial people who have both Spanish and indigenous ancestors, make up the majority of Mexicans living in the United States and Mexico...David Weber [in The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico] notes that most *Californios* were mestizo but enhanced their claims to Spanish ancestry in the hopes of maintaining their social status after the war" (144, no.11). See Tomas Almaguer, Racial Fault Lines for a discussion of the distinction between the elite Californio and the Mexican "greaser." See McCullough for a detailed discussion of land, race, and the Californios, 131-38, especially p. 135.

Whereas the "Mexican" could have specific class-related implication and stand for landless, working-class Mexicans in juxtaposition with upper-class Californios, in this paper, if without further explanation, I use this term in a more general sense, indicating cultural heritage, ethnic lineage, and/or national identification.

categorized as regionalists, but rather to draw on the copious academic research on literary regionalism to get a better look at the political, social, and literary environments that cultivated these two authors.

Regionalism and the Hidden Local

When people think of nineteenth-century U.S. literary regionalism, the most immediate impression that comes to mind is its non-modern or pre-modern settings and its common folk characters, who reside in the frontiers or rural areas and communicate with dialects, non-standard English, or even languages other than English. It is generally assumed to be a genre featuring themes that are the exact antithesis of the urban, the modern, the industrial, and the sophisticated northeastern culture. It requires a “setting outside the world of modern development, a zone of backwardness where locally variant folkways still prevail” (Brodhead 115), and offers “nostalgic portraits of preindustrial rural communities and people” (Foote, Regional 3). As a result, regional fiction is often viewed as a genre of nostalgia, or “a literature of memory” in Eric Sundquist’s terms; and its cultural work is sometimes interpreted as that of “cultural elegy,” of “memorializing a cultural order passing from life at that moment and of fabricating, in the literary realm, a mentally possessable version of a loved thing lost in reality” (Brodhead 120).

Yet regional writing, just as critics also note, consists of more than an innocent, nostalgic portrayal of an irretrievable ideal past, and is “far more than a nostalgic genre” (Foote, “Cultural” 34). Once treated as a minor genre that could not measure up in literary values to its more academically acclaimed literary cousin realism,⁴ regionalism

⁴ William Dean Howells, the most prominent advocate of both realism and regional writing in the

has received more and more critical attention in the past two decades. Recent critics, especially feminists, emphasizing the cultural, political work that regionalism performed, have concluded that this genre was in fact deeply implicated in complicated conversations about social issues such as the interaction between the local and the nation, the conflict between labor and capital, the encounter with the foreign in urban cities and around the frontiers, and imperial conquests both at home and abroad.⁵ As a genre thriving roughly between the Civil War and the early years of the twentieth century,⁶ regionalism bore witness to the social changes of the postbellum years up until the turn of the century. Its nostalgia was fact politically refracted, “profoundly shaped by an awareness of the globalizing and standardizing tendencies of urbanization and industrialization” (Foote, Regional 3). Behind the seemingly peaceful rural world in regional writing, there was concealed an awareness of current social problems and an

postbellum decades, is probably the first person to note the connection between these two genres. As Howells praised regional writing as a genre realistically portraying unaffected people everywhere as they really are, a genre that stands within the “predominant Protestant morality” and the “national discourse of propriety” (Trachtenberg, Incorporation 190; my emphasis), he accordingly included regional writing within his “novels of enlightenment and instruction, of reflective consciousness”—functions that he similarly attributed to realist novels (195). Whereas I will come back to critique his argument later in the chapter, what I want to emphasize here is the close relation between realism and regionalism even from the beginning.

One can observe the connection between these two genres from several important literary glossaries and handbooks. Even though Eric Sundquist in Columbian Literary History of the United States views regionalism as a subordinate form of realism, he nevertheless claims that realism and regionalism “cannot be conveniently separated” because of the “complex aesthetic, social, and economic entanglements between them” (501); the entry “Realism and Regionalism” itself, in fact, already indicates the inseparability of these two terms. Also see Donna Campbell’s article “Realism and Regionalism” in A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America.

⁵ See Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse, “Introduction,” American Women Regionalists, 1850-1910; Fetterley and Pryse, Writing out of Place; Eric Sundquist, “Realism and Regionalism”; Cecelia Tichi, “Women Writers and the New Woman”; Richard Brodhead, “The Reading of Regions” in Cultures of Letters; Kate McCullough, Regions of Identity; Stephanie Foote, Regional Fictions. Also see the Blackwell collection of essays, A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America, especially Stephanie Foote, “The Cultural Work of American Regionalism”; Donna Campbell, “Realism and Regionalism”; Krista Comer, “Taking Feminism and Regionalism toward the Third Wave.”

⁶ Foote in Regional Fiction has claimed: “The heyday of regional writing was roughly between the Civil War and the early years of the twentieth century” (28). Also see Brodhead: “from the 1860s well into the 1890s regional writing was an object of special demand” (118).

implicit wish to handle them narratively; that is, “to purvey a certain story of contemporary cultures and of the relations among them: to tell local cultures into a history of their supersession by a modern order now risen to national dominance” (Brodhead 121).

Telling a certain story for local cultures in the postbellum decades, however, was no easy task. During the decades following the Civil War, the United States not only needed to recover from the sectional division brought about by the war, but it was also undergoing painful transformation into a society built upon big corporations, monopoly capitalism, and intense urbanization and industrialization, a society that not only became more and more divided by internal class and racial conflicts but also tried to grab more materials and labor from outside sources through military and non-military imperial conquests.⁷ These two tasks, that of reconsolidating relations among local communities, states, and the central government and that of establishing an advanced capitalist economy, more often than not produced conflicting outcomes. As more and more immigrants from Europe, Asia, and South America, in response to the needs of the U.S. capitalist economy, crowded into the nation that was already plagued by a variety of social divisions, conflicts naturally ensued among different interest groups. The brutal confrontation with new peoples within, around, and outside national boundaries is an important context that one must bear in mind in reevaluating regional writing.

Let's return to Brodhead's premise that the function of regional writing is to “purvey a certain story of contemporary cultures and of the relations among them.” What kind of story was being purveyed and to what purposes and effects? Moreover, if one bears in

⁷ See Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America.

mind Foote's summary of the characteristic of regional writing as "deeply concerned with what is remembered and what forgotten, and how" ("Cultural" 25), the next question would be what parts were left out or forgotten in this process of purveying this story? This process, as previously noted, was closely related to the social issues that the U.S. faced around that time, and especially to U.S. nationalism and imperialism. In Foote's words, regionalism can be seen as a mechanism created for "making sense of foreigners, or for assimilating new kinds of people within a narrative of American identity" in the tumultuous period of national reconsolidation, capitalist infiltration, and imperialist expansion (29). That is, the "fearsome" unfamiliarity of new peoples in the frontiers or the countryside could be "assimilated" and renarrated in regional writing as exotic, "manageable" cultural or regional differences, differences that could be explained by and subsumed within the national narrative. Through this kind of struggle between remembering (narrating) and forgetting (not narrating), regional writing managed to produce a "false" sense of national wholeness and quasi-homogeneity for a country that was in fact composed of disparate cultures marked by dissimilar, even mutually opposing interests. All in all, the history of the production and reception of nineteenth-century U.S. regional writing was profoundly intertwined with U.S. nationalism and imperialism. It is a genre about the nation's consolidation of its territories and making sense of the peoples living within or migrating across the territories; a genre "uniquely suited to imagin[ing] a homogenous past for a heterogeneous nation" (Foote, Regional 6); a genre that, by illustrating "strange" yet "manageable" peoples and thus an ambiguous picture of "plurality," managed to maintain the illusion of national homogeneity and regional

plurality at the same time.⁸

Whereas most critics confirm the power of regionalism in molding a collective, homogeneous past for the nation that was in fact marked by diversified, even contending voices, some of them also note the inconsistencies, contradictions, and loopholes that sometimes appeared in this molding process; that is, the potential ambiguities and incongruities that could discredit and challenge the general goal of regionalism. This should be attributed to the fact that regionalism, molded by various contemporary sets of ideas, practices, and discourses, could be articulated differently in different situations and thus produce unexpected, complicated, and sometimes subversive results instead of a unified outcome. Recent scholars have paid attention to this unexpected, contradictory aspect of regional writing, and argued that the seemingly fictitious “plurality” portrayed by this genre can in fact be more implosive than it seems. In Foote’s survey article about regionalism, she observes that from the viewpoints of recent critics such as Kate McCullough and Gavin Jones, regional writing actually “helped to develop complex strategies for representing and circulating emerging forms of identity” (such as sexually deviant others in McCullough’s research and unorthodox immigrants in Jones’ delineation); similarly, the idea of the local also “needs to be expanded to encompass all forms of deviation from the normative” (34). In this light, even though the general function of regional writing might be to suppress emerging local identities and substitute a collective, homogeneous national consciousness, regional writers in some cases still

⁸ See Brodhead for a further discussion of the “plurality” created by regionalism. Whereas Brodhead agrees that regionalism was used to create the illusion of a homogeneous nation, he carefully contends that part of this illusion of homogeneity was a manageable and highly qualified “plurality.” That is, even though regionalism helped to foster the illusion of a homogeneous nation, it can also be viewed as a means to seemingly acknowledge a “plural” America—“a real-sounding yet deeply fictitious America that was not homogeneous yet not radically heterogeneous either and whose diversity was ranged under one group’s normative sway” (137).

helped to introduce, perhaps involuntarily, new forms of local identities to the national audience who, mainly consisting of middle- and upper-class easterners, yearned to make sense of other local cultures and the rapidly changing contours of the nation. And the picture they pieced together was not entirely a homogeneous, manageable image of the local; it also very possibly encompassed the hidden side of the local, which I call the hidden local—“all forms of deviation from the normative.” As the ideas of the local and the regional in the nineteenth century were constantly rewritten by transnational encounters that the region was involved in, there might emerge alternative micro-narratives that deviated from the “normative” and the dominant. This kind of deviation is what I call the hidden local of regionalism.

This hidden local is what I am more concerned about in my exploration of regionalism and the connections of Ruiz de Burton and Atherton with regionalism. I want to examine the possible hidden local in their texts, the part of regional writing that was supposed to be left out, forgotten, or subsumed into the homogeneous official history but that still managed to make an appearance. By doing so, I follow Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse’s claim in Writing out of Place that regionalism should be understood as “the site of a dialogical critical conversation” rather than “a fixed literary category” (2), and try to explore the possibility of including more “unlikely” texts into this dynamic, unfixed “category” of regionalism—texts that narrate and even celebrate “forms of deviation from the normative,” and that give a more unorthodox interpretation of the relations between emerging local identities and the nation in contrast to the official version. This is the theoretical framework in which I try to discuss Ruiz de Burton’s and Atherton’s works in terms of regionalism; that is, to observe what kinds of insights their

writings could offer to the theoretical debate concerning literary regionalism.

Ruiz de Burton and Atherton Vis-à-vis Regional Writing

Although both Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's works are intimately related to their regions, calling them regional writers requires further discussion. Ruiz de Burton's novels are generally labeled as "historical romances" instead of regional writing; her angry indictment of U.S. imperialist and capitalist invasion and her vivid portrayal of the plight of Californios also stand in sharp contrast to the nostalgic tone and the picture of national homogeneity that characterize the majority of regional writing. Whereas Atherton was often viewed as a regional writer both in her lifetime and by later critics, she rarely referred to herself as such, according to Charlotte S. McClure, perhaps the most prolific scholar on Atherton's works, and in fact preferred to be seen as a "social historian" who "truthfully" recorded contemporary events through fictional narratives.⁹ Besides, Atherton's interest in regions, in McClure's account, rather "lay in a universal inner or psychological one [region]" (*GA* [1979] 142). In the shorter 1976 biography, McClure similarly argues that because regions for Atherton were more universal than specific, she could easily move her "region" from San Francisco to New York, London, and even ancient Greece; she thus concludes that because of Atherton's engagement with various kinds of genres and materials such as biographies, quasi-historical books, gothic, detective fiction, and Geek mythology, it is not easy to pin the author down as a regional

⁹ See McClure, *Gertrude Atherton* (1976) for a discussion of Atherton's role as a regional writer (6). See McClure, *Gertrude Atherton* (1979) for discussions of Atherton's self-positioning as a social historian (141) and of critics' praise of the local color details in Atherton's works (131, 133). Also see McClure, "Gertrude Atherton and Her San Francisco."

writer (GA [1976] 6-7).¹⁰

Even so, I argue that it is both legitimate and useful to reassess Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's works in terms of the critical reevaluation of regionalism in the past two decades; that is, in terms of topics such as nationalism, imperialism, and transnationalism as well as the way in which these topics permeated nineteenth-century regional writing. To begin with, both writers did write about their regions, regions located in a burgeoning, expanding territory at the edge of the nation. Moreover, both of them self-consciously, carefully situated their voices vis-à-vis the more dominant northeastern culture, and were fully aware of their positions of being at the "region" instead of the "center" as well as their portrayal of local identities and cultures. Judging from this, I assert that it is at least reasonable to consider their works in terms of regionalism.

The fact that both of them were viewed as writers of historical romances at some point also supports the argument that they can be discussed in relation to regionalism.¹¹ After all, historical romances, just as George Dekker suggests in The American Historical Romance, "typically have a strong commitment to a particular 'patria' and its people" and tend to "regionalize the 'universal' conflicts characteristic of the genre..." (6); the title of chapter four "The Regionalism of Historical Romance" itself illustrates how closely

¹⁰ For Atherton's use of genres and materials other than regional writing, William S. Walsh, as early as 1892, has already mentioned Atherton's juxtaposition of romance and realism in "Mrs. Atherton's Novels, A Dialogue." For Atherton's relation to the sentimental formula, a topic that I will discuss later in the chapter, see Sybil Weir's "Gertrude Atherton: The Limits of Feminism in the 1890's."

¹¹ As for Ruiz de Burton's role as a writer of historical romances, see Sanchez and Pita's introduction of The Squatter and the Don; Anne E. Goldman, Continental Divides; Amelia María de la Luz Montes, "María Amparo Ruiz de Burton Negotiates American Literary Politics and Culture."

As for Atherton, McClure, in discussing her mixed use of the romantic and the realistic, has designated Atherton as "a writer of historical romance" (GA [1976] 15). George Dekker, in amplifying the entanglement between regionalism and historical romances, has disparagingly called Atherton one of "our minor romancers." Also see Walsh's "Mrs. Atherton's Novels, A Dialogue" (1892), in which he discusses her use of romance.

historical romances and regionalism are implicated with each other.¹² If one agrees that it is possible to see Ruiz de Burton and Atherton as writers of historical romances, one should likewise consider the possibility of situating them in the context of regional writing.

One should also take into account the factor of gender in evaluating Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's relations to regionalism. The fact that they were women writing about their regions during the postbellum years already connects them to the large body of feminist scholarship on female regional writing. Whereas U.S. female regional writers were once cast aside as secondary realists or romancers, feminist critics began to resurrect women regionalists in the 1970s by recognizing and affirming the existence of a tradition of regionalist writing among nineteenth-century women writers as well as this genre's narrative power to negotiate the social issues of each writer's particular historical moment; the 1992 publication of the groundbreaking Norton anthology American Women Regionalists, 1850-1910 exactly testifies to the blossoming of the feminist scholars' efforts.¹³ Thanks to this kind of feminist intervention, female regional writing has gradually freed itself from the notoriety of being a second-rate, apolitical, and

¹² Although William Dean Howells' view on regionalism seems to be contradictory to the argument about the connection between regionalism and historical romances, I would argue that this contradiction rather comes from Howells' somewhat limited definition of regionalism. Howells designates regional writing as a genre that stands within the "predominant Protestant morality" and the "national discourse of propriety" (Trachtenberg, Incorporation 190). He accordingly includes regional writing within his "novels of enlightenment and instruction, of reflective consciousness," and sets it against "the 'gross fables,' prodigies and marvels of the popular" (Trachtenberg, Incorporation 195), which might well include the "historical romance" and the "sentimental melodrama" since Howells tends to criticize these two genres in his praise of realism (Sundquist 504). In my opinion, because of Howells' own advocacy of realism, he creates a more "realist" version of regionalism, and sometimes even sets regionalism against other popular genres such as historical romances and sentimental writing. What I want to argue is that Howells' praise of regional writing and his criticism of historical romances do not necessarily indicate that these two genres are contradictory to each other; this seeming "contradiction" rather shows how regionalism was affected and refracted by different kinds of genres around the same period.

¹³ See Krista Comer for a summary of the feminist approach to regionalism (111-13). Also see Fetterley and Pryse's introduction to the 1992 Norton anthology and Writing out of Place.

escapist genre, and is recognized as a powerful cultural medium capable of opening up alternative possibilities and broadening the political imagination. In “Women Writers and the New Woman,” for example, Cecelia Tichi argues that the fiction of “women’s regionality” in the 1890’s, engendered by the contemporary ethos of the new woman, “sought to establish alternative bases of consciousness and to show how consciousness itself could be deployed for women’s empowerment” (590)—an argument very different from the then dominant view that regionalism was simply a genre of wistful nostalgia.¹⁴ All in all, feminist scholars have convincingly shown that reexaminations of women writers and regionalism can bring positive effects to the critical evaluation of each other.

Another important feature of this feminist rearticulation of regionalism is its attention to racial and ethnic minority women writers, a direction corresponding to the academic interest in minority authors in the past few decades. Whereas the 1992 Norton anthology includes three non-white women among its fourteen selected writers (the African American Alice Dunbar-Nelson, the Native American Zitkala-Sa, and the Eurasian Sui Sin Far), over half of the major authors covered in McCullough’s Regions of Identity, including Ruiz de Burton, belong to racial and ethnic minority groups.¹⁵

Issues of race and ethnicity no doubt have become indispensable points of interest in the

¹⁴ Tichi’s article is included in the Columbia Literary History of the United States, the first literary history that addresses the topic of regionalism and the differences among realism, regionalism, and local color by selecting three articles on regionalism for the collection, including Sundquist’s “Realism and Regionalism” (Fetterley and Pryse, Writing 51). Even though Tichi’s piece does not focus on regionalism, her emphasis on regionalism’s power to represent women’s social consciousness, according to Fetterley and Pryse, contrasts sharply with the three male critics’ view of regionalism as a subordinate form of realism and a genre of “affectionate nostalgia” (Writing 54-55).

¹⁵ I am also aware of the fact that, despite the recent interest in minority women writers, the “grand” title of regionalist “masters” in the academic circle still belongs to several more “prominent” white authors, such as Mark Twain, Sarah Orne Jewett, Willa Cather, Kate Chopin, William Faulkner, and Bret Harte. For example, in Part III “Some Regionalist Master” of the 2003 Blackwell anthology A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America, there are five articles on five regional writers; none of them belong to racial and ethnic minorities.

critical evaluation of regional writing, whether the focus is on the racial/ethnic identity of the writer herself, or on the interracial/interethnic entanglements illustrated in the texts. This is one of the reasons why Ruiz de Burton and Atherton are especially suited to be discussed in the context of regional writing, since their works abound in interracial and interethnic entanglements, especially those regarding Spanish/Mexican people in California.

The final and perhaps the most important reason to discuss Ruiz de Burton and Atherton in terms of regionalism is related to the current academic interest in exploring the transnational aspect of regionalism. According to Krista Comer in “Taking Feminism and Regionalism Toward the Third Wave,” this interest focuses on “innovating the category and analytic practice of regionalism so that it does not inevitably bounce back to critics in the form of the nation-state,” and on “exploring the possibility that regionalism offers one method by which to render literary studies more postnational and transnational” (112-13). This innovative way of probing regionalism aims to put the third term, the “global,” into the tug of war between the regional and the national—a direction that corresponds to recent academic efforts to initiate a more intercultural model for the study of U.S. American literature, and to reformulate curricula and scholarship in a more comparative, transamerican, post-nationalist, and global perspective. This is also the direction that I want to take in my discussion of Ruiz de Burton and Atherton.

There are two more points in Comer’s argument worth noticing for the present discussion. First, reinforcing the importance of the U.S.-Mexico War in influencing cultural production in the nineteenth century, Comer points out that the U.S. West and Greater Mexico serve as important coordinates to reassess U.S. regionalism in a

transnational, global framework (113).¹⁶ Second, following other feminist critics, Comer highlights the female power exhibited in women's regional writing, claiming that "regionalist discourse empowered those at a distance from the power centers of culture to speak" and to transform "their local and female knowledges" into "legitimate public knowledges which then were more strategically situated to contest the reigning masculinism of the 'official' national sphere" (115); that is, female insights from the locus of the local and the marginal could offer alternative takes and thus "unexpected" critiques of the dominant and the official. In sum, in Comer's argument, both the westward geographical shift and the input of female local knowledges can serve as important means to explore the alternative, "hidden" side of regionalism, especially the transnational, global dimension by which to challenge the assumed hierarchical relations between the nation and regions and among regions, and to contest outmoded political figurations such as the "closed" and "homogeneous" national sphere.

On the basis of this, I contend that it is important to consider California women writers Ruiz de Burton and Atherton as well as their differences and similarities in terms of regionalism. Both of them deserve critical attention from scholars working on regionalism not only because they are women whose writings are profoundly rooted in their specific regions, but also because their works register the complex entanglements among different sets of cultural and political values in the transnational western space. Their texts also reflect the authors' ambition to transform their female, local knowledges

¹⁶ See Streeby's *American Sensations* for a discussion of the important role that the U.S.-Mexico War played in remolding U.S. political and cultural scenery in transnational terms, especially in promoting U.S. imperialism.

As for Greater Mexico, a notion advanced by Américo Paredes in the 1950s and 1960s, its spatial field "is generally considered to extend from Texas to California, from the southern points of Arizona and New Mexico to portions of Colorado and Utah" (Comer 114).

into alternative public, national knowledges—that is, alternative visions that can possibly reveal the hidden local and revise the older critical terms of regionalism. These are the topics that I want to investigate in the following sections.

Ruiz de Burton and her Californio Version of Regionalism

As the first known Mexican American novelist writing in English, Ruiz de Burton composed two novels in her lifetime: Who Would Have Thought It? (1872) and The Squatter and the Don (1885). While the first book centers on the life of the Mexican orphan Lola Medina on the East coast and the second focuses on the plight of a Californio family exploited by unjust U.S. land laws on the West coast, both novels critique U.S. imperialism and sympathize with Mexicans displaced inside and outside the United States due to U.S. racism, capitalist expansion, and corrupt politics. In Who, a novel that mainly takes place between 1857 and 1864, Lola Medina, albeit descended from an elite Mexican family, is born far away from home while Mojave Indians hold her mother captive. The young Lola is later “rescued” by Dr. Norval, a northeasterner during an expedition to California, and is taken back to New England to live with the Norval family. Even though the gems and gold that Lola’s mother put in the doctor’s care make the Norvals wealthy, Lola is generally viewed, even despised, as a racialized other both in the Norval family and in the northeastern upper-class society—especially by Mrs. Norval, the matron of the household. Despite Mrs. Norval’s and her lover Mr. Hackwell’s attempt to swindle Lola out of her fortune and to sabotage her love affair with Julian, the noble son of Dr. Norval and Mrs. Norval, their scheme eventually fails. In the end Lola reunites with her Mexican family and is expected to marry Julian soon and live happily ever after.

While Lola, along with her fortune, symbolizes the southwestern territory and its plentiful resources coveted and exploited by Anglo-Americans who poured into this region at the close of the U.S.-Mexico War, her final reunion with Julian, the gallant model American son, not only proves her eligibility to be incorporated into the national household, but also testifies to Ruiz de Burton's authorial intention to portray elite Mexicans as a genteel "white" population, who were even more qualified to serve as U.S. nationals than the crass, corrupt Anglo-American characters in the novel.

While the focus of Squatter switches to the seventies (1872-76) and California, it shares the same authorial ambition to resurrect elite Mexicans and to critique Anglo-American materialism and imperialism, especially the greedy railroad barons. Putting the plight of Californios in the spotlight, Ruiz de Burton narrates the story of the financial downfall of the Alamar family, who are plagued not only by the trespassing of Anglo-American squatters but also by the encroachment of U.S. monopoly capitalism. Similar to Who, an interethnic romance grows between Mercedes Alamar, the Californio Don Mariano's daughter, and Clarence Darrell, the Anglo-American squatter William Darrell's son, and eventually results in a happy union that symbolizes a way to achieve reconciliation between these two cultures, native Californios and invading Yankees. Mercedes, just like Lola, is described as a noble "white" woman who is qualified to serve as an ideal wife and a future mother for the expanding U.S. nation.

Whereas ample research has been done about Ruiz de Burton's novels in recent years, I want to specifically discuss how to position her writing in relation to the academic discussion of regionalism. My purpose is not only to explicate the confrontation among different regions and the nation in her novels, but also to probe the

alternative ways that Ruiz de Burton's works reimagine the term "region" differently in nineteenth-century U.S. transnational contexts.

These alternative ways should ultimately be attributed to Ruiz de Burton's self-positioning as a Mexican American writer and her specific concern with Californios and the transnational southwestern borderlands. Critics have pointed out how Ruiz de Burton's novels highlight the importance of Mexico, the West, and East-West interactions in molding the nation's political agenda during the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Particularly in Who, a novel roughly set in the Civil War years, Ruiz de Burton adds the East-West axis to the common North-South model used to discuss Civil-War literature by juxtaposing the political and economic repercussions of the U.S.-Mexico War with the intranational conflict of the Civil War.¹⁸ By sending the Civil War veteran Northeasterner Issac to Mexico to seek for fortune and dispatching the Mexican orphan Lola to the East coast to have her fortune plundered, Ruiz de Burton resituates the Civil War not only as internal warfare between the North and the South, but also as a war that should be examined vis-à-vis Anglo America's exploitation of Mexicans and Californios and in terms of the transnational, inter-American framework. For one thing, the northerners' contempt for Lola's initial "blackness" and thus racial otherness (Mojave

¹⁷ For example, Goldman claims that "Lola's regional transplantation called into question the North-South axis that conventional narratives use to plot the Civil War and the East-West dichotomy" (66). Also see McCullough: "through the vehicle of Lola, Ruiz de Burton superimposes an East/West geographical divide on the North/South model and brings the Mexican/Californio into U.S. racial discourses of the day" (139).

¹⁸ Several critics have discussed how Ruiz de Burton's novels incorporate the Mexican perspective into the narration of the Civil War and how she uses the U.S.-Mexico War rather than the Civil War as the framework to reevaluate the national history. For example, Sanchez and Pita argue in the introduction of Who that Ruiz's "outsider status" allowed her to "view major political and economic changes taking place in the United States within a global context, one affecting Latin America, especially Mexico..." (ix). Jose David Saldivar in his discussion of Squatter also emphasizes how important it is to view the year 1848 as marking the profound effects of U.S. imperialism on Alta California, as illustrating the "protoempire role" of U.S. imperialism "in the Americas and the rest of the world"; the Mexican American war "opens up the Americas to the Big Four and its government's incorporation of the geopolitical arena" (177).

Indians dyed her black in order to avoid attention) and their shameless exploitation of her wealth were deeply implicated in the logic of the color politics behind the U.S. slavery system—a fact that exemplifies how the southwestern borderlands was entangled in the contemporary discourses on race and slavery that partly contributed to the Civil War.

Issac's arrival in a Mexico that was under attack by France, Spain, and Britain also testifies to the entanglement of Mexico and the southwestern borderlands with U.S. politics. The connection between the far West and the Civil War can be explicated on at least two levels. On the one hand, the West can be seen as one of the important triggers of the Civil War since the acquisition of the vast western land from Mexico after the U.S.-Mexico War gave rise to disputes over the introduction of slavery into this area and thus tightened the barely maintained balance between the North and the South.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Civil War affected the destiny of Mexico as well as the Hispanic Caribbean since the divided U.S. was no longer able to maintain its imperialist control here; as a result, European countries seized this opportunity to encroach into the area in which the Monroe Doctrine used to be in force during the antebellum years.²⁰ In this sense, the joint attack that was briefly discussed by Don Felipe and Don Luis (Lola's maternal grandfather and father) can be historically attributed back to the inability of the U.S. to "protect" the Hispanic Caribbean from other imperialist powers during the time of its own political crisis: that is, the Civil War.²¹ The weakened state of Mexico described in the novel, particularly illustrated by the narrator's lamentation over Lola's mother's tragic fate (201), had everything to do with the U.S. imperialist plan concerning Mexico

¹⁹ See Potter, Rogin (*Subversive Genealogy*), Streeby, and Fresonke.

²⁰ See Luis Martinez-Fernandez, *Torn between Empires*, especially pp.153-170.

²¹ For a discussion of the effects of the Civil War on the Hispanic Caribbean, see Martinez-Fernandez, *Torn between Empires*, 161-64.

and the whole Hispanic Caribbean region during the antebellum period; as a result, Mexico's fate became so intertwined with U.S. foreign and domestic affairs that it could not help but be affected by the U.S. Civil War. The fact that the Mexican gentlemen's discussion of the joint attack and the Civil War veteran Issac's arrival in Mexico are juxtaposed in the same chapter further indicates how deeply the southwestern borderlands was entangled in this seemingly unrelated sectional warfare between the North and the South.

In this regard, the West (or the Southwest in a more specific sense) that Ruiz de Burton repositions as the vantage point to critique the Anglo East and the dominant North-South axis is a West crisscrossed by a transregional imagination and transnational encounters. She thus presents a very different narrative perspective that testifies to her role as a well-informed yet powerless outsider in U.S. political and literary circles. The West, in Ruiz de Burton's description, is neither a Utopian space abounding in natural resources and regenerative energy for Anglo adventurers as shown by most of her contemporary writers, nor the rough, primeval, all-American West extolled and mythologized in dime westerns. It instead turns out to be a materially tangible place inhabited by flesh-and-blood people—that is, Mexicans and Californios deeply plagued by imperial conquests, unjust land laws, and the encroachment of U.S. monopoly capitalism. If the general goal of the majority of regional writing is to “explain” and “make sense of” marginal regions and unfamiliar peoples for the dominant culture, Ruiz de Burton's works demonstrate an alternative way of reading “regions.” Her writing not only challenges the dominant view from the vantage point of an ethnic woman writer in a culturally and regionally marginal position, but it also reconstructs the so-called U.S.

West as a multicultural, transnational West, transected by disparate national regimes, various cultural legacies, and multiple regional memories—a multicultural West inflected by Californio and Mexican perspectives, a transnational West where the effects of the U.S.-Mexico War still loom large and Mexico-related issues are still profoundly intertwined with people’s everyday life. One can no longer view the West as a stable “region” that could be readily and “safely” incorporated into the U.S.

Ruiz de Burton’s novels thus exemplify Comer’s claim that the West and Greater Mexico, because of their specific historical and cultural contexts, can serve as useful locales through which to “innovate the category and analytic practice of regionalism.” Her works achieve this goal by transforming the regional into the transnational and by broadening the critical ambit beyond that of the nation-state. They also do that by putting under the spotlight the hidden local: that is, Californios and Mexicans’ anguish over the loss of their land and their political rights, anguish that serves as a sharp contrast to the romanticized nostalgia over the loss of the pastoral, pre-industrial life as illustrated by the majority of regional writing. What ultimately distinguishes these two modes of thoughts are exactly the different frameworks in which they are situated: the transnational versus the national. It is productive to discuss Ruiz de Burton’s works in connection with regionalism precisely because the transnational vision that her works offer enriches one’s understanding of this genre and the related academic debates.

Ruiz de Burton’s obvious sympathy with the defeated South further testifies to this kind of transregional, transnational identification.²² As several critics have noted,²³ as a

²² See chapter one of Jose E. Limon’s American Encounters: Greater Mexico, The United States, and the

sympathizer with the South, Ruiz de Burton associates elite Californians of Mexican descent with elite white southerners on the assumption that both groups were victims under the imperialist rule of northern Yankees.²⁴ This transcultural, transregional, and even transnational sympathy, moreover, is refracted through the trope of maternal sentimental discipline. As David Luis-Brown argues, the alliance between southerners and Californios in Ruiz de Burton's works can especially be observed in the character of Mary Darrell, the southern lady who, although married to the northern squatter William Darrell, nevertheless abhors the unjust practice of squatting on Californios' land and thus asks her oldest son, Clarence, to secretly purchase the land that her husband aims to forcibly squat on. Mary's sympathetic attitude toward the Californios' plight makes her the exemplary national mother in *Squatter*. It is Mary, the southern mother, who tries to bridge the differences and settle the grudges between white Americans and "white" Californios, and who raises a son that will marry the beautiful, virtuous "white" daughter of the Californio Alamar family and symbolically become the leader in this interethnic family-as-nation. Luis-Brown has pointed out that the prominent status of Mary Darrell shows how important the political power of sentimentalism is: "the nation as a sentimental imagined community needs the mother to secure its respectability, a respectability threatened by the culturally and racially diverse elements it must consolidate ideologically in order to maintain its authority" (821). By approving the

Erotics of Culture for a discussion of the complicated relationships between the U.S. South and Greater Mexico.

²³ See David Luis-Brown, "White Slaves and the Arrogant Mestiza," 817; Margaret Jacobs, "Mixed-Bloods, Mestizas, and Pintos" 222-24; Jesse Aleman, "'Thank God, Lolita is Away from Those Horrid Savages,'" 97-98; Julie Ruiz, "Captive Identities": "she [Ruiz de Burton] considers the South an extension of Latinidad" (117).

²⁴ Ironically, the South, rather than the North, played the more active role in devising the plan of encroaching the Hispanic Caribbean. See Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861*.

respectability of the white Californio elites and the union between Clarence and Mercedes, the domestic woman Mary exerts influences on the public sphere and rewrites national ideologies by welcoming a group of new members into the big white family. This is how Ruiz de Burton's version of manifest domesticity works: the white woman consolidates the national household by taking in culturally different people and expanding the household.

This transcultural and transnational identification expressed by Mary, however, also exposes the problem with Ruiz de Burton's Californio version of manifest domesticity. Whereas Ruiz de Burton uses the trope of maternal sentimental discipline to challenge the Anglo-American discriminatory view of the racialized Californio, her method is to broaden the definition of whiteness by "hispanicizing" and thus whitening her Californio and Mexican characters, especially women, without challenging the basic biased assumption about whiteness; that is, by designating her upper-class Californio and Mexican protagonists as having "noble" Spanish blood, Ruiz de Burton reconstructs them as respectable "white" citizens who are more than qualified to serve as U.S. nationals. To put it in a nutshell, by challenging the existent U.S. racial hierarchy, Ruiz de Burton reinscribes this very hierarchy. Before the culturally different others can be taken into the U.S. national household, they must first be whitened and divested of their racial otherness through a "Spanish" transformation. Even though Ruiz de Burton endeavors to create "an alternative national whiteness" (Aleman 106), this whiteness, as many critics have shown, is formed at the expense of non-white racialized others such as Native Americans, African Americans, and even lower-class Mexicans.²⁵ This is the insurmountable

²⁵ Among others, see Sanchez and Pita's two introductions; Luis-Brown; Julie Ruiz, 118; Aleman, 99.

limitation with Ruiz de Burton's more transnational version of regionalism and with her project of promoting transcultural, transregional, transnational identifications through sentimental tropes.

The mechanism of forming transcultural, transregional, and transnational alliances operates in Who in a slightly different way from Squatter. While in Squatter the well-established national mother Mary, whose legitimacy would be questioned by no one, can rightfully welcome her Californio daughter-in-law, who is approved by her as one of the next generation of national mothers, the Mexican orphan Lola, Mercedes' counterpart in Who, has to prove her eligibility by turning into a "whiter" and more virtuous woman in the family, the kind of woman who conforms to every requirement of nineteenth-century doctrines of domesticity. Serving as a contrast to the corrupt northern matron Mrs. Norval, Lola becomes the last hope for perpetuating the tradition of true womanhood in Who. And by proving herself morally superior to all the Anglo-American women and thus more qualified to serve as the national mother, Lola not only rewrites the racial category of whiteness and the national category of U.S. citizenship, but she also incorporates herself as well as other Mexicans into the U.S. nation. It is significant that Mrs. Norval and all the other white women portrayed as less worthy than Lola are northerners. In Ruiz de Burton's plan of reconstructing national ideologies, whereas Mary, the matron of southern descent, can prove her moral superiority by embracing Mercedes and her Californio family, Mrs. Norval, the northern matron, can only serve as a narrow-minded, prejudiced hypocrite who rejects Lola simply because of the Mexican girl's alleged blackness and racial inferiority. While Ruiz de Burton uses sentimental tropes such as the white woman's moral power to narrate this alternative,

Mexican-centered set of national ideologies, one must bear in mind that her use of this tradition is regionally split and involves differing sets of transregional entanglements.

In sum, the political power of the discourses of sentimental true womanhood in Ruiz de Burton's depiction not only testifies to Comer's theory of regionalism in which female local knowledges can be transformed into alternative public, national knowledges, but it also echoes Comer's focus on the transnational, postnational aspect of regional writing. It is in this sense that one can claim that Ruiz de Burton's novels have the potential to map out new directions that the academic discussion of regionalism should take and is taking now.

Through the Looking-Glass of Spanishness: Race and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century California

Now I want to discuss the idea of Spanishness in the contexts of nineteenth-century California not only to further examine the transnational aspect of Ruiz de Burton's works but also to connect the present discussion to Atherton and California at the turn of the century. Just as several scholars have illustrated, Ruiz de Burton's method to prove the eligibility of Lola, Mercedes, and other Californios and Mexicans to serve as qualified U.S. nationals is to confirm their "whiteness" by hispanizing these characters.²⁶ In other words, Spanishness, in Ruiz de Burton's description, is coded as whiteness, the very evidence proving that a person has a legitimate claim to U.S. citizenship and all the inalienable rights belonging to qualified citizens. Spanishness, moreover, is specifically coded as sophisticated Europeanized whiteness in contrast to vulgar, *déclassé*

²⁶ Besides John Michael Rivera's argument that I will recount later, see Ruiz and Aleman.

Anglo-Saxon (northern) whiteness,²⁷ a fact exemplified by the sharp contrast of Lola's gentility with Mrs. Norval's degeneration and the Norval sisters' philistinism. One can accordingly situate the idea of whiteness in Ruiz de Burton's novels not only in terms of the negotiations between Mexico and the United States and between California and New England, but also in relation to, as Gretchen Murphy argues, the confrontation between Western and Eastern Hemispheres, the new world of Americas and the old world of Europe. That is, by creating a hispanized/Europeanized Mexican whiteness, Ruiz de Burton not only opposes the cartography advocated by the Monroe Doctrine which constructed the Western Hemisphere as an isolated, self-sufficient all-American world, but she also affirms the superiority of Mexican whiteness by highlighting its cross-hemispheric European ties—Californios were “white” and respectable not only because they could simulate true womanhood, but also because they inherited the legacy of authentic European sophistication. One can further argue that by acknowledging this genteel hispanized Mexican white womanhood, Ruiz de Burton tries to create a new national symbolic that endorses sophisticated European culture and embraces its cross-hemispheric, transcontinental descendents: the elite Mexicans and Californios. She articulates an alternative picture of the U.S. Southwest that can be imagined to be more intercultural, transregional, and transnational, that can take in Europeanized, hispanized Mexican elites as its legitimate nationals.

This “whitened” version of Spanishness in California can be traced back to the complicated history of intercultural, transnational exchanges in the U.S. Southwest/California, a history so peculiar that Comer designates this area as an

²⁷ See McCullough; Murphy; Aleman.

especially fruitful ground through which to explore new critical directions for the discussion of nineteenth-century regionalism. Nothing illustrates these exchanges more than the entanglement among designations of “Spanish,” “Mexican,” and “Californio” in nineteenth-century California. There was complicated political wrestling behind the nomenclature “Californio,” the so-called land-holding Mexican gentry in California. According to Leonard Pitt, during the Mexican period (1821-46), California, especially Alta California, was gradually set apart from the rest of the Mexican country due to the geographical distance and the general dismissive attitude of more “decent” citizens toward California, which seemed to them like “the end of the world,” a marginal backwater; as a result, those who went north to California were mostly “petty thieves and political prisoners” (6). And the second-generation Californians, in the face of the influx of the less “gentile” Mexican newcomers from the south, gradually ceased calling themselves Espanoles or Mexicanos and began to insist on the name “Californios” to highlight their identity as the California native-born (7).²⁸ The construction of the name “Californios,” even at the very start, was different from and even specifically set against “Mexicans” in terms of regional consciousness.

Later after the 1848 gold rush, the massive influx of immigrants from all over Mexico into California, called “mexicanos” by Californios, caused great alarm. According to Ramón A. Gutiérrez, to counter Anglos’ perception that Californios and the “mexicanos” were both Mexicans and “to clearly differentiate themselves from the recent lower class Mexican immigrant [who came to California to strike it rich in the mines],”

²⁸ Also see Gutiérrez: “The literary evidence indicates that by the beginning of the nineteenth century residents of the Kingdom of New Mexico were calling themselves *nuevo mexicanos*, those in California were referring to themselves as *californios*, and those in Texas called themselves *tejanos*” (82; my emphasis).

the Californios “increasingly referred to themselves as ‘Spaniards,’ and insisted that other English-speakers do the same” (90; my emphasis). This is exactly what Ruiz de Burton tries to achieve in her narratives of upper-class Mexicans and Californios.

The need for Californios to identify themselves has further set Californios and Mexicans apart along the class line and the color line. While the image of the former was at the outset more connected with the landed elite, the other designation was more and more racialized and became equivalent to the darker-skinned working class.²⁹ This class- and race-inflected double splitting contributed to their different fates after the U.S. takeover: whereas some Californios, whose higher class position and comparatively whiter somatic features had placed them at the top of the social scale during the Mexican period, could somewhat manage to demand Anglo recognition of their “whiteness” and thus the eligibility to be assimilated (especially through marriage), working-class Mexicans were denigrated as racially inferior “greasers.”³⁰ This ambivalent recognition was, furthermore, marked by the cross-continental imagination concerning California’s European heritage. Tomas Almaguer in Racial Fault Lines claims that “The claimed European descent of the Mexican ranchero elite, the so-called *gente de razon*...facilitated the assimilation of segments of the upper class into European American society” (46). This “European descent” obviously means Spanish. As Spanishness gradually became a

²⁹ Also see note 3, especially Almaguer.

³⁰ Even so, Californios could only be assimilated to a certain degree. For one thing, only the daughters of Californios were viewed as appropriate partners for white Americans; marriages between Californio men and middle-class Anglo women were less often seen (Almaguer 58). Moreover, after 1846 when more and more Anglo American women began to appear in California, the willingness of American men to marry Californio daughters “came to an abrupt end” (McWilliams, Southern 54); so even the number of intermarriages between Californio women and American men was decreasing after the U.S. occupation. Later, approximately during the seventies and eighties, when Californios lost most of their power, land, and money, “they began to be called Mexican and the old practice of referring to them as Californios, or native Californians was abandoned” (McWilliams, Southern 63).

token of higher racial and class status, by “a definition provided by the Californios themselves” those who achieved success were “Spanish” and those who could not become “Mexican” (McWilliams, North 45). So the so-called Californios were not only whiter, higher-class, and landed, but were also Spanish. Even though Spain might be the blackest, the least “European” of Europe’s nations according to contemporary discourses of the Black Legend, the specific historical contexts of California, specifically its intercultural, transnational histories, turned Spanish blood into an emblem of nobility and hispanicizing a means of whitening.³¹

What Ruiz de Burton’s writing reveals is this complicated picture of intercultural, transnational exchanges in California and the possible route that Californios could take after the U.S. occupation. Using The Squatter and the Don as an example, Kate McCullough has made an interesting case for the transformation of Californios (ethnic) into Californians (regional) and to Americans (national) in the novel. In her argument, by displacing the racial threat onto Indians and, more implicitly, landless Mexicans and by hispanicizing and whitening the Californios, Ruiz de Burton represents the Alamar family “as Californios rather than Mexicans,” and positions them as “an internal, regional part of the nation” rather than “an external threat to it” (163). McCullough further explains that as “ethnic difference can become a safe cultural manifestation of regional diversity,” “Californio slides into Californian, which then slides into American” (163-64). Through the looking-class of this genteel, high-class, and whitened Spanishness, not only is the

³¹ The idea of Spanishness in the contexts of the southwestern borderlands still strongly smacked of negative meanings from an Anglo-centered viewpoint, especially before 1846. According to Raymond A. Paredes in “The Origins of Anti-Mexican Sentiment in the United States,” before the U.S. takeover “Many American travelers in Mexico called the natives ‘Spaniards’ and assigned to them, almost reflexively, the familiar defects of the Black Legend” (158), a fact that further testifies to the shifting, slippery meaning of “Spanishness” in nineteenth-century U.S.

racial threat refracted out, but ethnic difference is reflected back as “safe” regional diversity that can become part of the refigured U.S. national identity that the author has in mind. This, in McCullough’s argument, is the political vision that Ruiz de Burton tries to delineate for Californios by using contemporary discourses on Spanishness, Californios, and Mexicans. So, even though Ruiz de Burton’s works differ from the majority of regional writing by voicing the hidden local that could not be made sense of by the dominant culture, part of her narrative endeavors also includes providing the dominant culture a very particular way to “make sense of” this hidden local—a way to “recognize” the hidden local in her own terms, to make it unhidden and become the very key by which to rewrite national ideologies. Her writing, in this sense, engages in an ambivalent conversation with contemporary regional writing, challenging it and echoing it at the same time.

This complicated entanglement concerning the idea of Spanishness, according to John Michael Rivera, contributed to the creation of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, a set of myths that testify to the multifaceted history of intercultural exchanges in Mexican America and that I will recount in more details in later sections. In his discussion of Ruiz de Burton’s works, Rivera argues that it was after the U.S.-Mexico War that the newly constituted Mexican Americans “conflated their discourses of *gente de razon* with Anglo-American discourses of whiteness to create a story of peoplehood known as Spanish Fantasy Heritage” (103); only through this “bourgeois conservative” heritage could landed Californios affirm their “whiteness” and endorse “a mythical blood line that created a racial distinction from their ‘true’ Native and African ancestry” (104). This whitening effect achieved by the mythical heritage, however, was only temporary.

Despite the collective wish that landed Californios, in setting themselves apart from unlanded Mexicans and Indians, could become U.S. Californians, a wish also shared by Ruiz de Burton in Rivera's argument, history shows that Californios would eventually transform back into Mexicans. As McWilliams claims, when Californios lost all their power, land, and money, approximately during the seventies and eighties, "they began to be called Mexican and the old practice of referring to them as Californios, or native Californians was abandoned" (Southern 63). Ruiz de Burton's works, published around the same period, possibly registered this last moment for Californios to fulfill this collective wish.

Ruiz de Burton wrote her novels during the 1870s and the 1880s—slightly before the time when the publication of Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona (1884) started a long-lasting tradition of romanticizing and mythicizing Southern California that will become an important part of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage in the later period.³² The romantic nostalgia that characterized the Ramona-centered legacy for the decades to come profoundly influenced later regional writers' portrayal of California and Mexican America, including the other author that I focus on in this chapter, Gertrude Atherton. When Atherton fully embarked on composing her story chronicle of California history during the nineties,³³ it was a time when most of the Californios had already faded from the picture; they either merged into the Anglo bloodline through intermarriage,³⁴ or lost

³² For a discussion of the influences of Jackson's Ramona on the construction of Southern California myths, see Starr, Inventing the Dream, 61-63.

³³ Whereas Atherton's first attempt at writing about California was The Randolphs of Redwoods (1883), not until the 1890s did she fully engage in her story-chronicle of California history.

³⁴ See Almaguer for a discussion of the different fates of Californio women and men in the case of intermarriage: "Only the daughters of the California elite were viewed as appropriate partners for European Americans, especially for white men of means. Occurring with less frequency were marriages between Californio men and middle-class Anglo women" (58).

their status and holdings and slid back to the status of “inferior” lower-class Mexicans in the collective consciousness. Either way, hispanized Californios became historical relics, merely romantic materials for regional writers to use, whereas Mexicans in real life became the racialized object of disdain. The Spanish Fantasy Heritage once used by the newly incorporated Mexican Americans to assert their Europeanized whiteness was transformed into an Anglo-centered, romanticized nostalgia over a passing legacy.

This schizophrenic state of mind toward the “admirable” Spanish past and the “detestable” Mexican present in California can be observed in Atherton’s writing—and this, in my view, is the difference between Atherton and Ruiz de Burton. Whereas Ruiz de Burton associates upper-class Mexicans and Californios with “whitened” Spanishness, Atherton usually distinguishes between Spanish and Mexican and skips “Californio,” the nomenclature that involved politically empowering identification and that, as a matter of fact, was already on the verge of disappearing in the eighties. Whereas Ruiz de Burton hispanizes her Mexican female characters in order to extol a sophisticated Europeanized white Mexican womanhood, Atherton makes a clear distinction between Spanish, a cultural heritage that denotes aristocratic blood and that might be consumed into the newly consolidated regional identity called the “Californian,” and Mexican, a racial category permeated with images of savage otherness, hereditary degeneracy, and social problems. Their different visions concerning California’s Spanish and Mexican heritages mark the authors’ disparate ways of renarrating regional and national histories and conversing with regionalism.

Atherton’s The Californians: The Passing of Old Spanish California and the Birth

of New U.S. California

In The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation, Larzer Ziff describes the multicultural, polyglot world of San Francisco in the 1890s:

So many flags had flown over it in the century (Spanish, Mexican, Californian, and even, slightly to the north, Russian) that the Stars and Stripes were not invulnerable; so polyglot was its population when it became part of the United States that white Protestantism had never managed to establish its creeds as the foundation of urban manners, as it had in almost all other major American cities (167).

Here San Francisco is portrayed as a city where “the Stars and Stripes were not invulnerable,” a city that distinguished itself from the rest of the country by embracing a variety of cultures, languages, religions, and heritages. But was this really so? While turn-of-the-century San Francisco did indeed have a multinational heritage, behind this seemingly harmonious picture of variety and heterogeneity there were actually undercurrents of racism and imperialism that could disrupt this peacefulness at any moment. This is what I want to probe in my discussion of Atherton’s 1898 novel The Californians, a novel that, in illustrating Ziff’s ideal of the multicultural, polyglot city of San Francisco, also exposes, perhaps inadvertently, the undercurrents hidden beneath.

Twenty five years younger than Ruiz de Burton, Atherton represents a new generation of Californians and a seemingly corresponding yet essentially different kind of cultural legacy and regional consciousness. In contrast to Ruiz de Burton’s upholding of the upper-class “hispanized” Californios and Mexicans and condemnation of northern Anglo-Americans, Atherton’s version of California at first seems to comprehensively incorporate northern, southern, and Spanish legacies of the state while past confrontations and injustices in this seemingly “heterogeneous” version of California are either

marginalized or forgotten.³⁵ Yet what Atherton portrays, on closer examination, is rather an Anglo-centered picture, and the multicultural California paradise in her description is ultimately at the service of the imperialist nation, a paradise that, in praising an integrated U.S. California identity, buries its transnational, interracial/interethnic heritage. Whereas it is true that the term “Californian” for Atherton symbolized “variety” (Leider 131), this seemingly “heterogeneous” variety lacks accumulated historical memories. All in all, in contrast to Ruiz de Burton’s delineation, in Atherton’s narratives the transnational, intercultural histories of California were suppressed and remolded to serve nationalist and imperialist interests.

I want to look at Atherton’s view of Spanish California to examine her delineation of the new “integrated” California and her ideal California women of tomorrow, and, by doing so, I aim to situate her works in relation to regionalism and, more importantly, to what I call the “hidden local” in regional writing. Discussing her 1898 novel The Californians among her other works, I trace how turn-of-the-century discourses on Spanishness, especially the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, helped to promote a “composite” regional identity for California and contributed to the birth of a new California and its related myths; and how the construction of this new regional identity can be positioned vis-à-vis U.S. imperialist politics around the turn of the century. While my analysis is greatly indebted to Stephanie Foote’s discussion of regionalism and The Californians, in which she argues that Atherton, by “rewriting ethnic differences as regional variation” (“History” 75), produces regional fiction and characters and takes part in making California as a U.S. region, I want to complicate her argument by situating the novel in

³⁵ See McClure and Leider for a discussion of Atherton’s multicultural background.

terms of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, the Spanish-American War, the California Fable, and the discourses of manifest domesticity. Furthermore, whereas Foote contends that Atherton rewrites “problematic” ethnic differences as “manageable” regional variation in order to make The Californians a realist novel and Magdaléna a realist heroine, I want to focus on several cultural practices and myths that helped to mold the imperialist message of the novel rather than on the entanglement between regionalism and realism, “a nationalizing genre” in Foote’s words (80).

In the beginning of the chapter, I have mentioned that southern, northern, and Spanish traditions in California all affected Atherton because of her maternal, paternal, and conjugal lineages. While southern influences were more dominant in her youth due to her maternal family background,³⁶ later in life she gradually identified herself as a Californian, a composite identity that artfully combined several cultural legacies that had existed in the state. Her publisher, Fred Sommers, once claimed in 1889 that Atherton was a woman “with the natural audacity of the Californian, the intellectual breadth of the Southerner, the uncompromising character of Northern blood” (Leider 82). This unconventional image would be replicated by the writer again and again in her portrayal of most of her California heroines, such as Helena in A Whirl Asunder (1895) and The Californians, who claims to be “beautifully mixed,” “half New England and half Southerner, and all Californian” (The Californians, 46).

What is intriguing about Sommers’ impression of Atherton and Helena’s self-description is their failure to mention another important California tradition, which

³⁶ According to McClure, “Because of her mother’s upbringing as a Southern belle, Gertrude Atherton believed that she belonged to the Southern aristocracy that was perpetuated in San Francisco in the 1850s and 1860s” (GA [1979] 18).

the author herself was deeply interested in and conjugally related to: that is, the legacy of Spanish California. This seemingly innocent omission, in my opinion, inadvertently echoes the apparent glorification yet eventual “suppression” of California’s Spanish legacy in Atherton’s writing. The author’s interest in California’s Spanish past was kindled during her 1889 trip to Europe. While she had already published two novels centered on California materials—allegedly because of the popularity of western genres that Jackson’s Ramona had inspired—it was only after she went to London that she became aware of British people’s keen interest in stories related to the U.S. West and the possible fame this kind of writing could bring her. She became conscious of herself as a California writer, and even began to see herself as “a literary Calamity Jane—fearless, independent, and unstoppable” (Leider 105), who with her first-hand knowledge of the U.S. West/California was the most suitable candidate to introduce it to the world.

With this new awareness in mind, Atherton returned to San Francisco in 1890 on account of her Chilean mother-in-law, Dominga’s, failing health, and she immediately set out to collect materials and stories about Spanish California from Dominga, who, despite all the conflicts and rifts between them, still symbolized maternal guidance for Atherton—at least more so than her own mother (Leider 106). Besides her personal connection with Dominga, another reason that triggered Atherton’s interest in California’s Spanish past, according to her 1932 autobiography, was a column written by Kate Field that lamented California writers’ neglect of the old Spanish life of the state, an article that she came across right after she returned from Europe (186). Even though Atherton used to connect California more with the restless vigor and competitive spirit of the pioneer generation such as the Forty-niners, after she returned from Europe she began to pursue

“a fantasy Spanish-California,” “a lost golden age one could yearn for but never recapture” (Leider 109). To sum up, not only did the popularity of western genres in both England and on the U.S. East Coast make Atherton desire to attain fame through materials that she was supposed to know best, but her personal connection with Spanish California also made her yearn to “preserve” this tradition which she deemed was quickly fading away. It is ironical that “The need for ruins, antiquity, and a resonant history that had propelled her flight to Europe she could now graft onto a legendary California past” (Leider 109). Although Atherton was not content with the lack of romance and imagination in the contemporary U.S. literary circle, which was then occupied with “dull” realism in her opinion, she eventually found the solution in her native U.S. soil.

This particular goal also situated Atherton within the whole tradition of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage. In explicating Atherton’s new interest in regional materials, Leider has further attributed Atherton’s case to a collective national phenomenon: “interest in the mission towns and in the Mexican era” was on the rise because the nation was “hungry for myths that were home-grown rather than imports from Europe”; as a result, “a fantasy heritage” was created to suit the nation’s needs (108; my emphasis). The Spanish Fantasy Heritage was ironically renarrated and repackaged as a set of home-grown myths, purified of its transnational, transcontinental origins, and used to serve purposes of internal consolidation and external expansion for the nation. In this sense, Atherton’s embrace of this “fantasy Spanish California” corresponded with the general goal of contemporary regional writing, which, as I have suggested earlier, mainly consisted of making sense of different regions and cultures far away from the metropolis, and of molding and reimagining a homogenous past for the nation, which was plagued by rifts

and conflicts partly due to these differences. This state of mind explains the renewed interest in romantically narrating the lost Utopia, the pastoral Spanish California, during the turn of the century. The nostalgia over the Spanish past was, in other words, a way to make sense of the problematic present.

I want to examine Atherton's use of Spanish California materials first by discussing The Californians, one of her more popular and acclaimed novels.³⁷ Unlike other regional writing focusing on "rough" westerners, this novel narrates the fates of three upper-class California men and their families living in the prestigious area of Nob Hill in San Francisco during the 1880s: the Spanish California grandee Don Roberto Yorba; his brother-in-law, the Yankee Hiram Polk; and the Southerner Jack Belmont. Atherton describes how these three men's ambitions, materialistic greed, self-complacency, and narrow-mindedness make them nestle within their own little circle, a "fool's paradise" in Atherton's words, and ignore reality and many important aspects of life.

Juxtaposed with the downfall of the older generation is the blossoming of the new generation, including the main heroine Magdaléna Yorba, daughter of a Californio father (Don Roberto) and a New England mother (Hiram Polk's sister Hannah), and Helena Belmont, Colonel Belmont's daughter as well as Magdaléna's best friend. Unlike Atherton's typical daring, comely, and self-willed California heroines such as Helena, the dark-skinned Magdaléna is plain-looking, introverted, awkward in social skills, and unsure of her life purposes. Her Spanish pride and New England conscience, according to Helena, are merely "hooked together" and cannot be smoothly integrated. This incongruous combination, in Atherton's description, results in Magdaléna's difficulty in

³⁷ Weir calls it "her best novel" (29). Leider calls it "one of her most serious and accomplished" (167). Also see McClure (1979) for a discussion of the contemporary reviews of the novel.

developing a stable, integrated California identity. The novel thus traces Magdaléna's various struggles, particularly her gradual disillusionment with her former beliefs and engagements—such as Catholicism, her love of the “imaginary” pastoral California, her duty as an obedient daughter to a patriarchal Spanish father, and her ambition to become a writer—and her eventual coming to terms with her current predicaments and problems; and only then can she embrace a new life and develop into a full-fledged U.S. Californian in the current turbulent world.

Magdaléna is contrasted with the beautiful Helena, who, in Magdaléna's opinion, is the “concentrated essence of California” (106). Dashing, outspoken, adventurous, and sometimes ultimately selfish, Helena loves freedom and yearns for new revolutions to lead, without regard to the possible damage she might do to others; yet she is deeply attached and faithful to her childhood friend Magdaléna. What produces a fissure in their friendship is the intrusion of a newcomer from New York, Jack Trennahan, a world-weary man of prominent ancestry, who comes to look for respite, regeneration, and a new life in California. While Trennahan believes he has found the peace and quiet he has always longed for in Magdaléna, the very woman incarnating California in his imagination, he cannot help but feel attracted to Helena's beauty, energy, and impetuosity. After Magdaléna discovers that Helena and Trennahan are in love, she unselfishly foregoes her engagement with Trennahan, only to find out later that Helena decided to leave Trennahan because of his infamous past history with women.

With Helena gone and Trennahan exiling himself in the south seas, Magdaléna is left all alone in this fool's paradise. Around the same time, both Hiram Polk and Colonel Belmont pass away; and Don Roberto, believing the chance of keeping his fortune intact

is forever gone with Trennahan's departure, confines himself as well as his wife and daughter in the tomb-like Yorba mansion on Nob Hill. The prospect of Magdaléna's future happiness gets dimmer and dimmer until one night, after a frenzied journey to the city's most squalid area, including Chinatown and the Spanish town, she makes up her mind to bravely face the problems of her life. Soon afterwards Trennahan returns from his exile and asks for Magdaléna's hand. The couple goes to see Don Roberto and discovers that he has hung himself with an American flag, leaving Magdaléna totally free to pursue her future life with the regenerated, more mature Trennahan. Although the fool's paradise is no more, these two people, who have suffered and learned from their past mistakes, can eventually embark on the task of building their new paradise in this paradise lost.

The theme that Arcadia must evolve into civilization was nothing new, but the civilization that Atherton had in mind for California was specifically constructed through the interethnic negotiations between Anglo-American culture and Spanish culture, with the former claiming the total triumph in the end. The California Arcadia delineated in the novel, which looks very similar to the pastoral Spanish California so nostalgically eulogized in the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, is more like an unrealistically, superficially constructed dreamland, a stilled picturesque world, which in Magdaléna's mind is associated with "perpetual blue skies and floods of yellow light," a country where "the sun shone for eight months in the year, where flowers grew more thickly than weeds, and fruit was abundant and luscious" (22). Although this kind of portrayal may seem to fall into the category of the clichéd pastoral paradise of early California propagated by the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, The Californians differs from the nostalgic literature produced

by those who promoted this heritage, including some of Atherton's other works, in its total lack of the trademark nostalgic tone. Whereas Atherton refers to old Spanish California, she simply views it as a disposable and useless, distant past without nostalgically sentimentalizing it as other regional writers would do or as she herself had done in her 1894 volume of early California tales, After the Gringo Came, and as she would do in the 1902 enlarged and revised edition, The Splendid Idle Forties. What Atherton focuses on in The Californians is rather the troubled present instead of the nostalgically eulogized past, a present in which the new California generation, including people of Spanish descent such as the upper-class heroine Magdaléna, must leave a state of seclusion and reimagine their future as respectful U.S. California citizens.

One can say that what distinguishes The Californians from the nostalgic literature on Spanish California is the difference between moving forward and looking backward: while in both the Spanish past is presented with a certain degree of appreciation (particularly in the portrayal of peaceful pastoral scenery), in Atherton's novel this past is also viewed as something that should be adamantly abandoned instead of nostalgically eulogized, an attitude that not only can be attributed to her previous uncomfortable personal encounter with dilapidated missions and poor Mexicans who lived there, but that also, in my opinion, reflects her belief in racist evolutionary theories that the weak should be replaced by the strong.³⁸ Yet the overall goal of this 1898 novel does not contradict that of the nostalgic literature. What this novel does is rather to expose what is hidden

³⁸ For more on Atherton's racism and her belief in evolutionary theories, see her 1922 article "The Alpine School of Fiction," in which she highly praises Madison Grant's "The Passing of the Great Race" (a work of scientific racism) and argues that the best fiction should be written by the Nordics, namely the Alpine school. Also see California: An Intimate History, in which she, commenting on the "backwardness" of Indians and the futility of the Spanish missionary's efforts to "save" them, claims: "God made the poor to toil for the rich, the weak to be oppressed by the strong, and, as both were put upon the earth to glorify Him, why not?" (34).

behind the nostalgic appreciative tone; that is, the past (Spanish California) is, after all, already gone, and what really counts is the present (U.S. California that tried to “make sense of” Spanish California and the legacies and relics it left behind). Arcadia must evolve into civilization, a brave new world that belongs to Anglo-American elites and eligible Californians such as the Spanish upper-class Magdaléna, who has to learn to put her regional identity as a (U.S.) Californian above her cultural and ethnic identity as a Spaniard; a brave new world where no room is left for minority peoples plagued by U.S. racism and imperialist encroachment such as landless Mexicans and Chinese.

Atherton’s portrayal of the Spanish residents in California testifies to the theme of the passing of Spanish culture. Both Magdaléna’s father and aunt—designated as the “typical” Spaniard, the upper-class descendent of Castile blood and passionate, indolent, and proud in nature—look like ancient relics belonging to the past that have no essential part to play in the current historical stage of California. Mrs. Polk, Don Roberto’s sister, who marries an American but always hates *Americanos*, lives in Santa Barbara, where the lifestyle is more similar to that of the old time. Just like the old Spanish California tales that she narrated to the young Magdaléna, Mrs. Polk, in her niece’s words, seems to “belong to another life,” a life that Magdaléna, despite her dismal situation at home after Trennahan and Helena leave, still has no desire to participate in when Mrs. Polk asks her niece to move in with her (303). It is telling that Mrs. Polk’s maiden name is also Magdaléna Yorba, exactly the same as that of her niece. Even though they share the same name, however, they eventually choose to go separate ways. The younger Magdaléna has no wish to follow in the older Magdaléna’s footsteps, buried in the wastes of time, shutting herself off from the outside world. She, with Trennahan’s help, can and will

embrace her destiny as part of the new generation of Californians.

Don Roberto represents another type of Californio in contrast to his sister. Whereas Mrs. Polk hates everything related to the *Americanos*, Don Roberto is a believer in Americanism. He loves to imagine himself as an American and hates to be viewed as an “indolent” Spaniard: “Yorba felt an American, every inch of him, and hated anything that reminded him of what he might become did he yield to the natural indolence and extravagance of his [Spanish] nature” (58). Yet no matter how hard he tries, Don Roberto, just like his sister, is doomed to perish from the center stage of California history. Right after his brother-in-law Polk, the very man who saved him from losing everything as his Spanish cohorts did, passes away, Don Roberto confines himself inside his chamber and never goes out again. This once magnificent mansion becomes a haunted graveyard, a sarcophagus witnessing the failure of the futile ambitions of one Californian millionaire. In the end, on the exact day that Trennahan returns to California to be reunited with Magdaléna, Don Roberto hangs himself with an American flag—a highly symbolic gesture that not only shows how his obsession with Americanism has ruined his life but also indicates his inability to serve as a U.S. national; his whole-hearted embrace of Americanism only results in his own unhappiness, confinement, and death. California may be a new Arcadia for Anglo-Americans such as Trennahan and the new Californian generation such as the mixed-blood Magdaléna, who will soon join the national household through marriage with an Easterner, but it is no place for “outdated” Californios like Don Roberto.

The heroine Magdaléna has a more complicated love-hate relationship with California. While she deems California a sunny land of beauty and peace and views

herself as “its first blood, the daughter of its Arcadia, the last living representative of all that it had been in the fullness of its power,” she nevertheless also has “a sense of being betrayed by the country of which she was...a part” because sometimes she just feels unhappy in this paradise for no reason at all (149). I will argue that part of her unhappiness can be symbolically attributed to the fact that she, deemed the “last living representative” of the passing Spanish culture, holds a rather insecure position in this paradise. Whereas Helena is without question the representative California “woman of tomorrow” in Atherton’s fictional world, Magdaléna must work hard to earn a legitimate place for herself. Will she be part of this passing Arcadia just like her aunt and father, or will she leave the “innocence” of Arcadia and march into the “experience” of the turbulent imperialist U.S. present? This, in my view, is the central question that the novel sets out to explore.

Although the novel in the end seems to provide an unequivocal answer by orchestrating the reunion of Magdaléna and Trennahan, the ambiguity surrounding Magdaléna’s eligibility still looms large. Just as Foote has noted, one can see in Magdaléna “the intersection of the Spaniard—imagined as a white European—and the Mexican—imagined as a dark native” (“History” 83), an uncomfortable combination that, in Foote’s opinion, contributes to Magdaléna’s ambiguous eligibility as a realist character. I will further argue that while Atherton is careful to distinguish between the “romanticized” Spanish and the “dirty” Mexican” most of the time,³⁹ Magdaléna proves

³⁹ The elite Californios such as the Yorba family are always described as “Spanish,” never “Mexican”; for example, Don Roberto, just like the elite Californio/Mexican characters in Ruiz de Burton’s novels, has “skin fair with the fairness of Castile” (26). On the contrary, Mexicans who live in the Spanish town are described as “stupid” and “weather-beaten” (333,334); the servant once horsewhipped by Don Roberto is specified as “Mexican” (40). Similarly, in “A Native on the California Missions” (1888), *Los Cerritos* (1890), *California: An Intimate History* (1914), and her autobiography *Adventures of a Novelist* (1932),

to be a paradoxical case in the author's oeuvre, since "Spanish" and "Mexican" juxtapose incongruently in Magdaléna's very being, especially in the beginning of the story. While Atherton takes pains to hispanicize Magdaléna by characterizing her pride, dignity, and indolence as typical Spanish traits, she also carefully paints her as an unhappy, unbalanced "hybrid" with swarthy skin, "as dark as an Indian." It is telling that, in my opinion, in the second half of the novel the "dark" racialized side of Magdaléna gradually fades out of the picture,⁴⁰ while the Spanish side becomes the central question, a fact exemplified by the shift of focus to her struggles with composing Spanish California tales and with differentiating herself from the older Spanish generation. If the novel at first tries to project two types of popular myths concerning Californios (archaic Spanish and lowly Mexican) onto Magdaléna, later it simply ignores the dark Mexican side. With the Mexican "problem" out of the way, Magdaléna can concentrate on reconciling the incongruity between her Spanish and New England traits, which in Atherton's delineation symbolize "indolence" and "intellect" respectively, and on developing an integrated, well-balanced California identity, a "safe" regional identity that can be made sense of by mainstream readers and the nation. The whole novel can thus be summarized as Magdaléna's *Bildungsroman*, whose ultimate goal, as Foote has argued, is to "rewrite

Atherton delineates "Mexicans" as lowly, dirty squatters and greasers, a description in sharp contrast to her "appreciation" of old Spanish California culture.

See the chapter called "Schizoid Heritage" in Pitt's *The Decline of the Californios* for a discussion of the impact of the differentiation between "Spanish" and "Mexican" on California culture. According to him, even today California still "sees the Spanish-speaking as living at once in two disharmonious worlds, one mythic, the other real. The mythic world emphasizes the 'Spanish' past—carefree, unchanging, and enveloped in a religious aura; the other is a 'Mexican' world—disagreeable, mundane, potentially violent" (291). Also see chapter two, "The Fantasy Heritage," in McWilliams's *North from Mexico* for a discussion of the "schizophrenic" dichotomy between "Spanish" and "Mexican," especially 44-45; and see Antonia I. Castañeda, "Gender, Race, and Culture: Spanish-Mexican Women in the Historiography of Frontier California."

⁴⁰ In this 350-page book, the last mention of Magdaléna's swarthy skin appears on page 168, approximately halfway through the novel.

ethnic difference as regional variation”; that is, to transform her racial/ethnic identity (Mexican/Spanish) into a regional/national identity (U.S. Californian).

What exemplifies this transformation best is Magdaléna’s renunciation of writing Spanish/Mexican California tales. Although Magdaléna does not have much confidence in her writerly talent and in fact often struggles with the dilemma of falling into clichéd wording, plots, and narrative structures, putting the stories told by her aunt into written words used to give her pleasure and a sense of purpose. Yet after reading Henry James’s novels, Magdaléna decides to give up writing and burns all of her manuscripts, since she feels convinced that her immature pieces will never be able to measure up to James’ literary achievement. This event has important symbolic meanings in the novel. If narration is a symbolic act of re/claiming the right to explicate histories, the act of renouncing means foregoing the possibility of narrating the not-yet-narrated histories of the marginal and depriving the marginal of the chance to speak. Magdaléna’s dilemma, in this sense, echoes the famous question that Gayatri Spivak poses: “Can the Subaltern speak?”—despite the fact that she, as an upper-class mixed-race woman, somewhat falls short of the category of the subaltern. So, can the troubled hybrid speak in The Californians? The answer is obviously no, as shown by Magdaléna’s decision to destroy her “immature” writing because she is in awe of Henry James. Magdaléna’s ability to find a voice as a Spanish subject is qualified by the fact that she, as a marginalized member of the society (a half-Spanish “cross-breed”), must sacrifice part of her ethnic heritage in order to be incorporated into the official history; and also by the fact that she is, after all, a tongue-tied hybrid confined within the framework of an Anglo-centered regional novel which, unlike Ruiz de Burton’s works, cannot provide much agency to a

Spanish subject—let alone a Mexican subject, a position that Magdaléna ambivalently occupies at least in the first half of the story.

Foote asserts that “the failure of Magdaléna to become a writer and the structural failure of the stories she is writing suggest an alternative national history whose emergent articulations are formally repressed...” (“History” 88). In other words, what is repressed in Magdaléna’s awkward renarration are these kinds of “emergent articulations,” articulations that, if given a chance, might blossom into alternative marginalized histories very different from the official version. Yet these articulations are after all, I would argue, only emergent without ever actually blossoming due to Atherton’s restricted authorial standpoint and the conventional form and motifs of the majority of regional works around the time. In the end Magdaléna can only mumble in a barely intelligible voice since Atherton is the one who actually controls Magdaléna’s creation of Spanish folklore. If “controlling folklore,” as Foote has noted, “allows the nation to make the double movement of silencing the other and forcing it to speak” (92), I contend that this forced speech cannot help but be articulated either in a half stifled tone (as shown by Magdaléna’s inarticulateness), or in a docile, deferential non-voice (as shown by her later renunciation of writing because of James).

In my opinion, whereas Magdaléna before at least tried to narrate, albeit with uncertainty and difficulty, stories of old California heroines and heroes in the hope of immortalizing them, her later renunciation deprives her even of this chance. Writing, no matter how restricted and awkward it is, produces a voice; even though this voice may be broken or may even consist of colonial mimicry as Homi Bhabha would argue, it is still a voice, capable of producing small changes, but Magdaléna does not even have this option

in Atherton's narrative. If one takes into account Trennahan's obsessive belief that Magdaléna and California are inseparable (176), one can understand why Magdaléna has no choice but to give up writing Spanish tales sooner or later. Just as California needs to evolve into a civilization as well as part of the "civilized" country called the United States, so Magdaléna, as the embodiment of California, likewise must bury all these unnarrated, unnarratable ghosts from the Spanish past in order to embrace her new identity as Trennahan's wife as well as a loyal U.S. California subject. In view of the fact that Magdaléna, as seen through Trennahan's eyes, used to be a "dear little Spanish maid" who does not seem to "belong to the present at all" (215), Atherton needs to find a way to loosen Magdaléna's tie with this nostalgically constructed, mythologized Spanish past in order to spare her the fate of being buried in the historical graveyard just like her father and aunt. This is why her renunciation of writing Spanish tales is so important. This decision not only symbolizes the passing of old Spanish California, but also ushers in the blossoming age of brave new U.S. California.

Two events that take place right after Magdaléna's decision to forsake writing illustrate her turn of fate: one is her frenzied night trip to the Spanish town; the other is her chance encounter with one of her father's old Spanish friends, who happens to be a famous hero that she has written about in her burned manuscripts. Without writing to keep her sanity in the sarcophagus-like Yorba mansion, one night Magdaléna simply snaps and strolls out from her home into the San Francisco streets. Coming across scenes of dissipation, lawlessness, and crime everywhere, she steps into a strange new world, filled with lower-class people of all nationalities, including drunken sailors, painted women, "blank-faced Chinaman," and "dark-faced men" of French and Italian descent;

and finally she enters the worn-down Spanish town: “This, then, was Spanish town. Magdaléna had dreamed of it often, picturing it a blaze of colour, a moving picture-book, crowded with beautiful girls and handsome gaily attired men. There was not a young person to be seen. Nothing could be less picturesque, more sordid” (334). Using this description, Atherton strongly suggests that the pastoral world of Spanish California is already gone, that there is nothing left to be nostalgic over—a sentiment that can possibly be traced back to her unhappy experience of accompanying her husband on a futile trip to run a ranch near the mission of San Antonio in 1882, an experience so bad that it led her to make the following comment in her 1888 article “A Native on the California Missions”: “It is doubtful if there is any structure on earth colder, barer, uglier, dirtier, less picturesque, less romantic than a California mission.”⁴¹ In the next paragraph Atherton even explicitly criticizes Jackson for “paint[ing] up the old missions with the brush of her imagination”; “There is no sentiment in California; the place is too young, too crude,” so she claims. Whereas Atherton copies the nostalgic writing style initiated by Jackson in some of her works, especially in her collections of short stories on old California, in The Californians she presents a different, even opposite, kind of view, very possibly based upon her own unhappy memory of living with her good-for-nothing Spanish husband near an “ugly” mission.

Magdaléna’s disillusionment with the Spanish town, in this regard, echoes her creator’s personal experience. Just as Atherton describes the Mexican women in the mission of San Antonio as “very fat” (Intimate 27), in the Spanish town Magdaléna also comes across some fat Mexican painted women, half-dressed and “frankly sensual” (334).

⁴¹ She recounts this experience in Adventures 74-77; California: An Intimate History 27.

This encounter is revealing because it is one of the very few times that the term “Mexican” appears in the novel. By putting these “Mexican” women in the “Spanish” town, Atherton, perhaps inadvertently, reveals the secret hidden behind the myths surrounding the Spanish Fantasy Heritage: that is, although this heritage produced a schizophrenic splitting between “Spanish” and “Mexican,” these two were actually linked and might even point to the same thing. If the general goal of regionalism is to make sense of the unfamiliar local through narration, in this short incident in this regional fiction, there emerge certain locations that cannot be made sense of and that can only live an “incongruous” ghost-like existence in the dilapidated Spanish town. This incongruity occurs because their very existence contradicts what has been narrated in the Spanish Fantasy Heritage; their existence, in this sense, bears witness to the surprising clashing and crisscrossing between the “beautiful” Spanish past and the “ugly” Mexican present and thus reveals the fallacy behind the logic of this fantasy heritage. That is, without the nostalgic cover, the archaic Spanish world that was assumed to be peaceful and pastoral is suddenly revealed to be ugly, full of “unsightly” Mexican ghosts. Because of Atherton’s refusal to assume the nostalgic tone endorsed by the Spanish Fantasy Heritage in this particular incident, the decay of the Spanish heritage and its linkage with the “ugliness” of the Mexican reality are suddenly and temporarily exposed as “facts” and end up revealing this fantasy as a “fantasy” indeed. This argument testifies to scholars’ claims that the fictitious plurality offered by regional writing could in fact be more implosive than it seemed, that it could circulate emerging forms of identity despite the representational power of regionalism. Whereas Atherton’s novel does not really offer an alternative way to represent the “emerging forms of identity,” it exposes the fallacy of the

mainstream representational process by illustrating, perhaps inadvertently, the existence of the “hidden local.”

Magdaléna’s intrusion into the Spanish town and her encounter with the “hidden local” thus highlight an important problem with her identity, which centers on the incongruity between Spanishness and Mexicanness and the incompatibility of both with the present-day California. Whereas she is disillusioned by the dismal sight of the Spanish town and its weather-beaten, stupid-looking residents, she still feels “an almost irresistible attraction” to those half-dressed Mexican painted women; but she hastens on and eventually finds a quiet space on Telegraph Hill to rest and cool her troubled head. For the first time, the natural beauty of California fails to comfort her, and it finally dawns on her that it is high time for her to seriously face the problem of her life and try to find a way out, to “put her character together again and accept the future without further luxation or debility of will” (336). This significant moment marks Magdaléna’s passage from “innocence” to “experience” in the novel. Just as mentioned earlier, Magdaléna has always been an incarnation of ambiguity and incongruity, with “Spanish” and “Mexican” traits colliding in her very being. While before she was pretty much secluded within her upper-class little circle, where people show deference to her because of her status and “Castilian” blood, now she, no longer a girl weaving romantic Spanish tales, must find a way to participate in the current Anglo-dominated California world and come face to face with the problem of her incongruity; that is, the racialized, “ugly” Mexican side of her, a side that must be “purified” before she can become a proper U.S. subject and which does gradually fade out halfway through the story but makes a sudden reappearance in this Spanish town incident—an argument proven by Magdaléna’s “almost irresistible

attraction” to the Mexican painted women.

In Atherton’s blueprint, in order for Magdaléna to embrace an integrated U.S. California identity, she must sever her tie with the “ugly” Mexican present and weaken her connection with the archaic Spanish past; that is, the decision she must make is none other than to choose between a life buried inside the grave-like ancient house with her father, her Spanish forebears, and the haunting Mexican ghosts, on the one hand, and, on the other, a life as a U.S. Californian who can blend in with mainstream society and leave the “useless” Spanish and Mexican relics behind. It is telling that when Magdaléna asks a Mexican crone in the Spanish town where all the young girls are, the old woman, in broken English, answers: “Girl come from other place sometimes, then have the baby and is old queeck. Si the senorita stay here, she have the baby and grow old too” (334). If Magdaléna continues to stay where she is, she will perish just like these old women in the Spanish town. What is brutally disclosed here is the fact that utopia, the pastoral Spanish world, has already turned into dystopia, the haunted Spanish town filled with unsightly Mexican ghosts.

Whereas in the beginning of the night journey Magdaléna is filled with “those tangled, fighting, sternly governed passions of the cross-breed” (328), part of the narrative function that this journey performs is to get rid of these wayward passions and straighten out the elements of the “cross-breed” within her. This is why after giving up the right to narrate the stories of her Spanish predecessors, she must be disillusioned by the Spanish town. It is interesting that at the same time she also feels a strange attraction to and even identification with the Mexican women before turning away. While Magdaléna’s destiny in the narrative is to embrace Anglo-centered imperialist California,

it is undeniable that she shares a very strong tie with the half-deserted, ghostly Spanish town and the sensual, surreal Mexican women, a tie that is supposed to be severed yet still has a gothic, ghostly existence in the narrative world of The Californians. This bizarre existence, in my opinion, symbolizes the hidden local supposed to be suppressed in regional writing, a reminder of what is buried inside the official narrative like a skeleton in the closet. And here the skeleton is the transnational, interethnic, and interracial origin of Magdaléna and the city of San Francisco, hidden, interred, and forgotten for the purpose of constructing an Anglo-Americanized grand narrative for the city and the people.

This is why the only way out that Atherton arranges for her heroine, after disconnecting Magdaléna from her Spanish/Mexican lineage, is tellingly the return of Trennahan, the exemplary U.S. northeastern man.⁴² Even though Magdaléna has decided to seriously face the problem of her life after the night trip, the only “two small stars of hope” that she can think of are, first, her father’s death, and second, the return of Trennahan (336). On the final stage of Magdaléna’s journey into “experience,” all her former ambiguity, incongruity, and self-conflict, i.e. anything that marks her as “abnormal,” must be managed and smoothed out; and her only salvation in Atherton’s text is to become a U.S. California subject by marrying Trennahan. She must wait for Trennahan, the representative northeastern elite man of the nation, to save her, so that she will no longer be the puzzled, puzzling cross-breed and can become a U.S. Californian subject and join the mainstream society. This is not only Atherton’s plan for Magdaléna,

⁴² Tellingly the only thing Trennahan feels upon hearing Magdaléna’s Spanish tales is boredom (110). Whereas he feels drawn by Magdaléna as an incarnation of California with regenerative powers, he considers the archaic, mythicized world of Spanish California to be obsolete and stories related to it cliché.

but it is also her dream for California, the land of which Magdaléna, tellingly in Trennahan's words, is the incarnation.

Before turning into this ideal U.S. California subject, Magdaléna has to finish her journey of disillusionment with old Spanish California. After the night journey, her dislike and contempt for her father grows; as a result, she even feels "thoroughly ashamed of her progenitor as she stood looking down upon the little dirty shrunken shambling figure [of Don Roberto]" (340). Yet Magdaléna's most thorough disillusionment comes when one of Don Roberto's old Spanish friends comes to visit him in the hope of loaning some money. This "shabby and dirty" man, who looks like a "fallen king" in Magdaléna's eyes, turns out to be a once-famous hero about whom she wrote a story in her burned manuscripts, who once held office under the Mexican government but ended up losing everything after U.S. American squatters came (342-43). Looking at this "broken-down old drunkard, in the dusty gloom of an old maniac's wooden 'palace,' in the fashionable quarter of a city which had never heard his name" (345), Magdaléna suddenly feels glad that she already burned all her manuscripts. Although Magdaléna laments over the "distress of her people" and feels eager to help them, she nonetheless recognizes that they are merely "fallen idols" congealed in a lost Utopia (345), and that the only way for her to escape a similar fate is to embrace her American present with Trennahan. In this particular novel, there is no place for Californios except as outdated historical relics; after all, they are "a historyless people" as Foote has noted.

This is why Magdaléna's attempt to write history for her ancestors is doomed to fail; she never stands a chance in Atherton's novel. In her 1891 article "The Literary

Development of California,” Atherton professes that “the most important literary work [in California] has naturally been done by Americans, the representative people of California” (269; my emphasis). It is obvious that Spanish/Mexican American writers such as Ruiz de Burton were never part of Atherton’s concern, and there is no doubt that Magdaléna can never become a writer in The Californians. Her first and foremost job, from Atherton’s viewpoint, is to consolidate her identity as a U.S. citizen, and thus to transform herself into one of the “representative people of California.”

The Spanish Fantasy Heritage and the Spanish-American War

In her article on Atherton and The Californians, Foote claims that “Ideologically, The Californians might well be considered the story of how the old Spanish empire became a new region in the United States and how Atherton scavenged Spanish American folklore to create a nonthreatening and romantic past for the new state” (80). Whereas I also explore the transformation of Spanish California into U.S. California in Atherton’s novel, my goal is to look at the role that the Spanish Fantasy Heritage plays in this transformation and the entanglement of this heritage with U.S. imperialism, specifically the 1898 Spanish-American War—a war that Foote mentions in passing but does not explore in full.⁴³ By doing so, I aim to position The Californians, a novel also published

⁴³ Although Foote does not specifically mention the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, her arguments about how Magdaléna’s “Spanish heritage” is “privatized” and “depoliticized” to construct a regional California identity and about the splitting between “Spanish” and “Mexican” in the novel can certainly be situated in relation to the Spanish Fantasy Heritage (75).

While I am much indebted to Foote’s work, I would like to qualify her claim that the novel “laments the disappearance of authentic Spanish culture in the increasingly Americanized state of California” (74). In my opinion, whereas the novel might “apparently” lament the disappearance of Spanish culture in some passages, possibly due to the influences of other regional writings around the time, it accepts this disappearance as inevitable and in fact necessary for the birth of the new integrated regional identity of U.S. California.

in 1898, in the transnational contexts of U.S. imperialism, in which the expanding U.S. empire, while replacing the declining Spanish empire, strove to create new myths of nostalgia and amnesia.

There have been somewhat differing interpretations of the origin and content of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, but critics generally agree that this idea, introduced by McWilliams in his 1948 book North from Mexico, usually consisted of a romantic, unrealistic, and mythological portrayal of Spanish culture; a fantasy heritage which was “mostly inaccurate, ahistorical, and suffused with excessive sentimentality and romanticism” (Bokovoy xvi), and which was to become the “theme of so much art and architecture, so many books, pageants, and movies” for the time to come (Heizer & Almquist 152).

One of the major characteristics of this tradition, as noted earlier, is its schizophrenic tendency. According to Pitt, after the publication of Jackson’s Ramona in 1884, there gradually developed an extremely popular romantic cult concerning Spanish California in the older days; a “Schizoid Heritage” that aimed at the romantic revival of the Spanish past while disregarding problems related to Mexican Americans in reality; and “So popular was this cult by 1890 that one could scarcely recall how recently the Spanish Americans had been in disfavor, or that the real, live ones still were” (290). What this cult created was the schizophrenic splitting between the good, noble “Spanish” and the bad, despicable “Mexican” as well as the marginalization, even disregard, of the latter in people’s perception toward the end of the century.⁴⁴ Some critics even argue for the

⁴⁴ About this schizophrenic tendency, also see McWilliams, North from Mexico, 43-53; Cecil Robinson, With the Ears of Strangers, in which he specifically argues that “California, in its attitude toward its heritage from Mexico, suffers from a split personality. On the one hand it reveres and thoroughly commercializes the ‘Spanish’ past, and on the other it tends to scorn or simply ignore the living

“absence” of Mexicans in this heritage. For example, in Neil Foley’s 2003 book review of The Spanish Redemption, he claims that while this heritage “evokes the lost world of Spanish aristocrats and their haciendas, Spanish friars and Indian Missions, as well as alluring señoritas and the Anglos who came to possess them,” Mexicans are absent from the picture; and thus he concludes that “Anglo Californians used the cultural material of the Spanish colonial past to mask the presences of mostly poor, mixed-race, immigrant Mexicans in their midst” (quoted from Michelle Habell-Pallan 15-16; my emphasis).

Whereas critics have generally agreed on the romantic, inaccurate, and white-centered description that this heritage presented, they have somewhat different opinions about who was using it to serve their own ends. Pitt attributes the birth of this romantic, mythological cult to Jackson’s Ramona (284, 286-87). Foley in the passage above specifies “Anglo Californians” as the ones who used this fantasy tradition to overlook the Mexican presence. Matthew F. Bokovoy, summarizing McWilliams’ argument in North from Mexico, claims that this fantasy heritage was the “invented tradition created by white Californians to interpret the historical legacy of Indians, Spaniards, and Mexicans in the Southwest” (xvi; my emphasis). It is true that Jackson’s work may be the major influence on Californians’ construction of the fantasy heritage, and it is also true that the slippage of meanings between “Anglo Californians” and “white Californians” is not that huge, since most of the “indisputably” white Californians were indeed Anglo. But when one adds Rivera’s claim in The Emergence of Mexican America into the discussion, the slippage becomes more problematic. In Rivera’s argument, this heritage was created by the “newly constituted Mexican people in the United States,”

representatives of this past [Mexicans] in its midst” (67-68). Also see Anne Goldman’s summary and use of Robinson’s argument (44).

who “conflated their discourses of *gente de razon* with Anglo-American discourses of whiteness to create a story of peoplehood known as Spanish Fantasy Heritage” (103). While Rivera’s “newly constituted Mexican people in the United States” specifically refer to elite “white” Mexicans and therefore can somewhat be categorized as “white Californians,” there is a great slippage of meanings between the “newly constituted Mexican people in the United States” and Foley’s “Anglo Californians”; there is also a difference between the post-1848 years (after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo) and the post-1884 years (after the publication of *Ramona*). Whereas it may well be that Rivera traces the development of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage to an earlier time when Californios increasingly referred to themselves as Spaniards after the 1848 gold rush in order to set themselves apart from the *mexicanos*,⁴⁵ this incongruity also testifies to the complicated interrelatedness and overlapping among designations such as Californian, Californio, Mexican, and Spanish, and shows how peoples in the Southwest shared the legacy of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage along with its power and limitation.

It would be helpful to know how the anti-Hispanic sentiment disclosed in early Euro-American writing on the Spanish borderlands was transformed into the romantic cult of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage. In “The Idea of the Spanish Borderlands,” David J. Weber points out that a necessary precondition for the emergence of the romantic view of Hispanophilia in the “last decades of the nineteenth century” is the “decline of Hispanic economic and political power”: “As Hispanics became assimilated or marginalized, they ceased to threaten Anglo-American hegemony... Thus, it became safe for Anglo-Americans to legitimize the past of this vanquished people—to render their history

⁴⁵ See my previous discussion, especially see Gutiérrez 90.

respectable” (6). Since the threat of Hispanics in reality (Spanish/Mexican Americans) gradually receded, there wouldn’t be much trouble, it was imagined, in reconciling images of the “constructed” respectable, romantic past with those of the present, and, more importantly, in masking the latter with the former. Antonia I. Castañeda in “Gender, Race, and Culture: Spanish-Mexican Women in the Historiography of Frontier California” (1990) has similarly contended that “Dispossessed of their lands and politically disenfranchised, the former rancheros represented no threat to Euro-American supremacy and thus could be safely romanticized” and converted into the “California Dons,” who were archaic, indolent, and incapable of hard work (13). This argument explains the differences and exposes the genealogical connection between the two Dons under discussion in this dissertation. While Ruiz de Burton’s Don Mariano, despite the fact that he knows much more about California land than do the American squatters, is forced to give the land up under the U.S. imperialist sway, Atherton’s Don Roberto is represented as an archaic relic, simply too deficient and anachronistic to properly cultivate his native land, and thus sooner or later he must be swept into the dust-covered corner of California history.

Besides the decline of Hispanic power, Weber has proposed another reason to explain the surge of Hispanophilia: that is, the local yearning to mold a European heritage in the Far Southwest. According to him, for Anglo-American newcomers to the far Southwest, a romanticized version of the Hispanic past permitted them to “identify with the region’s earliest European settlers, and it provided continuity, tradition, regional identity, and pride” (6). By constructing a romanticized cult based on the region’s Spanish legacy, the English-speaking new immigrants created Europeanized regional

identification and belonging for themselves, and at the same time remolded their conception of the nation and its relationship with California, their new homeland.

Although Atherton was born in San Francisco and basically grew up there, she did share the Anglo newcomers' habit of identifying with the region's earliest European legacy. Furthermore, her appreciation of Spanish California culture, the region's earliest European tie, was complexly intertwined with her views of contemporary European cultures. It is true that Atherton hated California for its restrictions and lack of culture and yearned for European sophistication at the earlier stage of her career, but after her trip to Europe in the nineties, she began to revise her view. Europe still held strong appeal to her, but she gradually began to feel distaste for the "moribund and epicene aspects of fin de siecle European culture," and viewed the "hardy American West" as a workable alternative if Londoners' interest in materials concerning the U.S. West was any indication (Leider 102). In other words, Atherton's firsthand experience with Europe not only made her cautiously reconsider the dominant status of cultured Europe, but it also remolded her conception of California and the U.S. as well as her identity as a Californian and western American writer. If Atherton, as Kevin Starr argues, "felt it her duty as a Californian to reject the genteel East and to turn to England and France for literary standards" (Americans 349), encounters with contemporary European cultures also enhanced and consolidated her self-awareness as the California writer, a U.S. writer, and ultimately a U.S. California writer. California and the U.S. West became a regenerative cure-all for both Europe and the U.S. in Atherton's writerly imagination: whereas the "hardy American West" could lighten up the "morbid" emphasis on madness and despair in fin de siecle Europe, European civilization could infuse cosmopolitanism

and sophistication into California culture and thus make the regional writing generated by this young state become the new standard of U.S. literature.⁴⁶

Importantly, Starr has emphasized that in Atherton's view, the prerequisite for California to take up this task is its specific historical, cultural background; that is, the "region's vigor and its European heritage" (Americans 349). Because of this European heritage, Atherton's California, the "mixed blood to which all Europe has contributed" in Isabel Otis's words (the heroine of Ancestors), could offer new perspectives and inject regenerative power into both European and U.S. cultures, and create what Starr terms the "California Fable"—a proud national as well as regional fable that designated California as a land of possibilities and hope and an earthly paradise that could regenerate the whole nation. To Atherton, the complicated relation between California and Europe acts like a circle: whereas California's European/Spanish heritage makes up California's distinctive strength, this strength in turn can be used to complement and revise contemporary European cultures. In this light, one can reconsider McClure's claim that Atherton "contributed a particular imaginative and historical view of the United States as the 'West' of European civilization" (GA [1976] 6). This "West" not only exists in a geographical sense, but it can also be used to indicate Atherton's vision of the regenerative power that the U.S. West and California could bring to European civilization, in which the United States should serve as the newest and the farthest western member.

To sum up, Atherton and her works were clearly influenced by both her identification with California's Spanish past and her views of contemporary European

⁴⁶ By claiming this, I want to qualify Leider's claim that Atherton began to think of herself "as a Europeanized American instead of a Californian" "as the nineteenth century drew to its close" (181). Rather, the image of the Europeanized American exactly characterized her version of the new Californian.

cultures, and all these influences molded her specific regional and national identification and the particular strength of her works. Situated among the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, contemporary European cultures, and the tradition of U.S. regional writing, Atherton strove to develop her identity as a Californian writer, a western writer, and a U.S. American writer. This transformation of her writerly visions and interests (that is, from someone infatuated with European sophistication to someone who self-consciously wanted to use Spanish materials to write about California and to challenge dominant literary standards in the East) not only testifies to the complicated relations between the region and the nation, but it also points to the transnational undercurrents that always covertly exist in regional writing. While encounters with contemporary European cultures helped Atherton develop her identity as a California regional writer and a U.S. national writer, the European, mostly Spanish, legacy of the region provided her with writing materials, and justified her goal to rewrite California as a Europeanized utopia that could regenerate and remold the nation—if not serve as a new national center.⁴⁷

The thing is that behind this ambition to construct a powerful, influential present-day California, there hovered an imperialist undercurrent in Atherton's writing. In Foote's words, it is a wish of "erasing or smoothing into a single narrative the violence of imperial histories and resistances that marked California's previous relation to the United States" (75); a wish that was also, in my opinion, closely related to the schizophrenic

⁴⁷ As for Atherton's ambition as a California writer, see "The Literary Development of California" (1891), in which she claims that "fifty years from now California will be the literary center of America." Also see "Geographical Fiction" (1892), in which she praise the local color, the "geographical quality" of the work; and "The Alpine School of Fiction" (1922), in which she highlights the importance of "opening up the great West" to the development of American literature, which she credited to the Nordic race. See "Why is American Literature Bourgeois?" (1904) for Atherton's criticism of American realism, which she considered "the most timid, most anaemic, the most lacking in individualities, the most bourgeois."

tendency of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, which produced a pastoral, archaic Spanish past for the nation and contemporary people to make sense of faraway southwestern regions such as California, to trivialize or ignore the Mexican “problem” in the Southwest, and to dehistoricize the region’s transnational and intercultural origins. Specifically speaking, this fantasy heritage fabricated a lost world of Spanish aristocrats and their haciendas, Spanish friars and their missions, as well as señoritas and the Anglos who came to possess them—all in all, a harmonious picture that can be readily subsumed into California history and consumed by contemporary, mostly northeastern readers. And this vivid image of pastoral Utopia gradually came to replace the “troublesome” existence of the mostly poor, lower-class, and mixed-race Mexicans in people’s imagination about California; in the end, these Mexicans were either assumed to be absent or deemed to have an anachronistic existence that should have disappeared long time ago with the passing of Spanish Arcadia.

This wish, in this sense, is also a way to erase the past imperial histories between Mexicans and Anglos and to justify the U.S. imperialist and white supremacist agenda in the Southwest, such as the suppression of the current Mexican population in the Southwest and the invasion of overseas countries and territories. One can further probe the connection between the romantic, nostalgic cult of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage and U.S. imperialism by examining Starr’s discussion of Atherton’s California-based works, including The Splendid Idle Forties, The Doomswoman, and A Daughter of the Vine. According to Starr in Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915, whereas Atherton seems to endorse the illusion of Spanish Arcadia, complications occur and challenge this illusionary existence: “Behind nostalgia for a lost utopia bristled the belief that something

better had taken its place. In that sense, the myth of Arcadia's passing served the imperialist fantasies of the California elite in the 1890's, as they began to envision their state as the point of embarkation for American moves in the direction of Pacific empire: the conquest of California in 1846 had been but the prologue" (353). The state of mind that Starr describes here, in my opinion, is similar to the macro-historical mode of progress that Walter Benjamin criticizes in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," a mode that views history as "a homogenous, empty time" and concentrates solely on "progress" and "advance" while ignoring/forgetting the existence of other kinds of micro-histories. First of all, according to this "progressive" mode of thought, Spanish Arcadia was destined to be replaced by U.S. California of the present-day: a powerful, Anglo-centered, and ambitiously imperial outpost of the nation. U.S. history was supposed to move forward and leave "useless" relics behind, and the only "acceptable" form of looking back was "imperial nostalgia," a false act of remembering in name only. For one thing, the fact that one is already in the position of nostalgically appreciating an imaginary past not only shows that this wonderful past is already gone, but it also implies that one can feel quite at ease to ignore, forget, and even eliminate the present "backward" descendants, who belong to the relics of the past anyway and who simply "happen" to be anachronistically misplaced in the present. The nostalgic admiration for the pastoral Spanish past served to rationalize the denial of and the indifference to the problematic Mexican present; that is, imperialist disavowal was dressed up as sentimental acceptance.

Moreover, the kind of imperialist fantasies in Starr's framework not only narrated the passing of the Spanish/Mexican generation, but also evoked the coming of the U.S.

trans-Pacific empire. I want to further amplify this point by looking at the 1898 Spanish-American War in relation to Atherton's 1898 novel The Californians, a war that, in my opinion, can serve as an interesting entry point to discuss this work.⁴⁸ Even though this novel, as described earlier, focuses more on moving forward (progress) than looking back (nostalgia), I argue that one can still use Starr's argument about the connection between nostalgia and imperialism to discuss the novel. After all, moving forward and looking back are simply two sides of the same coin, both defined by the mentality of U.S. imperialism.

Whereas the novel does not mention anything directly related to the war, this 1898 war in fact illustrates the hidden side of the much-celebrated California Fable in the novel. In my opinion, it is not completely coincidental that a novel about the downfall of Spanish Dons such as The Californians should be published right after the closing of the Spanish-American War. After all, the message implied in this novel is that California, the former Spanish colony, could be "smoothly" and "triumphantly" incorporated into the U.S. If one further situates this message in the fin-de-siecle transnational contexts in which the U.S. strove to establish its prestige as the new global empire that was capable of replacing old empires such as Spain, it will not be difficult to deduce the possible hidden message in eulogizing the California Fable: that is, if California could turn out to be such a wonderful land of possibilities and hope, so can other Spanish colonies such as Cuba and the Philippines (two of the Spanish colonies that the United States coveted for

⁴⁸ While the novel was published probably around September 1898 (as most of its reviews came out between October and November), Atherton finished writing the novel in Rouen in 1897. What I want to demonstrate, however, is not how the author might be affected by the prelude of the war; rather I would like to show that both the novel and the war can be viewed as products of the same imperialist spirit of the age.

during the Spanish-American War)—if they can only be “freed” by the United States. All in all, this 1898 novel about the passing of old Spanish California not only covertly served to justify U.S. imperialist actions such as the 1898 Spanish-American War, but it also illustrated that the old ideal of manifest destiny which contributed to the eruption of the U.S.-Mexico War in 1846 was still alive and well in the emerging space of the U.S. trans-Pacific empire at the turn of the century.⁴⁹ Just as Kaplan claims, “wars continue each other” (“Black” 122).

This kind of imperialist mentality is what primarily distinguishes Atherton’s The Californians from Ruiz de Burton’s The Squatter and the Don. Even though both novels narrate the downfall of a Californio family due to U.S. imperialist, capitalist invasion and more or less affirm the method of assimilating Californios into the nation through conjugal unions, Ruiz de Burton would never see Californios as disposable relics from a romanticized past as Atherton did. Because Ruiz de Burton occupies the position of a victim plagued by U.S. imperialism and Atherton that of one who endorses the imperialist mentality of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, the political and cultural visions that they offer in the texts are essentially different. Whereas Ruiz de Burton highlights questions of race and ethnicity by elaborating on the imperialist sway of Anglo America over Mexico as well as the confrontation between white New England and Spanish/Mexican California, Atherton rewrites the question of racial/ethnic differences as that of regional characteristics which can be understood and contained within the framework of the nation; that is, she depoliticizes and aestheticizes her characters’ Spanish/Mexican

⁴⁹ See Thomas Schoonover, Uncle Sam’s War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization for a discussion of the connection of the 1898 war with “social imperialism”—external expansion “as a response to the recurring domestic problems of recession, social discontent, labor wars, widespread poverty, and political corruption” (53).

heritage and subsumes it into a California regional identity. Even though at first sight Atherton seems to echo Ruiz de Burton's identification with Spanish/Mexican California by narrating the disappearance of Spanish Arcadia, hers is simply shallow nostalgia; what really stands out, instead, is her effort to remake California into a "national" region by erasing the violent histories of imperial encounters in this land, both past and present. While Atherton's reference framework consists of an imaginary monophonic and monolithic Anglo-centered nation that nineteenth-century regionalism in general covertly celebrated, Ruiz de Burton's works discloses the transnational undercurrents of regionalism; that is, the part that cannot be explained by the monolithic national framework, the unrepresented cultures and histories emerging in the transnational encounter that the nation could not quite comprehend and tried to make sense of by creating myths and narratives.

Chapter Four

The California Fable and the Imperialist New Women in Atherton's The Californians

In chapter four, whereas I will continue the discussion of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, the Spanish-American War, and the constant negotiations between counter-narratives and the official grand narrative, I will focus more on the turn-of-the-century moment and further explore how this moment was constantly shaped by regionalism, nationalism, and imperialism. I will first discuss the California Fable, especially how this fable was molded by cosmopolitanism and imperialism around the turn of the century. Then I will situate Atherton's 1898 novel, The Californians, in the discussion, and examine how Atherton appropriates the California Fable to portray her audacious and free-spirited "women of tomorrow" and how one can use the idea of manifest domesticity to discuss this appropriation and to characterize these "women of tomorrow" as imperialist. At the end of the chapter, I will bring Ruiz de Burton back into the discussion, and look at the two women's writings on the California missions to probe their diverse conversations with the collective phenomena of nostalgia and amnesia in the last decades of the nineteenth century. My overall goal is to show how people, by engaging in narratives and practices of nostalgia and amnesia, produced regional writings, renarrated national memories, and conversed with transnational undercurrents in turn-of-the-century California.

The California Fable: Cosmopolitanism and Imperialism

Following my discussion in the last chapter, I intend to look more closely at the

California Fable in order to further situate Atherton in the transnational contexts of California at the turn of the century. I also want to examine how Atherton reappropriates this fable to narrate her ideal of California “women of tomorrow,” an ideal intricately connected to contemporary imperialist sentiments. As a Californian writer, Atherton participated in the construction of this fable by delineating the “inevitable” passing of Spanish Dons in present-day California and by celebrating the regenerative power that this seemingly “multicultural” California could offer to the nation. From the particular case of Atherton, one can see how the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, as well as the homogeneous, manageable regional past that this heritage produced, was appropriated by proponents of the California Fable to serve nationalist, imperialist purposes at the turn of the century.

While this fable primarily consisted of idealized, mythicized, and optimistic images of California, it also registers the complicated interconnections among regional identification, national ideologies, and transnational undercurrents in California around the turn of the century. As early as 1845, when John O’Sullivan coined the term “manifest destiny” to justify the annexation of Texas as well as U.S. westward expansion in the Democratic Review, he already considered California, still governed by the Mexican government at that time, a significant target: “The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its [California’s] borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting houses” (quoted from Horsman 219). California played an important part in the blueprint of U.S. westward expansion even before the occupation took place.

After California was officially annexed by the U.S. in 1848, the discovery of gold soon drew Anglo-Americans and white and non-white immigrants here; and gradually there grew “a regional culture which from its inception combined qualities of the East, the South, and the Far West” (Starr, Americans 63). The multifaceted cultures and miscellaneous peoples, combined with the geographical distance from the east coast, resulted in California’s unique image: a dreamland permeated with freshness, energy, hopes, romances, adventures, and defiance of tradition and rules. California thus “entered American awareness as a symbol of renewal. It was a final frontier: of geography and of expectation” (Starr, Americans vii)—a description that strongly echoes Turner’s argument in his famous 1893 frontier thesis.

So what exactly did the California Fable consist of? According to Starr, who coined this term in his 1973 book Americans and the California Dream, this fable was “a means by which Californians sought to know—and some times to delude—themselves”; “the complimentary, hopeful side of their self-image” (120). All the past histories, including violent events and traumatic memories, were repackaged and romanticized into a set of comfortable, self-justifiable, and white-centered myths. Thus stood the California Fable at the turn of the century: “pastoral past, progressive and colorful present, imperial future—a proud and optimistic fable, one that conferred a sense of importance and glamour upon a remote, underdeveloped region...” (126). This sense of importance and glamour, moreover, was built upon California’s self-positioning vis-à-vis the more “developed” east coast cities, and was achieved through imagining the possible energy and vitality that California could pour into the nation. By enacting and fulfilling the California Fable, Californians at the turn of the century tried to assert their distinctive

regional identity in terms of, first, their differences from the rest of the country and, second, their indispensability to the expanding imperialist nation. And these are the two directions that I intend to pursue in my discussion of the California Fable.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when Californians engaged in developing a more “civilized” society, they also took pains to distinguish themselves from the cultured East. The key word in their effort, according to Starr, was “cosmopolitan” (124). It was, moreover, a Europeanized cosmopolitanism; after all, molding a European heritage, as discussed in the last chapter, had always been an important concern for both Anglos and Hispanics in California. The turn-of-the-century Californians cherished the diverse views and energies that European cultures, such as French, German and, most importantly, Spanish, brought to the state, and used them to develop a youthful, energetic cosmopolitan style in contrast to the more solemn, conventional Yankee tradition. San Franciscans even thought of their city as the “Paris of America” with a unique lifestyle that seemed “different from the normal American style of city living” (Starr 124). All in all, once a rugged backwater community, California toward the end of the nineteenth century gradually attained a unique kind of cosmopolitanism that was Europeanized but was still distinctly Californian.

This cosmopolitan trend in California especially came into style during the 1890s, a decade of “hegemonic crisis” for the nation in Alexander Saxton’s words (350).¹ While troublesome events such as the financial depression of 1893 and the strike of 1894 all suggested a higher level of moral and political tensions among different interest groups and a nation bereft of social control, it was exactly during such turbulent times that the

¹ See The Rise of White Republic, 350-52.

national fable of order and stability was desperately needed and sought for; and it was in this light that the popularity of myths surrounding the West around the turn of the century should be viewed.² In contrast to the tumultuous reality, the western myths produced a connected and unified account of the national past, a regenerated, optimistic view of the national character, and the image of the bold, self-reliant, unrestrained western hero; and in this way they managed to create an illusion that everything was fine and the nation was progressing. One of the most influential examples is Turner's frontier thesis, by which he participated in the collective process of constructing a coherent, unified story of the nation's beginnings and development by highlighting the importance of the West: "This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character" (2-3). For believers in the western experience such as Turner, "history seemed...a foreclosed event, an inevitable advance from low to high, from simple to complex"—"a record of social evolution" (Trachtenberg, Incorporation 26). The West served as a collective symbol that testified to U.S. progress around the turn of the century.

The cosmopolitan image of vitality and energy that Californians created for themselves was closely related to this contemporary collective perception of the U.S. West. Yet there were also basic differences between how Californians looked at themselves and how the dominant culture, presumably the East coast, looked at the West and California. While Californians also viewed their state as a land of vigor and opportunities that epitomized national progress, it also strove to distinguish itself from

² See Trachtenberg, The Incorporation of America, 11-37.

the East by absorbing European cosmopolitan cultures and by developing a multicultural, transnational outlook; and thus it could pride itself on being able to provide a different kind of cultural standard for the nation. For example, in his 1897 article “The Ideal San Francisco,” published in the Christmas number of San Francisco News Letter, James Duval Phelan, the mayor of San Francisco from 1897 to 1902 as well as Atherton’s close friend, praised San Francisco’s ability to imitate Paris, Berlin, and Vienna and thus to develop its specific individuality and its “now cosmopolitan, but then American community.”³ The imaginary enemy that this “now cosmopolitan community” set itself against, in Phelan’s mind, was none other than the U.S. East: “We are far enough away from the great cities of the East to develop an individuality, and that very remoteness makes it incumbent upon us to work out our own salvation.” In California and the Californians published in 1898, David Starr Jordan, the first president of Stanford University (1891–1913), similarly viewed California as the “most cosmopolitan of all the states of the Union” (24). Although he does not specifically focus on California’s ties with Europe, he does highlight differences between this western state and the East. Whereas he emphasizes the blood and cultural connections between California and New England by confirming that Californians originated either from America or from Europe, he argues that Californians are stronger and better than their eastern cousins, that “Life in California is...more intensely and characteristically American” (23).

It makes sense for these two leading political and cultural figures of San Francisco

³ Also see Starr’s discussion of Phelan and his devotion to the project of “Mediterranean Europe” for the city of San Francisco. According to Starr, Phelan “dreamed that San Francisco might one day emerge as a city in the style of Rome: sun-splashed, spacious, and baroque” (Americans 251); “a city of art and sound governance, the Florence of the Pacific” (253). He also dreamed of California as “a sunny land of artists, an American Italy in the surge of new creativity” (253).

to argue for the distinctiveness of California identity at that very moment. Despite the 1893 depression from which California suffered with the rest of the country as well as various social problems such as racial discrimination and class conflicts, California, particularly the city of San Francisco, began to nurture “a genuine cultural renaissance” (Chandler & Nathan 1). In 1894 and 1895, artists Frank Gelett Burges and Bruce Porter gathered around them a dozen or so youthful writers and artists to create a Bohemian movement in San Francisco. Calling themselves “*Les Jeunes*” (the young ones), this group of artists both imitated and strove to move ahead of the latest European trends and movements in order to explore styles that were “specifically and freshly Californian” (Starr, Americans 259). And they did succeed in giving San Francisco “a cultural identity that was of great significance to those who came on their heels” such as Frank Norris and Jack London (Nathan 200). While “*Les Jeunes*” might not achieve true originality or articulate a full-fledged Californian style, the vitality, enthusiasm, and European cosmopolitanism expressed in their works created a fin-de-siecle cultural renaissance and became an important step for California’s literary and artistic development in the near future.

Other cultural activities were also blossoming. Around the same time, San Francisco Chronicle publisher Michael de Young, after returning from the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, set out to plan the 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition in San Francisco. This exposition not only demonstrated to the world the cultural maturity of San Francisco and the rightful, pivotal role that the city was supposed to play in the international arena, but it also showed that California was fully capable of participating in the racist, imperialist project of celebrating evolutionary progress in

contemporary international fairs.⁴

This will lead us to another kind of transnational interaction involved in California's development of a culturally distinctive regional identity and to the second direction that I want to pursue in discussing the California Fable—that is, what did California mean to the nation embroiled in imperial conquests in turn-of-the-century transnational contexts? Whereas the key word in the previous discussion is Europeanized “cosmopolitanism,” the ones here involve nationalism and imperialism. Turn-of-the-century California served as an important collective symbol not only for national re/union and regeneration, but also in relation to U.S. expansionist imagination of the Pacific. I want to probe the role that California played in U.S. national consciousness and the imperialist blueprint by illustrating two transregional, even transnational, exchanges: one is the expansion of railroad networks into the West in general and California in particular; the other is the nation's imperialist move into the Pacific with California serving as an important outpost in this movement.

Railroads played an indispensable role in consolidating California's image as one of regeneration, or “perennial rebirth” in Turner's words, in national consciousness. The U.S. railroad system began to develop rapidly after 1830, and immensely expedited westward migration and communication between the East and the West, especially after the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869. The function of the railroads, however, was not confined to transportation only; they also contributed to the

⁴ See Arthur Chandler and Marvin Nathan, *The Fantastic Fair: The Story of the California Midwinter International Exposition* (1993). See Rydell for a discussion of the connection between imperialism and international fairs.

transformation of lifestyles, habits, and a collective consciousness of time and space. According to Trachtenberg, “The American railroad seemed to create new spaces, new regions of comprehension and economic value, and finally to incorporate a prehistoric geological terrain into historical time” (Incorporation 59). This historical time, in Amy G. Richter’s description, is also a national time: because railroads were able to reach faraway places, “regional distinction yielded to an imagined connection to the nation” (19); and a larger national consciousness thus emerged from the bustle and hustle of the railroad trip. In this regard, one can claim that nineteenth-century railroads, serving as the vanguard for the expanding nation, marched into remote territories and created new national space; they not only toned down regional division, but also constructed a sense of connection between regions and the nation. The cultural function of railroads, in a way, was not very different from that of regional writing; after all, they both contributed to the task of making sense of remote, unfamiliar regions and incorporating them into the national narrative.

Nineteenth-century California and its relations with the rest of the nation were profoundly shaped by the expansion of the railway system. In Whitman’s 1874 “Song of the Redwood-Tree,” a poem specifically eulogizing California as the future of America, railroads are described as part of “the New arriving, assuming, taking possession” and as an important embodiment of California, which was “true America, heir of the past so grand” and was entrusted with the task of building “a grander future.” One can say that during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was not only railroad communication that was remolding California experience and incorporating it into the national memory, but California also participated in shaping the nation’s past, present, and future partly

through the quickly developing railroad network.

This point can be readily observed in railroad posters promoting the newly-established westward routes around the turn of the century. According to Michael E. Zega and John E. Gruber in Travel by Train, one of the subjects that railroad advertising loved to cover in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the attraction of the far West (3). Among other places, California was an important location of attraction in the railroad posters, advertised respectively as the “Switzerland of America” (ca. 1880); an ideal place for “winter excursions” (1886-87); and a place providing “a thousand wonders” (1907). All these commercial catchwords not only introduced California as a paradise to easterners, but they should also be situated in the promotional effort of railroad companies to sell California as an even worthier place to visit than Europe—“the single most successful railroad campaign of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Zega & Gruber 22). So California, a place advertised as a wonderland full of thrills, spectacle, natural beauty, and sometimes even racialized romances, became an important part in the “See America First” nationalist campaign advocated by railroad companies (24). For example, the Santa Fe line (AT&SF), which was promoting travel to California by featuring romanticized and racialized depictions of the Southwest and the Native Americans there, created wartime ads that ran May-June 1898 and thus, in Zega and Gruber’s words, “turned the threat of war with Spain to its advantage”: “You have been abroad. You know all about Europe....Why not see your own great west? Spend your money at home” (24). Nationalist, nativist, racist, and imperialist sentiments were all packaged within this seemingly “innocent” piece of

advertising.⁵ As such an advertising campaign strategy shows, the California Fable was shaped and renarrated by complicated negotiations among regionalism, nationalism, nativism, and imperialism.

One can return to Whitman's poem to further examine the role that California played in the U.S. imperial project regarding the transnational Pacific. His ode to California not only paints railroads as an important intranational communication means to develop California into a key player in shaping the nation's future, but it also introduces "ships" as a significant medium that made the transpacific imperialist contact possible: "Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out to the whole world, /To India and China and Australia and the thousand island paradise of the Pacific..." The "grander future" that Whitman expects Californians to build obviously involves U.S. imperialist contacts with and conquests of other Pacific countries. The fact that these two images, railroads and ships, are juxtaposed in this particular poem about California testifies to the intricate connections between intranational expansion and overseas conquests as well as the entanglement between nationalist sentiments and transnational imperialism in the California Fable.

What is hidden behind the triumphant California Fable as well as the reverse side of California's sophisticated Europeanized cosmopolitanism is exactly this other type of transnational exchange: U.S. imperialist expansion into the Pacific. This argument also echoes my previous discussion of the connection between the Spanish Fantasy Heritage and the Spanish-American War; that is, the pastoral, harmonious picture fabricated by

⁵ Also see Sundquist's argument on the California myth and the Spanish-American War: "By the end of the century, California had already become mythical construction, endowed with 'a fresh mythic dimension' along with the rest of the West due to the "agricultural and industrial recovery, along with the nationalist pride evoked by the Spanish American War" (517).

this fantasy heritage in fact served to rationalize people's denial of the problematic existence of poor Mexican Californians and thus enabled them to imagine a glorious, modernized California and to justify U.S. past and present imperial actions as natural and good. If during the 1890s the California elite, as Starr claims, began to envision their state as the "point of embarkation for American moves in the direction of Pacific empire" (Americans 353), the 1898 Spanish-American War, as a symbolic sequel to the 1846-48 U.S.-Mexico War in the U.S. imperialist blueprint, in a way realized this expansionist fantasy, simultaneously announcing the end of the Spanish imperial regime in the U.S. Southwest and the Americas and coronating the United States as the new imperial super-power in the transpacific and transamerican world. Even though this war did not take place in U.S. territories, it greatly affected U.S. national consciousness and strengthened the collective belief in the necessity of controlling the world, especially the Pacific.⁶ And California no doubt played an important role in this process. After all, the California Fable, in Starr's opinion, was always "at the core of Manifest Destiny," reinforcing the imperialist message that "the United States was destined by God to exercise Pacific influence" (Americans 109). That is why in this optimistic, progressive California Fable there covertly exist incongruent undercurrents such as the dispossessed Mexicans and Chinese; their existence was the constant reminder of California's role as a springboard and an agent in the U.S. imperialist project in the Americas and the Pacific. Narration creates national consciousness, but narration also creates myths, and whatever cannot be incorporated into the myths must be deliberately eliminated, a point to which both the California Fable and the Spanish Fantasy Heritage testify.

⁶ As for the effects of the Spanish-American War on U.S. cultures, see my later discussion of Silber and Kaplan. Also see Hoganson and Schoonover.

It is not coincidental that the people supporting the ideal of cosmopolitan California at the turn of the century also engaged in racist and imperialist projects. Phelan was notorious for his advocacy of “Oriental exclusion” and his belief in “imperial expansion, a strong navy, and an Anglo-American alliance” in what he called “an impending high America era” (Starr, Americans 252, 251). Jordan, a firm believer in eugenics and an influential member of the Race Betterment Foundation, was immensely fascinated with “Anglo-Saxon superiority” and considered it the secret behind the success of westward pioneers (Starr, Americans 309).⁷ There were always these two forms of transnational exchanges, cosmopolitanism and imperialism, coexisting in the California Fable. The uniqueness of this turn-of-the-century California Fable perhaps exactly lies in the juxtaposition of these two different yet closely related modes of thoughts: people’s pride in creating a glorious California version of cosmopolitanism versus people’s awareness that California, in molding a seemingly integrated culture while marginalizing dispossessed peoples, testified to the triumph of U.S. manifest destiny and served as a symbolic vanguard of U.S. imperialist invasion into the Pacific.

Women of Tomorrow in the Shadow of Manifest Domesticity in The Californians

How can we evaluate the element of gender in this California Fable that regenerated the nation and fostered imperialist sentiments around the turn of the century? And how does Kaplan’s model of manifest domesticity work in fin-de-siecle California? In this section I want to use Atherton’s 1898 novel The Californians to examine these questions

⁷ Also See Wendy Kline, Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom for a discussion of the Race Betterment Foundation as well as the National Conference on Race Betterment held at the 1915 San Francisco Panama Pacific Exposition, the first popular exhibition in which eugenicists participated (14-15).

and illustrate the concerns of this California version of manifest domesticity. As a California-based writer, Atherton reappropriates the California Fable to narrate her California “women of tomorrow,” an ideal intricately connected to contemporary imperialist thoughts.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, California, as one of the sites in which western adventures and imperialist expansion took place, was constantly associated with images of masculinity. At the turn of the century, Jordan, in his 1898 pamphlet California and the Californians, designated California as “a man’s land, with male standards of action,” where the “growth of woman’s realm of homes and houses” had only just begun. His version of the California Fable, in a word, emphasized masculinity more than femininity.

This masculine image of California was closely related to the contemporary perception of the West. In “‘A Memory Sweet to Soldiers’: The Significance of Gender in the History of the ‘American West’” (1993), Susan Lee Johnson claims that of all the regions in the United States, “no place has been so consistently identified with maleness—particularly white maleness—as the region imagined as the American West” (89). According to her, the construction of a masculine West was part of “a larger late-nineteenth-century ‘crisis of manliness’ in the United States—a crisis in which older definitions of white, middle-class manhood that emphasized restraint and respectability (manly man) gave way to newer meanings that focus on vigor and raw virility (masculine men)” —a transformation closely related to “U.S. imperialism in the Pacific, the Caribbean, and Latin America” (91). All in all, both transnational and national conditions contributed to the formation of this new ideal of the masculine man.

I want to specifically look at the 1898 Spanish-American War, a war that, according to critics such as Hoganson, Silber, and Kaplan, was intricately related to this reconsolidation of American manhood.⁸ Kaplan's argument is especially useful for my discussion of The Californians. In "Romancing the Empire" she describes the crisis of U.S. manhood and the boosting of masculine virility through imperialist warfare by examining turn-of-the-century historical romances, which were mostly set overseas and whose "formulaic plot" uncannily parallels the popular view of the Spanish-American War as "a chivalric rescue mission that in turn rejuvenates the [U.S.] liberator" (100). In Kaplan's argument, imperialist warfare such as the Spanish-American War can be seen as "an opportunity for the American man to rescue himself from the threatening forces of industrialization and feminization at home" (92-93). On the one hand, one can examine this war from the angle of what Schoonover calls "social imperialism," in which military action in the international arena was taken to mollify domestic disorders created by the capitalist free market as well as class and race divisions (6). On the other hand, the ideal of masculine virility promoted by the war solved the turn-of-the-century crisis of manhood that erupted partly due to the emergence of the new woman. All in all, through overseas imperial conquests, whether military or non-military, the turn-of-the-century nation reincarnated itself in the image of the virile Anglo-American man—and this was the context in which historical romances were written, published, and distributed. The regenerated manhood delineated in the historical romances, in this sense, closely

⁸ See Nina Silber's The Romance of Reunion for a discussion of the effect of the Spanish-American War on the reconsolidation of American manhood. According to her, the Spanish-American War made northerners "recognize and accept the manliness and martial heroism of southern white man" (178); thus it not only consolidated the patriotic reunion of the nation, but it also gave a much-needed boost to the nation's virility (182). By celebrating southern men's virility, northerners not only reaffirmed their own but could also imagine a united front of masculine patriotism. Also see Kristin L. Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars.

corresponds to the spirit of the California Fable, which was similarly used to regenerate the nation and foster imperialist sentiments, and which was often more male-centered than female-centered.

Stating that the popular historical romances were the “major bestsellers on the earliest published lists from 1895-1902” (94), Kaplan probes the interconnections between U.S. imperialism and a rejuvenated manhood by taking into consideration the “new woman” foreign heroine from the historical romance, who, as a subject of imperial power, meets a very different fate than that of her male nationals (106-11). Whereas this kind of romantic heroine is independent, self-reliant, and adventurous, she can only achieve her “liberation” by aiding the U.S. hero with his imperial adventures and she will eventually fall in love with the U.S. “liberator.” That is to say, in such historical romances, the new woman’s desire to be liberated ends up being incorporated into the imperialist fantasy of the United States. In this way, problems such as emasculated white manhood as well as threats of both foreign otherness and unorthodox new women at home can be peacefully resolved. While the foreign new woman in the historical romance is free to act on her desire to reject traditional roles, this desire can only be fulfilled through imperial adventures and will finally be channeled into the traditional domestic/national framework such as marriage (110-11). In this way, overseas imperial expansion offers a new frontier for the white U.S. man to prove his virile masculinity, and a more subtle, circuitous method to incorporate the new woman, albeit a foreign one, into the nation’s imperialist project. Even though the new woman figure may not be simply a “civilizer” or a “temptress” (two typical roles that, according to Johnson, were assigned to white and non-white women respectively in western stories), it is still impossible for her to achieve

full liberation from traditional domestic values and ideologies. Whereas the “new woman” heroine may seem to shrug off the domestic bondage imposed by her “backward” society, the prerequisite is that she still has to embrace U.S. “advanced” civilization, and thus is still confined by U.S. nationalist/imperialist ideologies. Moreover, her story itself becomes a way to confirm U.S. imperialist action. Gender relations thus serve as a seemingly apolitical topic that covertly strengthens imperial relations. This is how ideologies of manifest domesticity worked in the turn-of-the-century historical romances.

In the particular case of Atherton, how can one discuss her portrayal of the California new woman in relation to Kaplan’s argument about rejuvenated manhood and the “contained” foreign new woman? Moreover, how may we situate the California Fable, the fable that aimed to distinguish California from the rest of the nation, within the discussion? After examining both the similarities and differences between Atherton’s California heroines and Kaplan’s romance heroines, I will highlight the regional variable, namely California circumstances, in Atherton’s delineation, and try to look at her works in connection to contemporary discourses on California girls/women.

In contrast to the general perception of the masculinized West, Atherton’s California stories create a general impression that California is feminized rather than masculinized. Take The Californians as an example. In the novel California is described by the narrator as the “Princess Royal of her country,” who, if successfully escaping from the curse of gold, can transform herself into the “most gracious mother mankind has ever known” (171). Moreover, Atherton’s independent, wayward, and beautiful California heroines, many of whom look exactly like the author herself, are viewed as the very incarnation of

the land; and they also have strong regional identifications and feel intense attachments to California. Even the author herself, according to Leider, “seemed the embodiment of California” to many people; she even “modeled for the figure ‘California’—imperious and golden-haired—in the Herter murals that used to adorn the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco” (6).

Atherton’s version of the California new woman paradoxically created both identification and tension with the California Fable. While the author seemed to identify with both cosmopolitan and imperialist aspects of the California Fable, this fable, as part of the western myth, was narrated more often than not from a male angle rather than a female viewpoint, and that was something Atherton no doubt would take issue with. In my opinion, Atherton uses masculinized myths related to California and the West as a handy tool, and reappropriates them to foster a female-centered regional identification both for herself and for her heroines. Even at her tender age, the young Atherton, despite her dislike of California’s provincialism and lack of sophistication, already knew how to use common myths concerning California for her own benefit. For example, she “often justified her displays of temperament and cruelty as the prerogatives of the ‘savage’ West”; “It is the instinct of the Californian...to scalp,” so she claimed (Leider 6).

This justification in fact ambivalently and revealingly connects Atherton to contemporary discourses on the virile, masculinized West, where men scalp and perform “savage” business. It is ambivalent especially because the notion of the masculinized West has double meanings. On the one hand, it points to the “savageness” of western Nature and its inhabitants, the Native Americans, who only white male pioneers were able to conquer; in a word, a “savage” West as an all-male land inhabited by pioneers,

scouts, and Indians in the white-centered imagination. On the other hand, as regional and national consciousness began to grow, the savageness that the West symbolized was gradually renarrated as a more “civilized” version, a version that characterized the West as a land associated less with negative “savageness” and more with positive attributes such as boldness, freshness, independence, optimism, roughness, and sturdiness—characteristics that not only differentiated the West from the “cultured” East, but which could also be referred back to the masculinized white pioneer, the very conqueror and destroyer of the “savage” West. In other words, whereas the meaning of the West had slipped from savageness to civilization, from the conquered to the conqueror, it was still more or less a “savage” West in comparison with the East, yet it was also a “civilized” West in comparison with the older version of the West. Identifying herself with the “savage” West and with Indians who were capable of scalp-hunting, Atherton not only summons the image of the old “savage” West, but she also draws forth its later version, the more “civilized” West, a version that surely fits in better with her own background.

If one takes into consideration Atherton’s identity as an unconventional white woman, her identification with this “savage” as well as “civilized” masculine West becomes more problematic. On the one hand, she wished to participate in renarrating California identity, but she also made clear that it had to be done on her own terms; that is, besides a more cosmopolitan, sophisticated California, she also wanted a different California that was not founded on masculine principles. Just like her figure “California” in the Herter murals, Atherton’s ideal California was a woman, “imperious and golden-haired,” dashing and headstrong. It was, moreover, an unconventional “new

woman” or the “woman of tomorrow” in Atherton’s own words, who would not bury her life in domestic duties and desired to take on adventures and explore the world. On the other hand, despite the author’s unorthodoxy and eccentricities, her works still show a subtle understanding that the white woman, no matter how wild and unconventional she might be, still must respect traditional family structures such as marriage and should not step outside certain kinds of boundaries. To sum up, Atherton’s California new woman, just like the West, also paradoxically has two sides, savage and civilized: she can be unconventional; she can also be conventional; she can “scalp”; she can also “behave.”

One can use Kaplan’s argument about the foreign new women in the historical romances to examine Atherton’s California heroines. In regard to the foreign heroine who strives for her liberation from traditional bonds but who ends up being subjugated by U.S. imperialism dressed up as modernization, Kaplan claims that “this female role replays the Pocahontas myth” (108), and she further proposes two points regarding the myth that would shed light to our current discussion. First, she claims that “In the figures of Pocahontas and the white heroines, these novels represent the female desire to be liberated from feudal and traditional bonds as the desire to be subjugated to modern power” (108; my emphasis). Whereas Kaplan mostly distinguishes between “Pocahontas” and white American women, sometimes she conflates them, which testifies to the close connection between these two and to the fact that the construction of “Pocahontas” in the historical romances at least partly aimed at resolving the anxiety over the “new women” at home. Second, Kaplan highlights the potential threat that such a new woman heroine can pose to her “liberator” in this “fantasy of imperial collaboration”: “the position of the hero as chivalrous rescuer makes him curiously dependent on maintaining the desire of

his female subject” (108-09). Although the female imperial subject seems to be safely managed, it is difficult to say if she is completely subjugated or if she will one day rebel and destroy the imperial collaboration.

While Atherton in The Californians also endorses such an “imperial collaboration” by making Magdaléna forswear her Hispanic ancestry and thus incorporating her into the national household as a “safe” U.S. Californian, her project is different from what is going on in Kaplan’s delineation of the historical romances. What is interesting about Atherton’s 1898 novel is that she splits the new woman figure into two, Magdaléna and Helena, and creates different stories for each of them and thus solves the dilemma of reconciling the two opposing imageries, to scalp and to behave. Whereas the self-willed, dashing Anglo Helena effortlessly disregards traditional obligations and participates in the project of remaking California identity through her audacious challenge to public expectations of women, the plain, timid, Hispanic-Anglo, mixed Magdaléna has to struggle with her ethnic and racial heritage, particularly patriarchal oppression, and can only participate in the making of U.S. history by giving up her attachment to Spanish California and marrying the New Yorker Trennahan. Kaplan’s narrative of “imperial collaboration” in which the foreign new woman is saved and subjugated by the U.S. hero is transformed into two separate narratives: the U.S. new woman Helena is liberated, free from traditional bondage such as marriage; the “foreign” new woman Magdaléna, despite all her efforts to become the “new woman,” ends up failing the task and can only wait for her Anglo liberator’s return to save her.

In Atherton’s blueprint, Magdaléna, as a mixed-blood of Anglo and Hispanic descent, does not really have the true strength of the new woman. Since she is the one who

eventually marries Trennahan, both the U.S. man and the U.S. household will no longer be threatened by the new woman and thus become “safer.” Whereas the “new woman” foreign heroine in Kaplan’s description eventually has to be incorporated into the conventional power structure and loses subversive potential, Atherton’s novel projects the subversive, unorthodox aspect onto the Anglo Helena and nips the mixed-blood Magdaléna’s potential in the bud and packs this now “unharmful” creature off to be reunited with the rejuvenated white American hero Trennahan. Importantly, since both girls serve as the incarnation of California at some point in the novel, their different portrayals and fates rather reflect the different roles that California could play for the nation in Atherton’s mind.

In “Gertrude Atherton: The Limits of Feminism in the 1890’s,” Sybil Weir describes the limitation in Atherton’s version of the new woman or “feminism” during the 1890s, a limitation that, I argue, met with a different solution in The Californians. According to Weir, whereas Atherton’s ambitious new woman heroines defied Victorian domestic values and gained immense popularity among the largely female audience, the prerequisite was that these female protagonists, subversive as they might be, were still “safely” contained within the sentimental narrative tradition such as achieving self-fulfillment through marriage with the “right” man. Weir thus concludes: “while by 1932 she [Atherton] could present herself in her autobiography as a thoroughgoing feminist, contemptuous of home and family, yet in many novels she published during the 1890s, her feminism was limited by her extolling home and family as the one goal for her heroines” (31). The creation of the double heroines in The Californians, in this regard, may be viewed as Atherton’s method to propagate her ideal of the new woman without

deferring to sentimental traditions and Victorian domestic values. By displacing the obligation of complying with tradition onto Magdaléna, the hybrid who should get “straightened out” anyway, Atherton lets Helena, her new woman, continue to live her free, reckless, and unconventional life. Magdaléna’s denunciation of the “backward” Hispanic patriarchal system is simply a prelude for her to enter into the other patriarchal national system, in which she will serve as the wife of the rejuvenated U.S. hero, but not as the new woman.

One can accordingly claim that the ambiguous juxtaposition, sometimes even overlapping, between Pocahontas and the white woman in the historical romances is presented very differently in Atherton’s novel. In the historical romances, the new woman Pocahontas outshines the white woman but eventually needs to defer to the latter’s value system. Here Pocahontas’ ambiguity lies in the fact that she has to play two roles, the new woman and the foreign other, at the same time. Because both roles were deemed threats to mainstream society, they were “naturally” projected onto the same person and suppressed together. Yet in Atherton’s The Californians, the two roles are divided among two persons, the revolutionary white woman and the less subversive Pocahontas, so that the author can discipline the racialized other and endorse the new woman at the same time.

By doing so, Atherton delineates her ideal blueprint for California at the turn of the century, in which not only the white new woman can thrive and prosper, but the white Anglo man and the nation can also celebrate their regeneration and keep on pursuing their imperialist ambitions. Take Trennahan as an example. For this world-weary, upper-class New Yorker, California “with her traditions of luxurious idleness, the low

languid murmur of her woods, her soft voluptuous air, her remoteness from the shrieking nerve centres of the United States, the sublime indifference of her people to the racing hours, drew so many quiet fingers across his tired brain...., giving him back something of the sense of youth and future” (159). California enables Trennahan to regain his vigor and youth; he even decides to marry Magdaléna because in his mind she serves as “a part of California the whole” (160). Trennahan’s case fits Kaplan’s formula that imperial conquests advanced the regeneration of U.S. masculinity at the turn of the century. Going west and falling in love with California, incarnated as the half-Hispanic Magdaléna, he serves as an important middleman to facilitate her entry into the imperialist U.S. nation. His later self-exile to Samoa and the South Seas, important locations in the U.S. expansionist plan concerning the South Pacific, to collect data for scientific research (possibly related to evolutionary theories) not only completes his journey of regeneration and thus enables him to come back and “save” Magdaléna, but it also further testifies to his role as part of an imperialist vanguard for the United States.

Magdaléna’s failure to transform herself into the new woman not only reflects the limitations of Atherton’s feminism, but it also points to the limitations of the imperialist California Fable. According to Starr, around the time when Atherton composed her California stories at the turn of the century, the new image of the California woman that closely echoed the spirit of the California Fable was also taking shape; thanks to the frontier life that had opened up new sets of roles for women, some California women began to think of themselves as different from, even better than, eastern women for their independence, strength, willfulness, and “crude” simplicity (357-60). This set of California values, originally solely associated with masculinity, gradually become the

trademark characteristics of this rapidly developing state, and could thus be reappropriated by authors such as Atherton to empower California women. For instance, in her 1913 article “The Woman of To-morrow,” Atherton states that the “newer western towns” were full of independent young women, who had “an innate distaste for domesticity and children” (428, 431). This suggests that, by creating her California heroines, Atherton made a political statement about how California women could represent the new spirit of the state and what they could offer to the nation by leading a gender revolution.

This revolution led by the California woman, however, was of an imperialist nature, which reflects the limitations of the liberating potential of the California Fable. Helena, the prototype of Atherton’s new woman who was “born in California” and “nurtured on its new savage traditions” (Wier 29), once expressed her desire to take part in some revolution in U.S. history: “I wish I had some heroic destiny. Why has the United States ceased to make history? I’d like to play some great part” (315). This sense of anxiety over one’s own belatedness in entering into the center stage was actually shared by the turn-of-the-century United States that Kaplan describes in her discussion of the historical romances: “American anxiety about the closed West may have had global dimensions that expressed fear of belatedness on the imperial stage” (“Romancing” 102). Kaplan further argues that the historical romances addressed this anxiety by “remapping the world overcrowded with contesting powers to create new worlds out of old, which offer themselves for the taking” (103).

This argument corresponds with Atherton’s project in an interesting way. Helena’s sense of belatedness with respect to participating in revolutions can be discussed in terms

of gender, region, and nation. As a woman, she feels like a latecomer in a male-dominated world; as a Californian, she feels like a latecomer in a nation centered on eastern values; and finally as a U.S. American, she feels like a latecomer in an international stage that seems to be already closed to expansion. In this sense, Magdaléna's response that Helena may still have a chance to be the "heroine of a revolution" not only points to Helena's role as a new type of California women with unconventional, revolutionary qualities, but it also implicates the imperialist project that the U.S. would like to undertake on the global stage, a project for which the California Fable offered materials and that triggered the eruption of the 1898 Spanish-American War, a project in which the new woman Helena would like to participate. In this sense, Kaplan's argument about how the historical romances remapped the current world to create new worlds out of the old one perfectly fits in with the message sent by Atherton's 1898 novel. The "old" Spanish legacy must be transformed into the legacy of the "new" integrated California that embraces the rejuvenated eastern man Trennahan, the domesticated ethnic Magdaléna, and the liberated Anglo new woman Helena. "One can have it all in California"—this is Atherton's proud and imperialist statement. In the fictional world of The Californians, by projecting California onto two heroines, one can have rejuvenated manhood, subversive, liberated new womanhood, and "safe," domesticated racialized womanhood at the same time in the imperial paradise of California.

So, freeing the Anglo new woman from the traditional domestic structure, Atherton in turn sends the racialized Spanish/Mexican woman right back into it. Nostalgic or not, Atherton considers the past of Spanish California archaic and obsolete and brushes aside

the “unpleasant” Mexican present; and her way to narrate her view, as Goldman succinctly argues, is to “frame international conflict as a domestic problem in order to naturalize it” (Continental 44). Whereas Goldman’s comment aims at the author’s short stories collected in The Splendid Idle Forties, this argument can also be used to examine The Californians. In this 1898 novel, interracial and interethnic tensions and imperial troubles are all resolved through a drama taking place in the domestic realm. The passing of old Spanish California is reframed as a family confrontation between the backward and, more importantly, “doomed” patriarch and the comparatively more modern daughter; and eventually the unsolved tension between the dominant U.S. culture and the declining Californio culture is more or less settled by the conjugal union between Magdaléna and Trennahan. Discourses of domesticity in this case, just as Kaplan argues, are intimately intertwined with discourses of manifest destiny and U.S. imperialist expansion. Here the former was appropriated to naturalize and justify the goals of the latter.

In the case of California new women such as Helena, discourses of manifest domesticity are invoked in quite a different way; that is, discourses of imperialism end up helping the new woman rewrite and resist discourses of domesticity. More specifically, the imperialist side of the California Fable was reappropriated by Atherton to characterize and empower her white California new women such as Helena, who yearns for new revolutions to lead in the wide, wide world, and who, considering herself a beautifully mixed Californian, relentlessly derides Magdaléna’s infatuation with a romanticized yet “outdated” Spanish legacy. Once donning boy’s clothes to sneak into the cheapest area of town to see a conflagration, the headstrong Helena always longs for adventures that traditionally only men can have, which might very well include the hottest nationwide

adventure around that time, that is, overseas imperialist adventures.

All in all, in Atherton's blueprint, the daring, independent California new woman uses the part of the California Fable that is useful to her (such as imperial adventures) and disregards or reappropriates the useless part (such as the all-male imagery and Spanish "relics") with the ultimate aim of empowering herself and escaping from the domestic realm.⁹ This imperialist viewpoint is what distinguishes Atherton from Ruiz de Burton in terms of their differing appropriations of the idea of manifest domesticity. In contrast to Ruiz de Burton's use of discourses of domesticity to consolidate her Mexican/Californio heroines' position within the U.S. nation, Atherton's heroines challenge conventional rules concerning female domesticity in hopes of "making national history" just as American men did in their turn-of-the-century imperial adventures.

Nostalgia and Amnesia

In The Romance of Reunion, Silber argues that the Spanish-American War, besides being a major step in U.S. overseas expansion, also symbolizes the reunion between northern men and southern men and, as a result, the boosting of national manhood: let bygones be bygones, and live in the present—this was a typical observation voiced by many northerners in the postbellum years, a mentality to which the war of 1898 served as a footnote. Silber thus claims that "forgetfulness, not memory, appears to be the dominant theme in the reunion culture" (4). Whereas northerners tried to forget past animosities

⁹ In this sense, Atherton's appropriation of the California fable forms an interesting contrast to northerners' "Victorian nostalgia" described by Silber. According to Silber, in the gilded age, northerners, in view of their own society's declining Victorian standards, began to imagine the South as a region of idealized feminine virtues and refined domestic comforts (9). Atherton's new woman, on the contrary, strives to search for life meanings outside the domestic realm.

and learned to appreciate the valor of their “imagined” southern manhood, southerners nostalgically created an idyllic antebellum South with benevolent masters and happy slaves and chivalric men and elegant belles, and conveniently disregarded the bloody history of slavery. These strategies show that the mechanism of forgetfulness was necessary for people to create new narratives and to be reunited as a nation, an argument advanced as early as 1882 by the French philosopher Ernest Renan in “What is a Nation?” Benedict Anderson, in his discussion of the “biography of nations,” also similarly asserts that “all profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives” (204). The Spanish-American War, in this sense, can be viewed as such “historical circumstances,” from which spring narratives of nostalgia and amnesia in both the North and the South.

Silber’s observation on the reunion culture, interestingly, can also be used to examine the myths concerning California (and the West in general) at the turn of the century. The romanticized version of national reunion and of the white, wealthy antebellum South resembles the proud, confident turn-of-the-century California Fable and the nostalgia over the Spanish golden age. During the postbellum years, people began to look back to the period of old California and narrate the past in a nostalgic tone; and this kind of mentality not only contributed to the “rediscovery” of the Southwest and its Spanish past, but also enhanced people’s appreciation of the present “integrated” California that “beautifully” subsumed disparate kinds of legacies. In Cecil Robinson’s argument, many Americans, “harassed and made anxious by the fiercely competitive and exploitative spirit of the times and disgusted by the materialism and fake, parlor-car

splendor of the Gilded Age,” found alternatives in aristocratic dons of a peaceful, pastoral earlier California, and were “pleased to be told by prominent authors that the United States in annexing the territory of the great Southwest had fallen heir to an ancient dignified and serene tradition” (135). In this way, past atrocities and bloodshed were buried, and new romances of national consolidation were established.

It is helpful to examine an article from the San Diego Union on the 1915-16 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, which similarly illustrates this mentality that celebrated imperial narratives of national progress disguised as regional myths: “Then westward the tide sets along the respective parallels of latitude marking the domain of the Saxon and Latin. Still in the north and the south the old world conquered the new until the restless hordes met and mingled on the California coast—here in San Diego...And the weaker was absorbed by the stronger; but with the passing of the weaker they left a legacy of their art and culture, which the survivor has gladly possessed to beautify and decorate his own.” (quoted from Rydell 209). Published almost two decades after the Spanish-American War took place, this article on the San Diego world fair added a “comforting” conclusion to the story of conflicts between Anglo-Americans and Californios in California: the weaker (Latin) passed and left a handsome legacy to the stronger (Saxon), and now everything in the universe fell into its rightful place.

One of the characteristics of this passage is its lack of the nostalgic tone, which made its confident evolutionary message and the constructed excuse for amnesia stand out more unequivocally. This excerpted text cannot help but remind one of Ruiz de Burton, who lived in San Diego half of her life, and who, based upon the assumptions of the article, should doubtlessly be grouped into the category of the “weaker,” that is,

people who could be “conveniently” screened out and forgotten in the process of myth-making. The reverse side of either the sentimental nostalgia or the evolutionary progressive view was historical amnesia, which abetted U.S. imperialist forces by creating narratives that glorified the Spanish past and ignored the Mexican present. In this regard, the historical amnesia that characterized many California texts around the turn of the century can be attributed to the split attitude toward the “despicable Mexican” and the “respectable Spanish” that was part of the tradition of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage.

In contradistinction to the goal of “naturaliz[ing] political conflict” embedded in this willful amnesia, Ruiz de Burton’s works such as The Squatter and the Don, as Goldman has argued, can be viewed as rare examples opposing the popular trend of historical amnesia in the last decades of the nineteenth century by advancing unorthodox political statements (“Romance” 66). It is helpful to examine McCullough’s discussion of the connection between Ruiz de Burton’s writing and a different kind of nostalgia presented in nineteenth-century Mexican American autobiographies. McCullough first recounts Genaro Padilla’s argument that in nineteenth-century Mexican American autobiographies, the reconstruction of past harmonious life was in fact “a strategic narrative activity for restoring order, sanity, social purpose in the face of political social, and economic dispossession” (311); as a result, this kind of nostalgia contained “a realization that there are future stakes involved in the reconstruction(s) of the past”; that “To remember is not only the act of not forgetting but an act of not being forgotten” (325). This is a kind of nostalgia very different from the imperial nostalgia explicated earlier, a kind of nostalgia that belonged to people who were the very object of imperial nostalgia yet who managed

to create their historical memories through the mechanism of nostalgia. This shows that nostalgia is a complicated political act, crisscrossed with historical legacies, burdens, hopes and grievances of disparate groups of people.¹⁰

What Ruiz de Burton's writing achieves, McCullough argues, is similar to this particular kind of nostalgia disclosed in Mexican American autobiographies. Even though Ruiz de Burton focuses on showing her people's plight at present and has little interest in nostalgically looking back at the past, she similarly manages to create alternative historical memories for her people in opposition to the official narrative. Her writing, in this sense, serves as a sharp, angry indictment of the contemporary trend of imperial nostalgia and historical amnesia, and testifies to Foote's claim that regionalism can be "far more than a nostalgic genre."

Yet there are also other kinds of complications in Ruiz de Burton's writing. I would like to compare Ruiz de Burton's and Atherton's views of the California missions in order to further examine their complicated uses of the idea of historical amnesia. In the newspaper article "Bygone San Diego," published in The Daily San Diego Union, Ruiz de Burton lashes out at Anglo-Americans' amnesia because they have totally forgotten the efforts that Spaniards, "those heroic philanthropists," had made for California; that is, her argument is full of anger toward the historical amnesia disclosed in U.S. imperial

¹⁰ "Nostalgia" is a term often used to define the modern experience. For example, Marshall Berman in All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity describes modernization as a maelstrom of disunity, leading one to search for "numerous nostalgic myth of pre-modern Paradise Lost" (15). Facing the transient modern world where things changed so rapidly and memories could no longer hold, people tended to yearn for a peaceful, stabilized pre-modern utopia. Yet what people were nostalgic over, as shown by the discussion in this section, is not simply a "pre-modern Paradise Lost." Nostalgia is in fact crisscrossed with multiple burdens of history, such as the fear of being silenced and the yearning for acknowledgement and visibility in the project of constructing national identity.

nostalgia.¹¹ Yet in the same article, the object of these “heroic” Spanish missionaries, native Americans, were compared to “barbarians” and “ferocious fiends” with “natural instincts of cruelty and love of murder” (577, 578). Just as Sánchez and Pita have observed in Conflicts of Interest, while Ruiz de Burton “critically attacks the dispossession and mistreatment of the Californios,” she is nevertheless “blind to the Indians’ rights to these same lands” (561). In other words, Ruiz de Burton’s indictment of Anglo-Americans’ amnesia also contains her own version of amnesia. While Anglo-Americans forgot how they snatched the land from Mexicans, Ruiz de Burton forgot how Spaniards did the same thing to Native Americans.

At first sight, there seem to be incongruities in Atherton’s delineation of the California missions, since she sometimes views them appreciatively and sometimes disapprovingly. In the 1888 article “A Native on the California Missions,” Atherton states that there is no structure on earth “colder, barer, uglier, dirtier, less picturesque, less romantic than a Californian mission,” where live “unshorn priests” and “dirty Mexicans with their unspeakable young.” Criticizing the pastoral, romanticized picture painted by Jackson in Ramona, Atherton asserts that from the viewpoint of modern Californians, missions nowadays are simply ugly; they do not correspond to the idealized image that readers and tourists might have in mind.

In her 1914 work California: An Intimate History, however, Atherton illustrates a more schizophrenic picture. On the one hand, she praises the pastoral beauty of the California missions in the past: “That long chain of snow-white red-tiled missions, hedged with Castilian roses, surrounded by olive-orchards...must have been the fairest

¹¹ See the article in Sanchez and Pita (eds.), Conflicts of Interest, 576-81.

sight in the modern world” (31). She also eulogizes the “heroic” Franciscan Spanish friars who founded the missions and cultivated the “stupid,” “degenerate” Indians, and suggests that California’s historical period only began with the arrival of the missionaries (18). She similarly uses a nostalgic tone to talk about the Spanish officers who protected the missions; they, from whom the “fine Old Spanish-California families” were descended, would become the “great ranchers of California’s pastoral era,” an era in which “There was little to do, an abundance of game and every other delicacy that cost nothing, sunshine for eight months of the year, a climate electric in the north and soporific in the south, and not too much discipline”—a pastoral paradise in a word (30). This beautifully portrayed picture coincides with the popular myth of an idealized, romanticized Spanish Arcadia; the missions serve more as a mythic cultural legacy at a distance, a monument of an epoch already gone—not something one sees and experiences in the present.¹²

On the other hand, in this 1914 quasi-historical account, a book specifically written for the occasion of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco,¹³ Atherton endorses the evolutionary belief in natural selection propagated in the exposition, claiming that “God made the poor to toil for the rich, the weak to be oppressed by the strong, and, as both were put upon the earth to glorify Him, why not?” (34).¹⁴ She, therefore, delineates Native Americans as “Brainless, little higher in the

¹² One can reference Atherton’s other works, such as Los Cerritos, The Splendid Idle Forties and Golden Gate Country, for a similar romanticized description of the old California.

¹³ Atherton promised her old friend Elizabeth Jordan, then an editor in Harper’s, to write a book on California history in order to meet the general thirst that was expected to arise in account of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. This project turned out to be California: An Intimate History, published at the end of 1914 and drawing “the quantity and kind of acclaim given her best novels” (McClure 134). See McClure 109; Leider 266.

¹⁴ See Rydell for a discussion of the racialized evolutionary fantasies propagated by the San Francisco

scale of life than the wild beasts of their plains and forests” (34). She also uses a similar tone to describe contemporary Mexicans who lived in the dilapidated Mission of San Antonio de Padua: “...[the] ruins were crowded with evicted Mexican squatters, the women very fat, wearing a solitary calico garment, and the children, although the San Antonio Valley is bitter-cold in winter, quite naked”—a scene, in her view, quite different from that of the “beautiful mission up to the days of secularization” in the pastoral, peaceful years of old California (27).

It is clear that from Atherton’s point of view, Mexicans and Indians belong to the same inferior racial category. Her description of the “dirty” Mexicans not only echoes her depreciatory attitude expressed in the 1888 article, but also testifies to Atherton’s participation in the paradoxical construction of turn-of-the-century imperial nostalgia: fancy and disgust at the same time. So the seemingly conflicting picture that she illustrates regarding the missions is after all not that incongruent, because what she juxtaposes is the mission’s past versus the mission’s present; fancy at the nonexistent past versus disgust at the inescapable present; romanticized myths versus harsh reality of social exploitation; heroic Spanish priests and noble Spanish officers in the past versus greasers (“dirty” Mexican squatters) and diggers (“incompetent,” “inferior” Indians) in the present. Her nostalgic look at the former sharply contrasts with her abhorrence of the latter. Even more importantly, this nostalgia points to a kind of collective historical amnesia, through which people conveniently chose to forget the genealogical connection between the past and the present in order to remold and make sense of the present.

This widespread nostalgia over the Spanish past also demonstrates how much the

nation was hungry for “myths that were home-grown rather than imports from Europe,” myths that Atherton participated in creating (Leider 108). What was sacrificed in this nationalist project of myth-creation, however, was the diversified transnational, interethnic/interracial aspect of California. In other words, California’s transnational Spanish/Mexican past was repackaged as the “manageable” Spanish Fantasy Heritage and renarrated as a set of “safe” home-grown myths; and thus it was turned to serve purposes of internal consolidation and external expansion for the nation. The mechanism of amnesia not only aimed to sever the genealogical tie between the Spanish past and the Mexican present, but it was also used to “Americanize” California and to cover its “messy” transnational past.

To conclude, looking at Ruiz de Burton and Atherton as well as their disparate visions of California, one can map out the interracial/interethnic, transregional, and transnational world in which the United States was implicated during the last decades of the nineteenth century. By composing regional stories of romances and myths, both the authors intervened in the national project that generated narratives of memories and forgetfulness in the face of political dilemmas, cultural crises and social divisions.

Chapter Five

Turning Indian, Empowering African American Identity:

Hopkins' Turn-of-the-Century Manifest Domesticity in Winona

This chapter examines Pauline Hopkins' 1902 novel Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest in relation to African Americans' engagement in social practices and cultural imaginings concerning Indians at the turn of the century. Set a few years before the Civil War broke out and built around the turmoil of "Bleeding Kansas" that involved one of the most prominent abolitionist figures, John Brown, this novel, as Hazel Carby illustrates,¹ uses the topic of antebellum slavery to criticize the failure of the antislavery ideal in the postbellum era, particularly targeting the turn of the century period in which Hopkins composed this novel. By juxtaposing the antebellum moment that strongly foreshadows the Civil War with the turn of the twentieth century, and by moving the characters from Buffalo to Missouri and Kansas and finally to England via Canada, Hopkins creates a temporally and geographically multilayered narrative about a mixed community of African Americans, whites, and, to a lesser degree, Indians. What I want to look at is how this narrative can be situated vis-à-vis turn-of-the-century popular discourses on Indians, especially the Pocahontas myth and the transformation of the Indian's role from a savage other to a national ancestor, and how African Americans such as Hopkins in turn appropriated these discourses to create hope and agency for black characters.

¹ In Carby's argument, "The novel used the historical landscape of slavery to represent the contemporary social order. Situated against the background of John Brown and the Free Soil movement in Kansas...the novel was transparently a call for organized acts of resistance against contemporary persecution displaced to a fictional history" (154).

I will first discuss the cultural practices of “playing Indian” and “going native” to show how Indianness as a symbol became a means to achieve certain political goals for white Americans at the turn of the century; I will also situate the popularity of the Pocahontas myth in this context. Then I will go on to examine African Americans’ specific views and uses of these white-centered practices and phenomena. After mapping out this general historical context, I will investigate Hopkins’ own stance on racial relations, especially those involving Indians. Finally I will discuss how some characters in the novel play Indian or appropriate Indianness to create agency for themselves as well as the heroine Winona’s role as what I call the Africanized Pocahontas. In my opinion, by using contemporary discourses on Indians, Hopkins anachronistically empowers her antebellum African American characters, especially her mixed-blood heroine Winona, and asserts her belief in the common brotherhood among colored races. In this way, she not only rewrites gendered ideologies of “disciplinary intimacy” endorsed by nineteenth-century domestic narratives, but also engages in a complicated conversation with white imperialist discourses on race and Indianness.

Imagining Indians at the Turn of the Century

American Indians were an ambivalent presence in the nineteenth-century U.S. cultural and political imagination. Their image was generally split into two: the “noble savage” symbolized the unspoiled nature and unbounded freedom that white Americans yearned for, while the “violent” racialized other was figured as what those same white Americans must eliminate in order to fulfill their manifest destiny in the “new” paradise.²

² See Michael Paul Rogin, Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American

According to Philip J. Deloria in Playing Indian, it was this “dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion,” this vacillation between possibilities of “inclusion” and “extermination,” that dominated white-centered perceptions and representations concerning Indians (3, 4). Idealization of native people’s innocence paradoxically went hand in hand with fear of their “violent savagery”; fascination with their “authentic” tie with the continent intersected with the wish to claim this “legitimate” entitlement themselves. In order to assert their differences from Europeans, white Americans yearned for a connection with Indians, the personification of the “new” continent, but paradoxically they also worked hard to differentiate themselves from the very same Indians, who were also “savage” others that should be driven out in order to make room for “civilization” to take place.

These two seemingly paradoxical sets of images and sentiments thus became essential tools for white Americans to secure a “civilized” national identity and a quintessential cultural Americanness. Just as Deloria claims, “To understand the various ways Americans have contested and constructed national identities, we must constantly return to the original mysteries of Indianness” (5). These “original mysteries of

Indian, for a further discussion of this dichotomy. According to Rogin, although liberal America in Jackson’s age defined liberalism in contrast to the superstitious, anarchic image of Indians, “its distance from primitive man was not secure” (8). The reason, as he argues, lies in the fact that “liberalism generated a forbidden nostalgia for childhood—for the nurturing, blissful, primitively violent connection to nature that white Americans had to leave behind” but that Indians still possessed (8). In Rogin’s argument, white Americans, in the end, solved this dilemma of simultaneously desiring and condemning by “return[ing] to childhood on the [western] frontier” (9); that is, while they tried to return to the natural world through “the encounter with Indians and the virgin land” in the wild West, they could still carry on the policy of Indian dispossession and annihilation (9). Also see Rogin, “Liberal Society and the Indian,” for a discussion of the paradoxical combination of innocence and violence in Indians as imagined by the white liberal society: “The concept of the Indian was split into the noble savage and the ‘starved wolf’” (144). Also see my discussion in chapter two about Thoreau’s paradoxical views of Indians.

For a discussion of Indians’ double-sidedness and their centrality in constructing U.S. American national and cultural identities, see Deloria, Playing Indian; Shari M. Huhndorf, Going Native; Trachtenberg, Shades of Hiawatha; Lucy Maddox, Removals; Leslie A. Fiedler, The Return of the Vanishing American; Rayna Green, “The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe.”

Indianness” are no doubt closely related to this double-sidedness of Indians in white people’s imaginations. By stressing the “savage” otherness of Indians, white Americans not only justified the removal policy of supplanting the original inhabitants of the continent, but they also reaffirmed their own role as the legitimate successor to the land, where they could glorify their exceptional national character and their unparalleled, unique nation. Yet the problem was that Indians were presented not only as violent savages but also as noble savages, who could inspire admiration as well as fear. On the one hand, they were regarded as uncivilized, backward, and outdated, a people that was supposed to belong to the past and therefore should be eliminated in the present to make room for the great white nation. On the other hand, they also personified desirable characteristics such as nobleness, freedom, and the seemingly boundless wildness of the land, characteristics that the new nation wanted to claim as part of its own. In sum, nineteenth-century white Americans defined their nation and national character in relation to the otherness of Indians—with both admiration and apprehension. Andrew Jackson’s 1829 words sum it up: “Our conduct toward these people [Native Americans] is deeply interesting to our national character.”

Perceptions concerning the double image of Indians underwent a substantial change during the last decades of the nineteenth century. According to Alan Trachtenberg in Shades of Hiawatha, “by the end of the nineteenth century the same Euro-Americans who had once viewed American Indians as alien savages came to embrace them as the true, the natural, the ‘first Americans,’ icons of the nation and its territory” (10).³ This

³ The connection between Indians and the Americas can be traced to a much earlier period. According to Deloria, Europeans “had used images of Indians to signify the North American continent since the sixteenth century” (28). Also see Rayna Green’s tracing of the genealogy of “playing Indian” or “Indian play,” a practice that in her view “represents one of the ways in which we can demarcate the boundaries of an

transformation was closely related to social changes around that time. Trachtenberg stresses how the presence of large numbers of new immigrants within the nation challenged the idea of national homogeneity and thus resulted in white people's eagerness to reaffirm this homogeneity by appropriating Indianness as the authentic symbol of American identity. Deloria and Shari M. Huhndorf list the rise of industrial capitalism, modernization, and urbanization as well as the gradual receding of the Indian "threat" as part of the reason why people toward the end of the nineteenth century could associate Indians with simple life, natural purity, and instinctual freedom, and, more importantly, to look at them with a newfound nostalgic appreciation.⁴ As a series of Indian wars drew to a close with the triumph of U.S. forces in the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, removal of native populations from the U.S. heartland was no longer a necessary policy or a cultural vision promoted by writers such as James Fenimore Cooper; it became an actuality. A succession of Indian Removal acts that had served as the guideline for official policies ever since the age of Jackson finally came to fulfillment as Native Americans came to be enclosed within a limited range of land assigned by the government after their military defeat. Since it was no longer necessary to worry about the "savage" other, it became easier to turn real-life Indians into abstract "Indianness," something that could be "safely" admired and idealized, and even reappropriated as the quintessential essence of the nation. In sum, the double-sided image of Indians,

American identity distinct from that which affiliates with Europe" (31): "Almost from their very arrival in the Americas, Europeans found it useful, perhaps essential, to 'play Indian' in America, to demand that tribal peoples 'play Indian,' and to export the performances back to Europe, where they thrive to date" (30).

In this chapter, unless otherwise stated, quotes from Trachtenberg all come from Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880-1930.

⁴ In her 1988 article "The Tribe Called Wannabee," Rayna Green similarly argues that the cultural practices of reappropriating Indianness, although starting as early as the arrival of Europeans, only began to fully thrive as Indians became "less of a problem" (30, 34).

deep-rooted as it was, began to transform as the pressing task shifted from stressing the negative, savage nature of the enemy to reimagining Indians as the nation's ancestors.

Some specific cultural practices that white people engaged in for this reconstruction are designated by Deloria as “playing Indians” and by Huhndorf as “going native,” practices such as dressing as Indians, adopting native ceremonies and habits, or collecting Indian artwork and enjoying Indian performances and exhibits such as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, practices that allowed non-natives to imagine and even pretend that they had finally become “true” Americans through Indianization. By incorporating Indianness as part of their own identity, white U.S. Americans were making a claim to the nation's native ancestry—a gesture that not only served nationalist purposes but, in my opinion, can also be labeled as imperialist. First of all, they substituted “positive” yet abstract Americanized Indianness for “negative” real-life Indians during a time when the threat of the latter was dwindling thanks to the triumph of U.S. internal or domestic expansionist imperialism. Furthermore, by doing so white Americans were able to reconstruct the U.S. as a quintessentially “American” nation that, with valiant and noble Indians as its predecessors, was tough enough to triumph as an invincible imperial power in the global arena. Appropriating or playing with Indianness, in this sense, became a means to reach nationalist goals and to display imperialist strength, which reconfirms Kaplan's claim that racism at home and imperialism abroad are intricately related to each other.

A good example would be Theodore Roosevelt's support of many turn-of-the-century fraternal organizations. According to Huhndorf, Roosevelt claimed that these fraternal organizations would benefit from imitating Native Americans'

military prowess and physical strength, an argument that was closely tied to his belief in the necessity of showing military muscle abroad and achieving dominance over the rest of the world (68-69). On a different note, the entanglement between Indianness and U.S. imperialism can also be observed in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, in which themes of "white" civilization and progress, symbolized by Columbus' 1492 entry into the Americas, were celebrated and Indians, along with other non-white peoples around the world, were denigrated as inferior and outmoded.⁵ Since part of the goal of this exhibition was to bring order back to the turbulent U.S. society and to flaunt the nation's status as a first-tier contender in the global arena of political and economic affairs, the Indian exhibit at the Chicago fair, which blatantly publicized the victory of white civilization over native populations, should be viewed in this turn-of-the-century context of Western expansionism and U.S. imperialism.

There is one particular kind of cultural representation that I would like to address in relation to the trend of appropriating Indianness; that is, the revival of the Pocahontas myth around the turn of the century. Even though both Deloria and Huhndorf do not look particularly closely at the figure of Pocahontas, as a cultural token deeply intertwined with U.S. nationalist and imperialist fantasies Pocahontas obviously plays an important role in the white-centered tradition of imagining Indians. Therefore her revived popularity at the turn of the century, in my opinion, should be considered as closely related to the cultural practices of playing Indian and going native.

The Pocahontas Myth at the Turn of the Century

⁵ See Rydell for a discussion of representations of U.S. imperialism at the Chicago fair.

The construction of the Pocahontas legend was a process of mythmaking. Represented as the white man's Indian, the loyal native maiden who welcomed and in a way legitimized the white man's entrance into the "new" continent, the figure of Pocahontas contributes to one of the "foundational fictions" "in U.S. cultural history" (Faery 9). Daughter of Chief Powhatan, who was then the powerful leader of about thirty tribes, the historical Pocahontas was kidnapped by whites, converted to Christianity, married to an Englishman named John Rolfe in Virginia in 1613, and later became the first Native American woman to ever set foot on England and was even presented at the court of King James. Yet what makes her so well-known is rather her alleged rescue of and romantic involvement with Captain John Smith, an account of which was first given by Smith himself and which has gradually evolved into an intricate web of myths even though the credibility of Smith's account has often been contested by scholars. Her so-called warning to Smith and his fellow white settlers about an imminent Indian attack also added controversy to the construction of the myths. All in all, Pocahontas' reputation as a native maiden who appreciated white men and white culture so much as to forsake and even betray her own tribe has followed her ever since. In her various literary and visual representations, Pocahontas serves as an "apt symbol of the White man's reconciliation with our land and its first inhabitants" (Fiedler 64), a figure that stands for "the continent as a female America who is virginal, seductive, open and receptive to English settlement" (Faery 128).⁶ Her story not only justifies white settlement in the

⁶ The construction of this image, according to Fiedler, is related to the fact that the figure of Pocahontas around the nineteenth century "was being blended into that of the 'Indian Princess' ...[, who was] 'the first symbol of the United States, representing the Western wilderness reclaimed by civilization'" (65). See Deloria for a discussion of the "Indian Princess" iconography, an image that allowed European settlers "to evoke female sexuality in picturing the fertile landscape or to show the colonies as available and vulnerable to the desires of English men" (29); see 29-31, 51-53. Also see Green's account of the symbol of the Indian

“new” continent and affirms the prosperity of the evolving nation, but it also molds gendered imagery that disguises disturbing imperial relations as comparatively more “comfortable” gender hierarchy. Complicated nationalist, imperialist, and gender discourses intersect with one another in this controversial figure.⁷

I want to specifically focus on the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the popularity of the Pocahontas myth was said to be at its peak and was intricately related to the U.S. presence in the international scene. Looking at various paintings and illustrations of Pocahontas, Martha Banta in Imagining American Women claims that during this time period when the U.S. was asserting itself as a powerful global force, many sensed that “America’s newly acquired international powers somehow lay rooted in the image of the Indian heroine whose courage had ‘protected’ the white European hero from death in the wilderness” (493-94). Just as white Europeans tamed the Indian maiden in the name of civilization three centuries ago, the turn-of-the-century United States had confidence that it would successfully extend its imperial reach to overseas lands and countries to “civilize” racialized others and to continue its manifest destiny. The figure of Pocahontas came in handy and as such became a popular icon.

Quoting Banta, Amy Kaplan tackles the entanglement between the Pocahontas myth and U.S. imperialism from another angle. Arguing that the construction of the “New Woman” foreign heroine in popular romances replayed “the Pocahontas myth, which was undergoing a revival in the popular culture of the 1890s” (“Romancing” 108), she equates

Princess, who “loses her Indian-ness as she transmogrifies into the Anglo- European and neo-classic Miss Liberty,” a process that can be viewed as “altering the cultural icon so that it conforms to the majority population's notions of itself” and that is “certainly co-existent with nationalism and nationalization” (31).

⁷ For more discussion of the Pocahontas myth and Pocahontas as a cultural icon, see Faery, Tilton, Fiedler, and Åsebrit Sundquist.

Pocahontas, the tamed native girl from the colonial period, with the racialized foreign heroine in popular historical romances, another tamed figure that epitomizes the victory of U.S. imperialism at the turn of the century. In Kaplan's contention, no matter how free-spirited, subversive, and "modern" the racialized romance heroine might be, she would eventually fall in love with the white U.S. hero and turn to support U.S. imperialist causes against her nation and countrymen, just like Pocahontas did three centuries ago. The popularity of the Pocahontas myth at the turn of the century, in this sense, went hand in hand with U.S. imperialist endeavors. And this imperial connection, in my opinion, also closely associates the Pocahontas myth with the cultural practices of playing Indian that were gaining popularity around the same period of time.

African Americans Going Native and Playing Pocahontas

In this section, I will discuss how African Americans engaged in a complicated conversation with mainstream perceptions and cultural practices concerning Indianness in general and the Pocahontas myth in particular during the time when they were struggling with racial bashing, social discrimination, and Jim Crow laws. Several scholars, including Huhndorf and Deloria, have examined or at least briefly looked at the cultural practices of "playing Indian" performed in the African American community. Huhndorf states that the significance of these practices "extends well beyond the relations between European Americans and Native Americans," and specifically claims that these practices often "reflect upon other power relations within the broader society, including...the devastating histories of African Americans in the United States" (8-9). Deloria briefly mentions that "African-American Indian play—especially the carnivalesque revels of Mardi

Gras—follows white practices to a degree, but it also stems from a different history of Afro-Caribbean cultural hybridity” (8). While neither of the scholars investigates this topic in much detail, their arguments suggest the existence of a specific connection between African American and Native American communities in terms of the cultural practices of using Indianness as a means to achieve certain political goals.

This connection is more fully examined by Rayna Green in her 1988 article “The Tribe Called Wannabee, Playing Indian in America and Europe.” Although she primarily focuses on how people of Anglo-American and Anglo-European backgrounds have played Indian, she points out that “persons of Hispanic, Mediterranean and African/Afro-American background also play Indian in large numbers” (30). Her basic argument is that socially oppressed groups, such as women and blacks, are drawn into the practice of playing Indian because it offers them “a unique opportunity...of escaping the conventional and often highly restrictive boundaries of their fixed cultural identities based in gender or race” (31). In the case of blacks, Green gives the “Mardi Gras Indians” of Louisiana as an example, whose performance, albeit bearing no resemblance to native tribal tradition, was “insistently described as Indian by the [black] performer” (43). The underlying reason, according to Green, was that the participants, including black performers and black audiences, used the performance as “an embodiment of admiration of Indians, for their freedom, for their resistance to the white man’s bondage”—“for the purposes of ‘acting out’ roles rejected in the normative culture” (43). Green thus concludes: “When Blacks, as opposed to Anglo-Americans, play Indian, perhaps they are connecting to a world that allows them to be first, to be other than Black, other than white, other than victims who did not fight their enslavement” (48). To sum up,

by acting out “Indianness,” an attribute associated with freedom, resistance, and new possibilities, African Americans tried to imaginatively fight back against social oppression and construct a better past and a brighter future for themselves.

Even though Green designates black people’s use of Indianness as opposed to that of Anglo-Americans, I would argue that in a way their methods are not as opposed to each other as generally assumed. What both groups wanted from appropriating Indianness was an opportunity to claim something that they did not have but were eager to have. Whereas the African American community used Indianness to imagine for themselves a more flexible cultural identity that could challenge social restrictions set by white Americans, white Americans used Indianness to make a claim to authentic Americanness and to connect to the nation’s native ancestry. They also shared the belief that Indianness symbolized freedom, perseverance, and valor.

Despite these similarities, since the relation between Native American and African American communities was essentially different from that between Native and European Americans, appropriating Indianness in the case of black people thus served different purposes and functions. With the shared experience of being forcibly assimilated, discriminated against, and relocated in the white-dominated U.S. society, African Americans and Native Americans were closely intertwined in the nineteenth-century cultural and political imagination. According to Tiya Miles and Barbara Krauthamer in their survey article “Africans and Native Americans,” “by the late eighteenth century these two populations were joined together metaphorically and ideologically in the minds of Europeans” (121). While their connection was partly formed through their shared status as “racialized others” in a white-centered society, antebellum incidents of escaping

black slaves finding haven in Indian communities as well as cases of intermarriage were also often reported (Miles & Krauthamer 130-31). Thus there gradually emerged a sense of bonding and of political urgency to make this connection between the two groups. Cultural critic bell hooks, for example, highlights the importance of examining African American and American Indian relations, claiming that “recalling shared black and Native history is an act of resistance to colonialism and a necessity for political solidarity” (Miles & Krauthamer 133).

On the other hand, despite their similarities, their specific histories of interaction with white Americans result in different types of representation—especially around the end of the nineteenth century, when the Indian problem seemed to be more or less “solved” due to Native Americans’ ultimate military defeat and to the introduction of the 1887 Dawes Act that would divide reservation lands into privately-owned parcels and open the door to legal occupation by white people. When African Americans were still struggling with Jim Crow laws in the South and discrimination all over the country, Indians began to be praised as the predecessor of the nation, whose image of gallantry and freedom-loving made them the perfect symbol for Americanness. Because Indians no longer were a military threat, they could be safely appreciated and reconstructed as part of the “glorious” national past, in which whites contributed to the progress of civilization by assimilating, rather than annihilating, Native Americans. Consequently, there emerged a surge of public performances and ethnographic displays by and about Indians, the erection of public monuments to Indian “heroes,” and the appearance of Indian themes in paintings, artworks, and book illustrations. Trachtenberg’s words sum up this phenomenon well: “the indigenous population seemed in certain eyes to promise national

redemption: absolution of the sins of conquest, legitimation by offering themselves as founders and guardians of nationhood” (xxiii-xxiv).

African Americans, on the contrary, enjoyed no such turn of fate. As a matter of fact, “the much-praised dignity, independence, and virile manhood of Indians were often cited as a rebuke against the so-called inferiority of African Americans” (Trachtenberg xxiv). Due to changing social conditions and different predicaments faced by the two racial groups, cultural ideas associated with them transformed correspondingly around the end of the nineteenth century. Whereas real-life Indians, being marginalized, were displaced by abstract “Indianness” in national memory and thus could be reimagined as praiseworthy national ancestors, African Americans were deemed inferior citizens as well as the lowest specimens in the emerging racial hierarchy.

Considering this turn of fate, it is interesting to observe how the turn-of-the-century African American community reacted to the cultural myth of “Indianization as Americanization” and to the popular practices of “playing Indian.” Besides the example of Mardi Gras in Louisiana mentioned above, Frederick Douglass’ change of attitude as described by Trachtenberg offers a good entry point to approach this question. In his 1869 speech to the mainly white American Anti-Slavery Society, Douglass insisted that blacks were more like whites than like Indians in terms of “tastes and tendencies, disposition to accept civilization” and therefore should not be pushed off to the border of civilization as Indians had been (Trachtenberg 28). Yet two decades or so later, in his 1893 speech at the Carlisle Indian School, Douglass practically contradicted his previous claim, and remarked that “he had, himself, been known as a Negro, but for then and there,

he wished to be known as an Indian.”⁸ What caused this change of attitude, in Trachtenberg’s view, was the fact that native identity was “undergoing change (even if coerced)” (29). Since the objective in establishing the Carlisle Indian School was to “whiten” and “civilize” young Indians, it would no longer be risky to associate blacks with this version of whitened, disciplined Indians and, by extension, with whites. I will further argue that the transformation of Indians from savage others to national forebears might also play a role in Douglass’s willingness to connect African Americans with native population. Since Indianness was mystified as the ultimate symbol of Americanness, “going native” would certainly be a good way for blacks to assert their claim to national identity. Just as Green argues, by performing Indianness African Americans could try to controvert social stereotypes that restricted them to an inferior position and imagine a more honorable and “Americanized” past and a brighter future for their community. In sum, interestingly just when African Americans (the racially “inferior”) were further separated from Native Americans (“our” national forebears) in the white imagination, some of them, such as Douglass, actually found it beneficial to claim an Indianness that was created by white Americans for nationalist and imperialist purposes. Similarities and disparities, associations and dissociations, connections and conflicts were paradoxically intertwined in the relations between African Americans and Native Americans.

In view of this complexity, how one can situate African Americans in relation to the turn-of-the-century Pocahontas myth? I would argue that a similar paradoxical pattern of connections and conflicts functioned in African Americans’ appropriations of the

⁸ Quoted from Trachtenberg, 28.

mythical Indian maid as well. On the one hand, in Leslie Fiedler's words, because of Pocahontas' rescue of the white man John Brown and her later marriage to another white man, John Rolfe, her image as a tamed and white-loving racialized other resonates with Stowe's equally docile Uncle Tom: "Our first Tom is an Indian girl; and this, in our deepest national memory, we do not forget!" (70). That is, since the Pocahontas myth can be seen as a product of white-centered ideologies, it echoed white people's craze for Uncle Tom, perhaps the most popular figure of a "white people's black man," since the mid-nineteenth century.⁹ Robert S. Tilton's observation that the Pocahontas narrative became an important tool for constructing a white southern genealogy during the Civil War period also highlights the white-centered aspect of the Pocahontas myth and its complicated connection with African Americans (149).¹⁰ It was ironic that Pocahontas, a native who used to live in the area later named as Virginia, would become such a useful symbol for Confederate Virginia and the South that they, claiming themselves as Pocahontas' descendants, could use her to assert both their difference from the abolitionist North and their right to construct their own "slave-holding" nation. All in all, whether associated with the docile slave Uncle Tom or with the slave-holding Confederate South, Pocahontas proved to be a handy symbol to perpetuate and affirm white imperialist ideologies.

On another note, Pocahontas can also be viewed as a dilemma or even a challenge to white ideologies. Seeing Pocahontas as the archetype of all the oppressed ethnic women

⁹ About the Uncle Tom craze, see Sarah Meer, Uncle Tom Mania, Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s; Linda Williams, Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson.

¹⁰ Tilton also emphasizes the flexibility of the Pocahontas narrative, as it was also used by the Union side to vaunt its military strength (145-49).

in U.S. history, Mary V. Dearborn in Pocahontas's Daughters links Pocahontas with black female slaves: "The profound contradictions embedded in the Pocahontas marriage resonate in the profoundly contradictory conditions of female slave life" (134). These contradictions, as Dearborn illustrates, partly stem from white men's "deep-seated ambivalence toward female sexuality and ethnicity": whereas they projected their anxieties about female sexuality and racial otherness onto black women, some black women paradoxically evoked the white man's love and desire as well as fear and hatred (134). As "Pocahontas' Daughters," these female slaves do present the similar dilemma that one encounters in trying to make sense of Pocahontas: a racialized other supposed to arouse disdain and fear as well as an object of love and desire. If the image of Pocahontas could be transformed from that of the sensual, exotic other to that of the national foremother, how should one look at these black women in terms of this similarly knotty play of differences and sameness? Moreover, in regard to the popular cultural practices of "going native," what does it mean for some African American women to don an Indian or a Pocahontas mask? These are the questions that I want to delve into in my analysis of Hopkins and Winona.

Hopkins' Views on Race and Indians

Before moving on to textual analysis, I would like to briefly discuss Hopkins' views on race, specifically her take on the relations between blacks and Indians. Born in 1859 in Portland, Maine, and raised in Boston, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins was a novelist, essayist, and editor closely associated with the Boston-based Colored American Magazine from 1900 to 1904, a brief range of time that roughly corresponded with the short life span of

this first African American general interest magazine that covered literary, social, and political subjects of concern to the black community. Her various literary and non-literary writings not only demonstrated her affirmation of black people's courage, intellect, and perseverance and her sense of pride in a common African heritage, but they also showed her concern about intensifying white supremacist violence and deteriorating black social conditions in the post-Reconstruction era. Despite her important status as one of the most published African American women writers in the early twentieth century, Hopkins received little notice even in her lifetime. Thanks to the efforts of black feminist scholarship, which began with Ann Elizabeth Shockley's 1972's essay "Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: A Biographical Excursion into Obscurity," as well as the publication of Hopkins' four novels and a couple of short stories by the Oxford Schomburg Library in the late 1980s and the early 1990s,¹¹ Hopkins began to receive more and more academic acclaim, and is now recognized as a formative voice in African American literature.

While most critics still focus on Hopkins' fictional works, more attention has gradually been given to her achievement as a non-fictional essayist who contributed original articles on U.S. racial issues, most of which can now be conveniently located in the recently published Daughter of the Revolution: The Major Nonfiction Works of Pauline E. Hopkins (2007). One can especially look at Hopkins' articles from 1900 to 1905, a period of time in which she was writing for, first, the Colored American Magazine and, then, the Voice of the Negro, for her thoughts on race and racial relations. The keyword to her argument, as the editor Ira Dworkin points out in his introduction to

¹¹ The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers series, under the general editorship of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has published Contending Forces and The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins in 1988, and Short Fiction by Black Women, 1900-1920 (Ed. Elizabeth Ammons) in 1991.

this nonfiction collection, is “internationalism” (xxiii). Hopkins’ articles reflect her belief in the importance of affirming a common brotherhood across nations and races, especially among darker races around the world. For example, in the “Famous Men of the Negro Race” column series (1900-01), she features Toussaint and Haiti as the topic of the first installment, thus connecting African Americans’ fight for freedom with the Haitian Revolution, an event that began with the rebellion of African slaves and ended with the establishment of a free, black republic. It is important that Hopkins opens the first installment by tracing the genealogy of slavery back to Columbus’ 1492 landing on the island named by him as St. Domingo (the former name of Haiti), and concludes by highlighting the importance of establishing a common brotherhood among oppressed black slaves across the Americas: “Therefore the history of the Island of St. Domingo is interesting to the Negroes of the United States; brothers in blood, though speaking different languages, we should clasp our hands in friendship when we look back upon our past...” (21). What she tries to illustrate is an internationalist, transamerican genealogy for black people to unite with one another.

The theme of “internationalism” is also the key word that runs through her 1905 series “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century,” which is divided into five installments: “Oceanica,” “The Malay Peninsula,” “The Yellow Race,” “Africa,” and “The North American Indian—Conclusion.” Just as Dworkin argues, “With installments on South Asians, Native Americans, East Asians, and Pacific Islanders, this series represents her broadly internationalist outlook” (305). This “internationalist outlook” especially punctuates the last installment, in which Hopkins first illustrates her views on Native Americans and then moves on to conclude the whole series. Affirming Indians’ advanced

skills in craftsmanship, agriculture, tribal government system, and religion, Hopkins states that Indians “compare favorably with Anglo-Saxon advancement in the scale of progress” (328). She further attributes this favorable status to the fact that Indians, in her observation, are descendents of the world, whose mysterious ancestry can be traced to Jews, Scandinavia, Ireland, Greenland, Asia, and the Polynesian Islands or Australia—a very transnational and diasporic view, in a word. It seems that to Hopkins Indians “compare favorably” with white races exactly because they have this flexible, multiracial, and global heritage. This argument illustrates Hopkins’ ideal of “a common humanity” or a common origin of human beings, a theme that she emphasizes in the concluding section: “the African race and its descendants...stand in close relationship to other races on the broad, indisputable plane of a common origin and a common brotherhood” (329).

It is important that Hopkins, in the end, ties her ideal of a common brotherhood back to current social problems, that is, white people’s discrimination against the colored races and their apprehension about possible racial uplift all around the world: “This [white people’s dread] is caused by the steady uplift of thousands of Blacks, Yellows and Browns” (329). As her title “The Dark Races of the Twentieth Century” indicates, Hopkins, by naming her last installment “The North American Indian,” tries to designate Native Americans as one of the “dark races” and thus to connect their fates with those of African Americans and other people of color with the ultimate purpose of achieving racial uplift together. Yet ironically, whereas Hopkins highlights the urgency of fighting against white discrimination that hinders the development of people of color at present, she also points out that “the Indian is steadily decreasing and there is every indication of his ultimate disappearance” (328). Indians in her description are paradoxically both allies

in fighting against racial discrimination in the present and a disappearing people who will soon be forgotten and who, I would further argue, will soon pass into mythological time and become newly crowned national ancestors. This paradoxical tension between the actual present and the mythological past, between possible allies and a vanishing people, becomes an undercurrent in this series and in Hopkins' internationalist, diasporic ideal concerning race and racial relations. This, in my opinion, is also the problem that makes Winona, a novel about an Indianized quadroon girl, so problematic. Even though Indian culture is imagined as an empowering force to African Americans in the novel, what it portrays is not the actual Indian at present; it is rather abstract Indianness as well as a vanishing people in mythological time.

Appropriating Indianness in Winona

Published in serial form in 1902 by the Colored American Magazine, Winona is Hopkins' third novel and her only one to primarily take place in the antebellum period. The story traces the journey of Winona and Judah, who happily grow up together in "a mixed community of Anglo-Saxons, Indians and Negroes" in the Seneca tribal land near Lake Erie, an area just a borderline away from Canada (287). Their father and caretaker is White Eagle, a white Englishman adopted by the Seneca tribe, who married a run-away mulatta slave in Canada, fathered Winona, and adopted Judah, the orphaned son of another escaped slave. Their life of peace and happiness falls apart in 1855, when Colonel Titus and Bill Thompson, previous owners of the two children's deceased mothers, surreptitiously murder White Eagle and, with the backing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, force the children into slavery and relocate them to Titus' plantation in

Missouri. Two years later, with the help of Ebenezer Maybee, an abolitionist as well as White Eagle's old friend from the Lake Erie time, and Warren Maxwell, a young British lawyer who came to the U.S. two years ago in search of the lost heir to the Carlingford estate and befriended the two children, Winona and Judah finally escape and join the forces of John Brown in Kansas, along with their two benefactors. It is around the time period when a series of violent encounters called "Bleeding Kansas" took place between antislavery Free-Statists and proslavery Southerners in the Kansas Territory, since both sides wanted to influence whether Kansas would join the U.S. as a free or slave state. That is exactly why abolitionist John Brown and his army of men came here. After the defeat of the proslavery camp led by Titus and Thompson, White Eagle's true identity is revealed by the dying Thompson to be that of the heir of the Carlingford estate; thus Winona, as his biological daughter, becomes the heir to his title, name, and fortune in England. In the end, she goes to England with Maxwell, who has already fallen in love with this young girl, marries him, and becomes a respectable great lady. Judah also leaves the U.S. with them and ends up entering into the service of the Queen. He proves himself to be such a brave and worthy man that he is eventually knighted and married into one of the best British families. The novel ends with Aunt Vinnie, an old black woman who knew everyone back then, concluding her story about Winona with a short sermon to a bunch of black and white listeners, a scene that supposedly takes place in the postbellum years: "De Lord has come to set us free, / O, send dem angels down."

Whereas Hopkins' importance is already recognized by the scholarly circle, Winona has not received as much academic attention as Hopkins' other novels such as Contending Forces and Hagar's Daughter. The reason may lie in the unreconciled

tensions in the novel, which have been pointed out by several scholars. Martha H. Patterson, for instance, claims that *Winona* is “an unresolved novel” with “contradictory rhetorical strategies” because of Hopkins’ ambivalent position as an African American woman writer who tried to create agency for her black readers and evoked sympathy from her white readers at the same time (445). Elizabeth Ammons names Winona as a novel of “unruliness,” characterized by hybridity, polyvocality, and resistance to formal unity, a novel whose theme of racial protest just cannot be reconciled with “its generic participation in the western,” a genre marked by its “imperial plot of valorizing white men” (215). This novel, in their description, is one of contradictions in terms of authorial intent, narrative strategies, and generic forms.

The contradictions of the novel, in my opinion, can also be observed from the fact that there is an obvious discrepancy in opinion among critics concerning the purposes and effects of the novel. Claudia Tate, one of the early important scholars who rediscovered Hopkins, regards this novel as “an exercise in nostalgia” that “outlines no program of social reform other than that offered by escape,” a novel that may even disclose “Hopkins’ own growing frustration with the effort to improve both the American racial climate and the quality of life for black American women” (“Foremother” 61). On the contrary, Hazel Carby, another significant early scholar in Hopkins scholarship, claims that Winona is “transparently a call for organized acts of resistance against contemporary persecution displaced to a fictional history” (154). Patterson similarly states that the novel demonstrates Hopkins’ “calling for more vehement public protests against the escalating mob violence endorsed by Jim Crow culture” (446). This tension between escape from the present and confrontation with the present as illustrated by the critics

testifies to the contradictory nature of the novel.

Here I want to highlight another point of contradictions and tensions in the novel, that is, African Americans' appropriation of Indianness and their use of the cultural practices of playing Indian or going native. On the one hand, Indianness in the novel symbolizes positive attributes such as freedom, courage, and nobleness. Yet on the other hand, Hopkins' delineation is problematic in that what she portrays is Indianness rather than Indians, and in that her description of "Indianness" is stereotypical and is deeply implicated in the logic of white-centered imperialism. As a result, Hopkins' blueprint of an ideal world of racial equality in both national and international spheres becomes problematic as well and results in unresolved tensions and contradictory effects.

Hopkins obviously tries to empower White Eagle, Winona, and Judah, the three characters who are all betrayed and wronged in some way in the novel, by associating them with the spirit of freedom and nobleness symbolized by Native American culture. They are "playing Indian" not only in the sense that they in the beginning of the novel don Indian apparel, live like Indians, and reside on ancient Indian land, but also in the sense that Native American culture helps to reenergize them during their respective moments of crisis. Henry Carlingford, wronged by his English countrymen and forced to leave England for the United States, is adopted by the Seneca tribe and renamed White Eagle, and regains a life of domestic bliss and spiritual regeneration in a mixed community of Indians, blacks, and whites. Since Judah and Winona are raised in this utopian community, where the ideal of racial equality seems to be attainable to a certain degree, they not only conceive of themselves as Indians, but they, more importantly, have little understanding of the racial barriers dictated by the mainstream society beyond their

utopian little circle. Even though this illusion is soon to be shattered after the two children are forced into slavery, this short span of happy life leaves an indelible impression on the entire story and creates a sharp contrast between their former life of freedom in the Indian community and their later life of bondage trapped in southern slavery: “The time [as slaves] seemed centuries long to the helpless captives, reared in the perfect freedom of Nature’s woods and streams” (320). The Indian life symbolizes unbounded freedom and bliss of Nature, whereas U.S. southern white culture equals bondage, injustice, and doing evil.

After they escaped from slavery, it is suggested how positive a force their past life in the utopian Indian world was. For instance, Winona, thinking back on her innocent childhood and her miserable life as a slave, tries to find comfort and peace in wild Nature, an image long intertwined with Native American culture: “In the primal life she had led there had entered not a thought of racial or social barriers. The woods calmed her, their grays and greens and interlacing density of stems, and their whisper of a secret that has lasted from the foundation of the world, replacing her fever with the calmness of hope” (376). It is her former life as Indian that enables her to engage in this ritual of regeneration and gives her the strength to carry on. Her connection with Native American culture can be further observed from the fact that Winona, described as “queen of the little island” (290), does look like an Indian princess dressed in traditional native clothing and moccasins when she first appears in the story. Even her name itself has strong Native American associations, since it is “a Sioux nickname for a first-born daughter.”¹² Winona’s abduction by Titus and Thompson is also strongly reminiscent of the story of

¹² Reference from wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winona> (retrieved on April 2008).

Pocahontas, who was in fact a popular icon during the time when the story was serialized; so are her love affair with the white Englishman Maxwell and her later trip to England. It is in this sense that I argue that Winona can be seen as an Africanized version of the Indian princess Pocahontas.

Just like Winona, Judah, even in his first appearance, is already linked to Indians: “The lad...might have been mistaken for an Indian at first glance, for his lithe brown body lacked nothing of the suppleness and grace which constant exercise in the open air alone imparts” (289). In a similar vein, the adult Judah is said to have “the power of the hypnotic eye...known and practiced among all the Indian tribes of the West” (324), who can tame the wildest horse “in the true style of reckless Indian riding on the Western plains” (326), and who “had learned his lesson of endurance in the schools of the Indian stoic” (327). Despite his sporadic violent outbursts, Judah is generally praised as an exceptional man with courage and intellect, epitomizing the noble nature of African Americans as a whole. In Hopkins’ description, “Slavery had not contaminated him [Judah]. His life with White Eagle had planted refinement inbred. In him was the true expression of the innate nature of the Negro when given an opportunity equal with the white man” (335). It is important that Judah’s “life with White Eagle,” his Indian life so to speak, is cited as the very reason that enables him to develop the noble nature of African Americans. It is also important that White Eagle, the man who affords Judah this life, is himself a white Indian, who is saved and regenerated through “Indian baptism” after being betrayed by his white countrymen. Just like in the case of Winona, Indian culture provides Judah the ability to fulfill his potential and to achieve regeneration. Their former Indian life hovers throughout the story like an undertow, symbolizing possibilities

and hope as well as a utopia where evils such as social and racial barriers exist no more.

Yet there are unresolved tensions and contradictions in this description. Not only is this utopia an unattainable dreamland, but Indian people here are also generalized as abstract Indianness, something for people to put on and perform that does not really have anything to do with actual Native Americans. This is exactly what Ammons has argued in “Afterword: Winona, Bakhtin, and Hopkins in the Twenty-first Century.” Here I want to further explicate her argument by giving some more textual examples. For one thing, in the very beginning of the story, set in 1854, one is told that Indians are currently moving West—a statement foreshadowing the gradual “disappearance” of Native Americans from the U.S. heartland and actually linking the story to the time of its publication, the early twentieth century when the Indian threat receded and the popularity of performing Indianness among non-native people was on the rise. Furthermore, the only Indian character in the novel is White Eagle’s housekeeper, old Nokomis, who barely speaks a word and simply vanishes from the narrative after the murder of White Eagle. The most Indian part of this novel is indeed not Indians per se but these three characters who perform Indianness.

Ammons further argues that “...Hopkins’s novel is not about Indians. It is about Hopkins’s fantasy of non-Western cultural affinity and solidarity among people of color on the North American continent” (217). That is, by donning Indianness, African American characters such as Judah and Winona not only cultivate and reenergize themselves through Indian transformation, but they are also metaphorically connected with other non-white peoples oppressed by the dominant white culture. Indianness is used as a means to actualize political desire, to refute racism, imperialism, and colonialism,

and to promote Hopkins' internationalist dream of a common brotherhood and a multiracial, intercultural, and anti-imperialist society.

If one takes into consideration the fact that Indianness at the turn of the century was used to symbolize Americanization as well as the "primary" claim to the continent, one can even argue that the alliance between African American and Native American cultures as illustrated in the story represents an authorial wish to revise the national myth of white founding fathers. By playing Indian, African Americans connect themselves to the mythical moment of national origin and can reimagine themselves as national forebears blessed with noble attributes and respectable status. All in all, by Indianizing her black characters, Hopkins not only promotes her ideal of a common brotherhood among nonwhite peoples, but she also tries to portray African Americans as noble, admirable, and respectable human beings and thus qualified U.S. nationals who, if not national ancestors themselves, are at least fully capable of carrying on their legacy of nobility, courage, and perseverance. During the time period when African Americans were put under immense social restraints, Hopkins, in composing Winona, tried to write black people back into U.S. history by connecting them with one of the most mythologized icons of the time: Indianness as a symbol of Americanization.

The problem with this Indianness is that narrations and imagery surrounding it were highly stereotypical and were deeply implicated in the logic of white supremacy and imperialism at the turn of the century. Even Hopkins' account sometimes cannot escape from this limitation. In Winona, despite the fact that Indianness generally represents nobleness and hope, it sometimes can also equal savageness. For instance, the atrocity that Judah endures as a slave is compared to Indians' "savage" doings: "...in performing

these duties [as slaves] he had witnessed scenes that rivaled in cruelty the ferocity of the savage tribes among whom he had passed his boyhood..." (320). Here "savage" Indians become a metaphor for white people's savage deeds in the slavery system, a comparison showing how popular scientific racist thought of the period cannot help but affect Hopkins. As a result, Indianness as a symbol can paradoxically be linked to both black possibilities and white barbarity in the novel. While black ferocity, similarly a product of popular scientific racism, is at least qualified by the author as the "natural outcome or growth of the 'system' as practiced upon the black race" (417-18), Indian savageness does not receive the same qualification and is rather presented as a natural fact. In sum, Hopkins' ode to Indian superiority and nobleness juxtaposes uncomfortably with her presumption of Indian inferiority and savageness, and this problematizes her critique of U.S. imperialism and white racism and creates contradictions in the narrative.

What further complicates the matter is the ending. Just like the "disappearing" Indians whose moving West is described in such a telltale, even nostalgic tone in the beginning of the story, Hopkins' two Indianized African American characters, Winona and Judah, will disappear from the U.S. and move to England to begin their new lives, where racial barriers are said to be nonexistent. It seems that the cultural practices of playing Indian can only be useful to a certain extent in this narrative. That is, with all its positive implications of hope, possibilities, and racial equality, Indianness still cannot succeed in securing a legitimate place for these two black characters in U.S. history.

This ending is exactly what made several critics deduce that Hopkins must have felt discouraged by the current situation in the U.S. and thus decided to send her black characters abroad. In my opinion, whereas it is true that Hopkins might have felt

disappointed in the neglect and even backlash against black rights at her present moment, instead of being an escapist who hides in the past, she actually engages in an active political critique of the present. Take Judah's case for example. In the end of the story: "After the news of John Brown's death had aroused the sympathies of all christendom for the slaves, he [Judah] gave up all thoughts of returning to the land of his birth..." (435). While this passage illustrates Judah's disappointment in his birth country because of Brown's death, the latter's execution is actually assumed to partly contribute to the eruption of the Civil War by "arous[ing] the sympathies of all christendom for the slaves," the very war that will free the slaves and ideally should have achieved the vision of racial equality in the U.S. By ending the story with the brief mention of John Brown and the Civil War as well as Aunt Vinnie's hopeful sermon, Hopkins is in fact critiquing her contemporaries' neglect of the real legacy of the Civil War: the abolition of slavery and the espousal of black's inalienable rights. The fact that Judah and Winona can achieve so much in Britain testifies to Hopkins' belief in black peoples' innate abilities, the potential of which can be fully developed if only circumstances permit. In this sense, I would argue that Hopkins, despite her discontent with how things stood at the moment, still affirms black people's chances to actively make a difference, to uplift themselves, and to embrace a better future. In other words, the reason for Hopkins to send her black characters abroad is more about giving them these chances to fulfill their potential in circumstances different from that of the postbellum U.S. than about ultimately despairing of ever being able to achieve racial equality in the United States. It is the past forty years, the postbellum period, which her despair is directed at; she herself, just like Aunt Vinnie, still looks forward to the future. And images of Indianness and the idea of a common

brotherhood among colored races serve as useful tools for Hopkins to illustrate this blueprint and to create agency for her African American characters—even though sometimes Indianness and blackness can be stereotypically linked to racist, imperialist imageries of barbarity and inferiority.

Winona, the Africanized Pocahontas: Who is She Exactly?

In the last section, I want to examine Winona the character in terms of African Americans' appropriation of “playing Indian” and the Pocahontas myth to conclude my argument on the connections between Indianness and African American identity. Just like her namesake, Winona is a character full of ambiguities and controversies. Critics are especially divided about whether this particular heroine has agency or not. Ammons launches the question “Who is Winona?” explicitly at the end of her article, and goes on to say that Winona is a problematic character, “Present throughout the narrative yet still, somehow, almost invisible” (217). Tate, in Domestic Allegories of Political Desire, claims that “Hopkins seems to have silenced the discourse of female agency” in her serial magazine novels (208). While Tate admits that Winona does display immense courage, she emphasizes that this courage is only directed toward the man she loves, and argues that the heroine herself does not perform the pedagogical or disciplinary function that characterizes other black domestic heroines who engage in racial protest and political critiques. On the other hand, refuting Tate's and Kevin Gaines' view that Hopkins marginalizes her female protagonists in later magazine fictions, Patterson contends that Hopkins “grants her female protagonists a considerably more important role than has been considered” and that Hopkins “claims for her heroine [Winona] and herself an

agency sanctioned by a past and present history imbued with divine significance” (447). All in all, the question of Winona’s agency, just like that of Hopkins’ authorial intention in composing the ending, leads to diverse answers and becomes one of the biggest mysteries in the novel.

The question of agency also happens to be a notable point in discussions of Pocahontas. Painted as the white man’s Indian by generations of white authors, Pocahontas represents submission to a “superior” western knowledge system and imperial power as well as an affirmation of white people’s God-ordained right to take up the Americas. The cultural Pocahontas, as a product of white men’s imagination and desire, seems unlikely to have agency, whereas the historical Pocahontas, leaving no text of her own, remains a complete mystery. As a result, it becomes difficult to reconstruct this figure as an affirmative icon for Native American communities. This is why Faery, one of the scholars who endeavors to assert agency for Pocahontas, states that “to retrieve the polyvocal possibilities of her story requires both resistant reading and imaginative reconstruction” (14).

I would argue that this difficult task is what Hopkins’ Winona partly fulfills, no matter how ambiguous the result turns out to be. As a non-white woman who falls in love with the Englishman Maxwell, who has strong connections with Indian culture, and who is even dotingly nicknamed by the “rugged Puritan” John Brown as the “pretty squaw” (375), Winona is strongly reminiscent of Pocahontas. If one follows Dearborn’s contention that some female slaves, in terms of their ambiguous status as both the object of love/desire and the object of hate/fear for white men, can be called “Pocahontas’ daughters,” Winona can surely be categorized as one of Pocahontas’ daughters or even an

Africanized version of Pocahontas. Yet on the other hand, she, in my opinion, also represents the “resistant reading and imaginative reconstruction” of Pocahontas. It is true that Winona, just like Pocahontas, is caught within the dilemma of being simultaneously a stereotypical exotic other (such as the “pretty squaw” or a marketable beautiful female slave) and a respectable model woman who can take charge of educating present and future national subjects through maternal sentimental discipline. But what essentially differentiates Winona from Pocahontas, I would argue, is the fact that Winona, albeit falling in love with a white man and participating in a military campaign led by another white man, is not collaborating with the enemy; rather she is also fighting for the cause of her own race, and thus she has more self-determination and agency that enable her to engage in political critiques. For instance, she is not only a “pretty squaw” pampered by John Brown, but she also actively participates in fighting and scheming in his camp and even plays a key role in rescuing the imprisoned Maxwell.

Even more importantly, not only can Winona fight like Pocahontas, the popular icon standing for the national foremother at the turn of the century, but at a certain point she is even reminiscent of the exemplary white heroine propagated by nineteenth-century domestic novels; that is, someone who is morally superior enough to discipline others and to serve as the present or future national mother. In this way, by representing Winona’s courage and virtue as deeply intertwined with her white heritage and Indian background, Hopkins tries to avoid recirculating the stereotype of a licentious woman of color, presents blacks in a positive light, and enables her mixed-race heroine to embody ideal womanhood. Yet the result turns out to be rather problematic: being linked with the virtuous white heroine, Winona is ambiguously granted more political agency and yet is

also forced to speak for the dominant white culture at the same time.

One event that especially exemplifies Winona's eligibility to be a national mother as well as the ambiguity about this eligibility is her stopping Judah from killing the scoundrel Bill Thomson. Thomson, in Judah's words, is the hater of his race, who unforgivably takes away black men's manhood, but Winona holds Judah back on the ground that enough bloodshed has already been shed. It is interesting how Hopkins juxtaposes and interprets Judah's and Winona's reactions in terms of gender and race. It is Winona's natural maternal instinct that propels her to make this decision: "He [Thompson] was her enemy, but the mother instinct that dwells in all good women, which can look on death, gave her calmness and strength to do, and the heart to forgive" (422; my emphasis). By illustrating Winona in this way, Hopkins aligns her with "all good women," presumably virtuous white domestic heroines whose sentimental power contributes to the successful disciplining of past, present, and future national subjects as well as the prosperity of the nation. By showing her motherly sympathy, Winona becomes universalized and, in other words, de-racialized and even whitened; she proves herself to be capable of becoming the model woman that the nation needs.

On the other hand, Judah, viewed through Winona's disciplinary gaze, becomes the object of discipline, someone not mature enough and in need of Winona's motherly guidance. It is Winona, after all, who "sternly catch[es] the ferocious light that still glimmered in his [Judah's] eyes as his lifted his gun to the hollow of his arm" (422). She obviously plays the role of the "rightful" discipliner here, whereas Judah plays the role of the "immature," racialized, disciplined subject. It turns out that Winona's decision is right since Thompson, on the verge of death, finally discloses the true identity of White Eagle

and thus enables Winona to gain her fortune and title back, and in a way guarantees their future life of happiness. It seems that only by following Winona's sentimental discipline can the happy ending be achieved.

I will further argue that this event illustrates a different kind of manifest domesticity in contrast to the general pattern, in which the white woman disciplines the racialized other and thus helps fulfill the imperialist goal of manifest destiny. What Winona resorts to is a method very common in domestic narratives, that is, domestic women's sentimental compassion used as a "safe," "non-threatening" way for them to take part in social critiques and in the molding of national ideologies. It is true that here Winona stands for the white female discipliner and Judah for the racialized disciplined, and so this incident at first sight seems to fit right in with the general white-centered imperialist pattern of manifest domesticity. But it is also true that this novel, after all, offers a sharp critique of white U.S. racism both in the antebellum and postbellum periods. While it is ironic that Britain, another important imperialist power, should be portrayed as a utopian paradise of racial harmony and equality, praising British abolitionism and, to a lesser degree, U.S. northern abolitionism does make criticizing U.S. white racism less controversial, especially in the eyes of the white readers of the Colored American Magazine.¹³ In this way, Hopkins manages to critique U.S. racism without condemning the white culture altogether—a point fully illustrated by Winona's disciplining Judah on behalf of white domestic ideologies and by their later move from the U.S. to Britain.

Hopkins' version of manifest domesticity thus turns out to be not only about managing racialized others, but also about condemning U.S. racism. One good example

¹³ Quoting Walter Wallace, Patterson states that "one-third" of the readership of the Colored American Magazine was white (445).

is the narrator's comment on Judah's hatred for Thompson right before the disciplinary lesson between Winona and Judah takes place: "Judged by the ordinary eye Judah's nature was horrible, but it was the natural outcome or growth of the 'system' as practiced upon the black race" (417-18). Even though Winona later will criticize and try to discipline Judah's "violent" behavior, Hopkins manages to somehow tone it down by adding the narrator's comment above, claiming that Judah's "violence" is actually the product of the racist slavery system. In this sense, Winona's disciplinary gaze, albeit partaking in white ideological constructions of "black violence," is more about affirming black people's ability to learn and improve (Judah does follow Winona's instruction not to kill Thompson) than about condemning Judah as an innately inferior and savage racialized other. Put in this light, the Africanized Pocahontas Winona is anything but a traitor to her race.

All in all, if one says that the image of Pocahontas is torn between differences and sameness, between "one of them" and "one of us," Winona faces a similar yet different dilemma. Even though she falls in love with a white man, she does not end up becoming a traitor. Unlike in the case of Pocahontas, to Winona there does not exist a choice between "one of them" and "one of us"; from her standpoint "one of them" is ambiguously also "one of us." She can align herself with abolitionist white culture and even censors "violent" black traits while still remaining faithful to her people and critical of U.S. white racism. And that is Hopkins' reconstruction of the Pocahontas myth—to make Winona into a more active and dynamic player in historical and literary arenas than Pocahontas ever was. In a similar vein, by using Indianness to empower and regenerate her black characters, Hopkins tries to prove that African Americans, under the right

circumstances and with the help of proper resources, can succeed and prosper just as white people do. It is true that Hopkins' internationalist goal of a common brotherhood between Indians and blacks may sound too idealistic and sometimes even mimics the white imperialist model since her focus is obviously on Indianness rather than real-life Indians. Yet this novel is surely Hopkins' attempt to point a way out of the present dismal situation for turn-of-the-century blacks plagued by U.S. racist and imperialist ideologies.

Afterword

In this dissertation, I trace four women writers' different ways of participating in the process of national narration and myth-making, that is, of rewriting, endorsing, challenging, and/or subverting the seemingly coherent official narrative of the nation by creating their own specific versions of micro-histories and counter-narratives. I examine several collective cultural constructions and practices during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, such as white domestic womanhood, manifest destiny, myths about the U.S. West and westward expansion, Spanishness as blackness (as in the Black Legend), Spanishness as whiteness (as imagined by some Mexican Americans), the Civil War built upon the East-West imagination as opposed to the dominant North-South framework, the Spanish Fantasy Heritage, the California Fable, and the practices of playing Indian and going native. While these constructions and practices may collaborate or contradict with one another, they all represent particular ways of interpreting history. What I want to address are the collaborations and contradictions among these different ways of interpretation, and I accomplish this goal by looking at how the four women writers appropriate these constructions and practices to perform their own myth-making and wish-fulfillment from different subject positions and at different historical moments.

Even though the four women writers come from varied racial, ethnic, class, and regional backgrounds and compose disparate forms of narrative, they share one thing in common; that is, they all make their political statements by negotiating with the dominant national and cultural ideologies through their narratives. I would argue that because they

and their protagonists are all marginal in different ways in relation to the dominant culture, the authors, as a result, try to work out a solution for the dilemmas through narratives. It is interesting that they all choose to play with certain racialized roles, symbols, images, myths, and discourses in the texts, and reappropriate them to carry out their own agendas. While Alcott writes antislavery narratives to propagate the abolitionist ideal, she also uses racialized symbols of blackness and Spanishness to stereotypically portray her mixed-blood male characters as exotic yet dangerous others. Only by doing so can she fulfill another important mission in her texts; that is, to delineate white middle-class heroines as capable discipliners and leaders in both domestic and national spheres who know how to exercise sentimental disciplinary power to “tame” the racialized men. Her sensational thrillers and the Little Women series also conform to this pattern, albeit with different twists, in which hispanized racialized characters are more or less subdued in the end. All in all, her political vision of a sentimentalized, feminized nation led by “little women” is refracted through racialized images of Spanishness and blackness.

Whereas Alcott uses the symbol of Spanishness to exotically “blacken” her white-looking mixed-race characters, Spanishness in Ruiz de Burton’s case becomes coded as whiteness, the very evidence proving elite Mexican Californians’ legitimate claim to U.S. citizenship and all the inalienable rights belonging to qualified citizens. That is, in her description, possessing “pure” Spanish blood not only establishes Mexicans’ white identity but also confirms their rightful place in the white U.S. nation.

In contrast, in Atherton’s works Spanishness serves as a means to distinguish between the despicable Mexican present and the idealized Spanish past for the

contemporary California generation like the author herself. By engaging in narratives of nostalgia and amnesia, Atherton manages to efface California's "messy" transnational and interracial/interethnic aspects (such as the dispossessed Mexicans at present) and subsume California's glorious Spanish past to remake California into an unparalleled U.S. national region. And by doing so, she creates an "integrated" California identity for her ambitious white California heroines who yearn to conquer the world just as U.S. men did around the turn of the century. In sum, while Spanishness, in Ruiz de Burton's delineation, is aligned with elite Mexicans and is used to whiten and empower them, Spanishness, in Atherton's case, albeit extolled as a beautiful past set against the ugly Mexican present, is still doomed to disappear and become part of the proud contemporary U.S. California.

In my last chapter, I go back to the subject of slavery, but, in contrast to the first chapter, I now approach this question from a black woman's point of view at the turn of the century. Moreover, this time the racialized symbol appropriated by the author Hopkins is that of Indianness. By examining the cultural practices of "playing Indians" and "going native" as well as the Pocahontas myth popular around that time period, I argue that Hopkins uses Indianness, a racialized symbol long associated with hope, freedom, and new possibilities, to empower her black characters and thus make her political statement that African Americans, if put in the right circumstances and equipped with adequate resources, can succeed and prosper just as whites do. Even though Hopkins, following white racist conventions, portrays stereotyped Indianness rather than real-life Indians, her work obviously illustrates the authorial wish to point a way out of the present dismal condition for African Americans plagued by U.S. racist ideologies.

To sum up, if narration is a symbolic act of re/claiming the right to explicate

histories, these four writers' narratives, by playing with different kinds of racialized symbols and discourses, surely engage in this task. Together they present part of the process of national narration and myth-making and point out the ambiguities, incongruence, and complexities within this process.

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