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THE SPACES OF HISTORY: FRANCIS PARKMAN'S LITERARY LANDSCAPES AND THE FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN COSMOS

by

FLORIAN SCHWIEGER

Under the Direction of Dr. Audrey Goodman and Dr. Robert Sattelmeyer

ABSTRACT

It is the aim of this dissertation to discuss the creation of historiographic space in the works of Francis Parkman. More specifically, this dissertation intends to analyze Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* and *Montcalm and Wolfe* as literary texts that examine geographies of cultural interaction and transnational empire building. Parkman's historical narratives, this dissertation suggests, not only describe historically significant sites, such as the Oregon Trail and the Northern Frontier, but further create literary heterotopias. These textual counter geographies, as for instance his conceptualizations of the trading posts of the far West and the wilderness fortifications of the far North, allow Parkman to effectively interrogate American history. By investigating the fruitful juncture between history, geography, and literature this project aims to establish the importance of historical geographies for Francis Parkman's methodology and define its function for the creation of a national consciousness. In addition to Parkman's use of space, this dissertation further analyzes the historian's depiction of historical characters and his subsequent attempts to define American identity. Thereby, my analysis specifically highlights the relationship between Parkman's literary characters and their environment. In an attempt to

trace the impact Parkman's historical narratives exert on postmodern authors of American literature, the concluding chapters interrogate the re-negotiation of Parkman's historiographic spaces in Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* and William T. Vollmann's *Fathers and Crows*.

INDEX WORDS: Francis Parkman, Oregon Trail, Montcalm and Wolfe, Nineteenth-Century Literature, Literary Criticism, Heterotopias, Historiographic Space, American History, Geography, Space, French and Indian War, Border Fiction, Native American Literature, Thomas King, William T. Vollmann.

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FLORIAN SCHWIEGER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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by

FLORIAN SCHWIEGER

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Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

July 2011

DEDICATION

für Heather und Lyric.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 New and Other Worlds: American Space

“America is therefore the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself.”

Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel *The Philosophy of History*

When Rodrigo de Triana aboard the *Pinta* sighted the coastline of the Bahamas around 2 am on the morning of October 12 1492 the medieval world ceased to exist. Although neither the sailor Triana, nor his captain Admiral Christopher Columbus, could possibly foresee the whirlwind of radical change this event would bring on both the Old World and their inhabitants and the New World they were about to discover, Columbus had an inclination that his accidental discovery of America was important. In a journal entry from November 12th Columbus describes the immense potential of his recent discovery for Spanish colonialism:

Thus your highness should resolve to make them Christians, for I believe that, the work was begun, in a little time a multitude of nations would be converted to our faith, with the acquisition of great lordships, peoples, and riches for Spain. Without doubt, there is in these lands a vast quantity of gold, and the Indians I have on board do not speak without reason when they say that in these lands there are places where they dig out gold, and wear it on their necks, ears, arms, and legs, the rings being very large.
(73)

Although Columbus had failed to achieve his initial goal, the discovery of a seaway to the Orient, he had succeeded in a far greater task, namely discovering a New World. A world, whose mythical inhabitants and tales of natural wonders would fascinate the European imagination for centuries to come while triggering an unparalleled set of political, economic, and geographical changes. This New World would soon become the physical and imaginary counter-space to a European world increasingly restricted by intensified urbanization and reckless land use. For its European explorers and their royal masters, the American continent promised an unprecedented possibility of spatial liberation. For the indigenous population of the Americas, on the contrary,

the arrival of Columbus' and Cortez' ships marked the beginning of a political, cultural and spatial conquest that would leave their societies at the brink of extinction.

Before the discovery of the western hemisphere, the world, for the European mind, was a fairly stable geographical space. It was defined by biblical cartography and organized around Jerusalem, which was commonly believed to mark the center of God's planet. The common people had little knowledge of distances and abstract notions of space but defined geographical location in terms of relationship, community, and experience. As a result, Robert Sack explains, "the Old World viewed territoriality primarily as socially defined" (*Human Territoriality* 131). Hundreds of years of feudal existence had established a powerful bond between the rural population and the land they would live and die on. This deep-rooted connection to their fields and villages was not merely a product of an organically grown sense of belonging, but also the result of social and geographical immobility and medieval power structures. Bound by divine law and royal order to their liege lords, medieval serfs had little choice but to develop a deep connection to the land they could neither escape nor own.

The discovery of America, however, radically changed European notions of space as it questioned the existing global geography and presented a seemingly untouched and infinite space that was unbound by the feudal laws that had inflicted a repressive and restrictive model of space upon the rural population.¹ America represented a terra incognita that attracted every form of European spatial desires while presenting Europeans with a degree of abstract space they were wholly unfamiliar with. Europeans had never encountered a space so untamed and, from their

¹ It is obvious but noteworthy, that the "discovery" of America was not the only event that helped redefine European notions of space during the late fifteenth and sixteenth century. Other contributing factors, such as the rediscovery of the Ptolemaic worldview, the beginning transformation of the social and economic order, advancements in technology, and new thoughts in philosophy and government, helped to deconstruct the medieval concept of space.

perspective, empty as the Americas. The new continent thus must be regarded as a condensed metaphor for the radical changes in the conceptualization of space that occur during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. At the same time, the new world posited an unprecedented geographical challenge. A simple look at the incomplete and blank maps that show a vast void beyond the sparsely explored coastal regions reveals the epistemological crisis that resulted from the exploration of the western hemisphere.



Figure 1.1: Martin Waldseemüller's map of America (1507) is believed to be the first work of cartography to use the term "America" to refer to the New World. John R. Hébert labeled described the document as "the map that named America" ("The Map") highlighting the decisive role cartography played in the process of familiarizing Europeans with the recently discovered continent and transforming it from a mysterious landmass known as simply "the New World" into the concrete geography of "America."

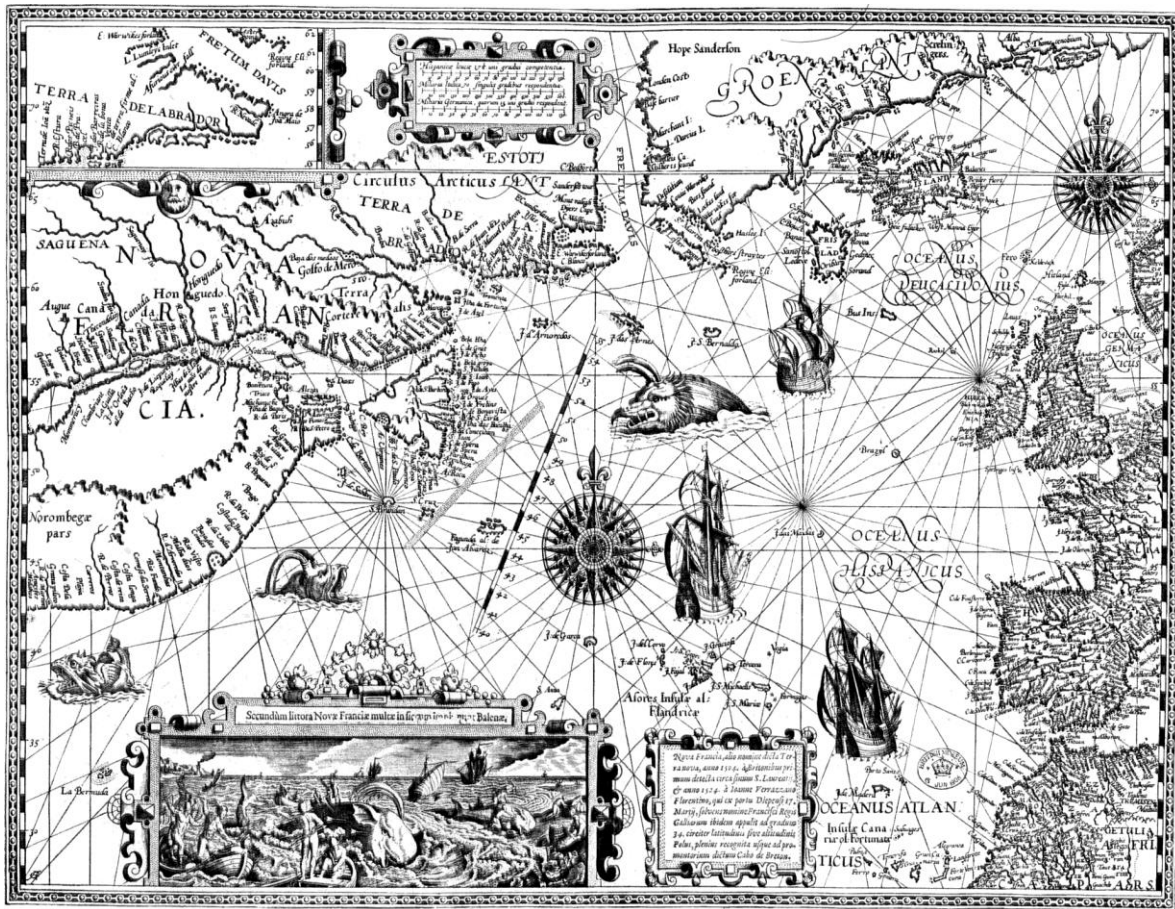


Figure 1.2: Benjamin Wright's map of New France (1608) nicely mirrors the inclusion mythological elements into maps of America. In this example, the coast of Nova Scotia is guarded by maritime monsters that are meant to represent both the dangerous waters and the uncertain fate that would await European explorers on the other side of the Atlantic.

European concepts of space were simply underequipped to describe the vast American continent and its wondrous geography. Yet sooner or later the empty spots on the maps of the New World needed to be filled; to do so European explorers and geographers required a theory of space that would enable their emperors to develop a firm grip on the continent. What the triangular trading system, the Encomienda, and the slave trade achieved politically and economically, the notion of “blank space” accomplished in geographic terms. Within two years after Columbus’ maiden voyage to the New World, the first documents that attempt to order spatial relations in the New World, the Papal Bulls of 1493 and the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 were signed. These documents regulated the territorial claims in the Atlantic Ocean, establishing a distinct sphere of influence for the Portuguese and Spanish crowns in the newly discovered territories, thereby subjugating the “blank space” of the new continent to the system of established spatial control that governed the process of colonization. These treatises are compelling historical witnesses to the imperial implicitness with which the Spanish conquistadors went to work in the New World and attest to the importance of completing the military conquest of America on an intellectual level: for the conquest of the New World could only be completed successfully if this foreign space and the epistemological crisis it had caused could be controlled with the tools of European cartography.

The method of colonization the European invaders employed differed significantly from South to North America; and so did the spatial narratives they wrote. The Spanish conquistadors who followed in the footsteps of Cortez on the Yucatan peninsula and Pizzaro in the Andean highlands encountered highly developed civilizations such as the Mayans, Aztecs, and Incas that had erected impressive monuments, temples, and government complexes. These sophisticated city structures with their ceremonial and bureaucratic centers, public gathering spaces, and

infrastructural support systems reminded the conquistadors of the use of space in their respective home countries. The North American Indians and their disregard for individual landownership, on the other hand, posited a spatial enigma for the European settlers. The North American tribes of the Chesapeake or the Hudson Bay lacked centralized notions of imperial land use and therefore presented the European arrivers with little recognition value. As a result, as Robert Sack aptly notes, Native American “customs and land uses seemed so alien and their political process so inconspicuous that many Europeans concluded that Indians were sub-human and could and ought to be removed from the land” (133). Immediately, the notion of empty space that the Europeans superimposed on the North American continent became the foundation for spatial myths. Early American narratives that evoke America as a “virgin land” and detected a “manifest destiny” in its colonization should thus be understood as the product of the baffling encounter of European settlers with an understanding and use of space that defied their geographical imagination. In response to the epistemological challenge of the American space, thinkers turned, for example, to the ideal space of nature, a rendition of natural space as Edenic fantasy that liberates the individual from the restrictions of feudal society while returning the self to a place of heightened spirituality and personal fulfillment. This specifically romantic variation of “empty space,” which will be discussed in greater detail in my analysis of Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* and *Montcalm and Wolfe*, fittingly exemplifies how the discovery and settlement of the Americas accelerated the development of abstract notions of space that unite physical concepts of space (void space, absolute space) and ideal notions of space (subjective, intuitive, transcendental space).

The discovery of America undoubtedly shattered the European mind unlike few other events in history (such as the Reformation and the deconstruction of the heliocentric worldview).

Columbus' journey, paired with the Copernican revolution of the early sixteenth century, not only debunked the geocentric worldview but also decentralized the geography of the planet. The state of epistemological uncertainty that followed the Copernican revelations and their subsequent validation by Galileo can hardly be imagined by us, but it seems certain that, for many, human destiny and divine providence had never been less certain. As if the demotion of the earth to the role of a supporting actor in the great drama of heavenly bodies was not traumatic enough for the European mind, the discovery of America unmercifully dislocated the geographic center of the Christian world. Before the discovery of America, Jerusalem was unanimously perceived as the center of the world from which God's grace and with it all human activity radiated into the far corners of the planet. The Copernican Revolution in conjunction with the discovery of America eroded that perception beyond repair.

As much as the discovery of the New World in the late fifteenth century sparked a process of radical astronomical and geographical reordering that would preoccupy European scholars for centuries, it also produced an increasing desire to depict the newfound geographic realities and made spatial exploration the main manifestation of empire. Later colonialism and imperialism continued this trend. Accordingly, printers and book binders in the sixteenth and seventeenth century responded to the growing appetite for stories from the wondrous continent across the Atlantic. Travel accounts such as Olfert Dapper's *Die Unbekante Neue Welt oder Beschreibung des Welt-teils Amerika, und des Sud-Landes* (1673) delighted their readership with ravaging stories and imaginative illustrations. But not only adventurous travel accounts introduced Europeans to the far side of the world. Calendars, encyclopedias, and especially geographical works all contributed in their own way to the vision of America that slowly took shape in the European imagination. Among this colorful pastiche of works some texts, like Abraham

Ortelius' *Theatrum oder Schawplatz des Erdbodems: warin die Landttafell der gantzen Weldt, mit sambt aine der selben kurtze Erklarung zu sehen ist* (1572), labor to expand the geographical imagination of Old World citizens, while others, such as Peter Freytag's *Grosse Kalender-Practica/ Auf den von Americanischen Schiffahrten/ Sitten/ Trachten/ Götzendienst/ Grausamkeiten und andern seltzamen Wunder-Begebenheiten handlenden Kalender gerichtet* (1678), familiarize the intrigued reader with the cultures and customs of the oversee colonies. Some volumes even engage in selective cultural archeology as they anthologize exotic American tales and rarities, as for example Eberhard Werner Happel's *Thesaurus Exoticorum. Oder eine mit Außländischen Raritäten und Geschichten Wohlversehene Schatz-Kammer* (1688).



Figure 1.3: Mappa Mundi by Gervase Ebstorf. This world map of the high Middle Ages exemplifies the Judeo-Christian world view and places Jerusalem at the geographical center of the earth. Believed to be created in the thirteenth century in a monastery in near Lüneburg, Germany, the original map was destroyed in the turmoil of World War II.



Figure 1.4: Illustration from Olfert Dapper's *Die Unbekante Neue Welt oder Beschreibung des Welt-teils Amerika, und des Sud-Landes* (1673). Dapper's resourceful account of America is a colorful example of the literary invention of the New World. The author's authoritative account assures the reader that Native Americans in Virginia adorn their heads with "snake-tails of rattlesnakes, [...] bird-wings [...] or the severed hand of a slain enemy" (Dapper 158). For clothing, "they wear wolf and bearskin; sticking their heads through the animal's neck, so that the ears of these creatures come to rest on the shoulders, while the muzzles, including the fangs, dangle from their chests. Many also wear the head of a wolf on a chain around their neck for jewelry" (Dapper 155).

Overall, it is safe to say that literary production, in the Old World, in the two hundred years after Columbus' journey to the New World, is characterized by a resourceful process of intellectual and cartographical occupation from afar. European writers and publishers spearheaded the literary exploration of America in an attempt to solidify the political and economic subjugation of the colonies with a narrative of spatial domination. In this process cartography became an especially productive tool as it not only reflected the ongoing appropriation of the transatlantic world by European empires, but also announced future claims for spatial expansion. While the literary and cartographic response to Columbus aimed at familiarizing its readership with the New World, maps and travel reports were also designed to validate European control, both politically and intellectually, over the terra incognita. Despite the immediate attention intellectuals paid to the Americas, it would take a good three hundred years before another explorer would complete the process with the recently sharpened tools of science.

At 6:30 pm on June 5th 1799, the Pizarro, a Spanish corvette, passed the familiar coal light in the Tower of Hercules that for centuries had guided sailors safely to the port of La Coruna. This time, however, the men on board the Pizarro did not look joyfully towards the reassuring flame for safe guidance home. Instead, their eyes were fixed at the ancient light house in the knowledge that this dim light would be the last image of their European homeland they would see for a very long time. Among the men who lined the rails on this foggy June night was the young German scientist and mining expert Alexander von Humboldt and his friend and colleague Aime-Jacques-Alexandre Bonpland, a twenty-five year old French Botanist. Humboldt had attempted to secure funding for his journey to the New World for years and finally succeeded in obtaining such support from the Spanish court of Charles IV. Humboldt had long dreamed of a scientific exploration of the American continent and as the Pizarro finally set sail after several delays,

including the threat of British attacks, he must have been elated to finally embark on the journey. But even Humboldt felt the melancholy of the moment, the uncertainty of the journey's outcome, and the challenge a close encounter with the mysterious continent beyond the horizon presented for each individual involved: In his account of the Pizarro's departure, Humboldt writes: "Separated from the objects of our dearest affections, and entering into a new life, we are forced to fall back on ourselves, and we feel more isolated than we have ever felt before" (Humboldt 19).

Little did Humboldt, or his men, know that it would indeed be more than five years before they would return to the French port of Bordeaux. But when he returned, his exploration was immediately recognized as one of the most daring and significant scientific accomplishments of recent history. In fact, it was Humboldt's scientific exploration of the Americas that ignited a humanist and scientific passion for the many still unexplained mysteries of the transatlantic world.

On board the Santa Maria, Pinta, and Nina were a ragtag crew of eighty-seven men, many of them former soldiers, convicts, and swineherds. Humboldt's ship was loaded with the latest scientific instruments available: sextants, telescopes, hygrometers, barometers, electrometers. All in all over fifty different tools that would aid him in the meticulous research he had planned. The difference between the two explorers could not have been any more pronounced. Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro, and the other protagonists of the American conquista claimed the continent for the Spanish crown with the bloody sword of colonial subjugation. Humboldt's journey, in contrast, was driven by the desire to understand the alien continent and unlock its secrets for the sake of all mankind. In the introduction to his *Personal Narrative* Humboldt explains the motivation for his exploration: "Two main aims guided my travels, published as the *Relation*

Historique. I wanted to make known the countries I visited, and to collect those facts that helped to elucidate the new science vaguely named Natural History of the World, Theory of the Earth, or Physical Geography” (5).

The statement validates the assertion that Humboldt’s unprecedented explorations of the South American interior continued the century-long struggle of European explorers and intellectuals to make sense of a world that had remained, despite colonial subjugation, so different and desirable to the Europeans. However, it also mirrors the fact that this second discovery of America marks a decisive turn in the geographical imagining of the Americas. Indeed, Humboldt’s entire journey must be understood as a grand geographic excursion that posits geography, the study of the earth *and* its people, as the key to Humboldt’s proposed redefinition of science as an interdisciplinary, interconnect study of the planet.

The observations and sketches Humboldt published after his return to the Old World presented the Americas as an even greater spatial enigma than previously envisioned. Humboldt understood that America was much more than a formerly blank slate on a map, inhabited by primitive societies and wondrous creatures that had to be explained in relation to European standards. He immediately realized that the Americas inherently negated, even after hundreds of years of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English colonization, European notions of space and thereby opened up the possibility of perceiving what Laura Dassow Walls termed “the interconnections of all phenomena” (13). By doing so, Humboldt perceived the New World as a metaphor for the cosmos, a space that if studied rather than subdued could reveal much valuable insights about the human production of space as well as our metaphysical relation to it. The new appreciation of American space Humboldt advocated urged his readers to understand nature as a scientific object that could produce factual truths and thereby not only encouraged an immersive

study of the natural geography but also counter the ideology of conquest that had dominated European spatial discourse.

Unlike the Columbian discovery of America in the late fifteenth century, Humboldt's journey to the Americas also benefited the population of the New World. Humboldt's humanist principles permeate his expedition logs and observations, resulting in a surprisingly respectful portrayal of any indigenous culture he encounters. For him, the inhabitants of the Amazon basin and the Andean highlands are not uncivilized savages, but simply different people with their unique cultures and practices. Humboldt's scientific discovery of the Americas thus also played a decisive role in the conceptualization of American culture in Europe and the Americas themselves. Humboldt taught Europeans and Americans alike, as Laura Dassow Walls pointedly observes, to see America "on its own terms, not as an artifact of Europe's making or an appendage to its power" (16). Humboldt "literally put America on the global map, positioning its history, nations, and resources in relation to the rest of the world, and drawing the detailed and extensive maps by which America could find, and know, themselves" (Walls 17). Probably nothing expresses Humboldt's significance for the American continent better than the following excerpt from a poem that Oliver Wendell Holmes delivered at the celebration of Humboldt's one hundredth birthday on September 14 1864 in memory of the great scientist and explorer:

For God's new truth he claimed the kingly role
That priestly shoulders counted all their own,
Unrolled the gospel of the storied globe
And led young science to her empty throne.



Figure 1.5: Friedrich Georg Weitsch's painting *Alexander von Humboldt und Aime Bonpland am Fuß des Vulkans Chimborazo* (1810) shows Humboldt during his South America expedition interacting with the indigenous population. Humboldt's expeditions inaugurated the age of humanist explorations of the New World that focused on scientific study rather than military conquest and economic exploitation.

1.2 Change of Space

The discovery of America in the fifteenth century and its scientific rediscovery in the eighteenth and nineteenth century strikingly show the inherent bond between constant changes in spatial knowledge and the conceptualization and understanding of space. Every new discovery, may it have been a continent or a species of plants, challenged the epistemological status quo of the Early Modern European mind. Map makers and scientists were continuously forced to rethink the accepted contours of the known world and start over the Sisyphean task of depicting a world in flux. But the period of colonial expansion is just one example of the unstable ground on which our perception of space is built. In the last century, for example, smaller, nonetheless equally radical, caesuras have impacted our understanding of space. The reorganization of political geographies triggered by events such as the two World Wars, the process of decolonization, and the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union forced us to question the durability of spatial realities. In addition to political and social changes, environmental threats to our living spaces such as flooding, global warming, radical deforestation, tsunamis, and hurricanes continue to threaten the very existence of entire geographical regions. Radical transformations of our immediate political and physical geography naturally remind us of the inextricable link between human existence and space. Contemporary thinkers, however, have become increasingly aware of the interrelation of time, being, and space also because the human experience of postmodern reality is marked by the rapid disappearance of space. In contrast to the period of colonial expansion, in which the colonizing countries experienced a continual expansion of their spatial horizon (to the detriment of the colonized), contemporary western countries are now experiencing the loss of space. Population growth and

urbanization increasingly mark the postmodern existence as a spatial retreat into imagined or hyper spaces.

It is of course not true that space actually disappears, but we perceive it as such because the illusion of temporal simultaneity that had been achieved at the end of the nineteenth century, now, in the twenty-first century, has been complemented with the simultaneity of space. In fact, the postmodern individual experiences space either as an artificial simulation or as absence. Technologies such as computers, webcams, and cell phones create an unparalleled sensation of spatial simultaneity, enabling individuals to virtually overcome geographical distance. Despite the illusion of unlimited spatial mobility, the fact remains that the postmodern individual is increasingly stationary. In actuality, the simulation of space replaces the actual experience of space, thereby disconnecting the individual from the necessary spatial component of human experience.²

² In a sense, postmodern means of communication that produce simulations of spatial simultaneity therefore reinforce the sense of lack that necessitated these simulations in the first place. Tourism, however, can be viewed as an intermediary stage in this process as it allows for the temporary immersion in a spatial other.

1.3 The Interplay of History, Space and Literature

“Du siehst mein Sohn, zum Raum wird hier die Zeit.”
Richard Wagner *Parsifal*

Recently, scholars of historiographic metafiction began to focus on the formation of history as the encounter between cultures within a specific spatio-temporal setting.³ Often regionally specialized, authors like Samuel Truett, James R. Giles, Blake Allmendinger, Neil Campbell, or William R. Handley continued the groundwork of theorists such as Michel Foucault and Hayden White to challenge both historical and geographical empiricism by replacing monocausationist national historiography with a paratactic mosaic of human interaction lived out in the cultural hybrid spaces of postmodernity. James R. Giles’ *The Spaces of Violence*, for instance, rewrites the history of American space as the violent encounter of varying cultural groups and individuals entering an entropic landscape in search for self-fulfillment. Krista Comer, in *Landscapes of the New West*, foregrounds the need for revisiting the spatial historiography of the West and thereby illuminates the fruitful intersection between the historical and spatial imagination. History,

³ Other important tendencies in the scholarship of postmodern literature’s relation to history that have influenced this project include the works of Amy Elias, Marianne DeKoven, Hans Kellner, Frank Ankersmit, Peter Nabokov, or Cheryl Walker, to name a few. Amy Elias traces the postmodern obsession with the past and conceives a notion of the postmodern sublime as historiographic intervention. Elias locates a critical potential within the desire for history that, if unleashed, can recover the fruitful intersection of philosophy, history, and literature. Similarly, Marianne DeKoven, in *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern*, describes contemporary literature and culture as post-utopian. DeKoven argues that society is permeated with a post-utopian consciousness that creates particularized, single-issue revolutions rather than large scale opposition movements. Embracing an “utopia limited” (DeKoven 21) further means to reinvest individual action with social and historical significance, thereby unsettling the amalgamative tendencies of historical memory. Whereas both Elias and DeKoven interrogate the specific relationship between postmodernity, its various literary and cultural expressions, and historical thinking, Frank Ankersmit, Hans Kellner, Ellen Fitzpatrick, Peter Nabokov, or Cheryl Walker challenge the theoretical foundations of historiography itself. Kellner and Ankersmit advocate a return to a philosophy of history, while Fitzpatrick analyses the varying stages of American historiography. Nabokov and Walker seem particularly interesting as they attempt to formulate a distinctly Native American theory of writing the past.

according to Krista Comer, Harold P. Simonson, Roger A. Hall, or José E. Limon, is at all times the combination of human interaction, geographic location and temporality, and it is only if the historiographer acknowledges the inseparable union of this triad that historical representation can be both vibrant and valuable. As diverse as the above outlined tendencies in historiographic writing are, they do have one thing in common: namely, that they are not entirely new. In fact, the core assumptions of postmodern theories of history, the acknowledgement of narrativity, trans-cultural and transnational encounters, and the imagination (among others), were once the pillars of historical writing.

Romantic historians in the middle of the nineteenth century embraced these seemingly postmodern assumptions as a genuine form of narrating the past without, of course, claiming that these myth-histories would describe the past, as Ranke would say, “wie sie eigentlich gewesen ist” (as it actually happened). Instead, the epic encounters of Montcalm and Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, or Cortez and Montezuma on the steps of the great temple of Tenochtitlan, were progressive fables, intended to explain the course of history according to the gospel of American exceptionalism. The protagonists of these tragic tales of conquest and conflict were “representative men” (Levin *History* 52) and idealized literary characters. Chattillon, Pontiac, Montcalm, Wolfe, or Frontenac all served as supreme historical subjects. They were both models of civil virtue and individual bravery and consequently romanticized as mythical forefathers of the American spirit and defendants of the progressive law of history. *Montcalm and Wolfe* and *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* and many other seminal texts of nineteenth century American historicism, such as William H. Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Mexico* or George Bancroft’s *The History of the United States from the Discovery of the Continent*, thus reflect the belief of their authors that “the history of [...] the American continent was, at least partially, due

to the exploits of identifiable individuals in a social structure peculiarly stratified and peculiarly dependent on its leaders” (Pease 42). However, these historical narratives also exemplify the conviction of romantic historicism that both history and literature depend on great characters.

Nineteenth century historians realized the importance of characters for the formation of national history as living, feeling, and sensing witnesses to the emergence of a distinctly American identity. They allowed the readers to project their own longing for cultural independence from European traditions while announcing the necessity of a corresponding space in which this newfound identity could be acted out. For Francis Parkman, the entire history of America was, in fact, the history of the constant assault on the American forest and its inhabitants. It was in the vast wilderness of New France that Parkman located the battle between liberty and absolutism which ultimately generated the revolutionary American spirit.⁴ Similarly, Prescott’s depiction of Mexico inscribed the image of an effeminate Hispanic culture that was both morally and physically inferior to its conquerors into the American consciousness of the time, while placing the indigenous population of the Americas on the lowest possible ladder of civilization. The interplay of a romantic theory of cultural independence thus coincided with the creation of a mythical geography of conquest.

The “geographical turn” in American historical writing of the nineteenth century is, of course, closely related to the continuing effort to expand and secure the boundaries of the young nation. In the course of the nineteenth century territorial accords, such as the Louisiana Purchase, the incorporation of Texas and California, or even the acquisition of the Alaska territory,

⁴ Another crucial space in Parkman’s writing is the Oregon Trail. Here, Native American and Anglo-American, French-Canadian and European traders, emigrants, and even tourists come together by necessity and a shared desire for a utopian space. The forts and trading posts along the way emerge as cross-cultural contact zones in which both economic and cultural dominance are negotiated.

significantly altered the geographical make-up of the United States while producing a host of spatial ideologies that went along with it (manifest destiny, westward expansion, frontier myth etc.). In this expansionist political climate, questions of space dominated the public discourse of the time and subsequently permeated the academic disciplines. Interestingly, the increasing interest in a cross-disciplinary approach to history was not limited to the United States but also found enthusiastic proponents on the other side of the Atlantic. In fact, a brief look at some of the prolific historical writers on the continent (for example Michelet, Macaulay, Curtius, Marsh, Mommsen, Droysen, Humboldt, Stanley, and Ritter) shows that geographical introductions and detailed maps became the fashionable way to open a historical study. Specifically Michelet's *Histoire de France* (1833) was a significant moment in the assertion of space into the discipline of history. His text, as H.C. Darby rightfully notes, almost single-handedly extended the historical "vision until it came to include almost every aspect of human endeavour, social and economic" (35). By the late nineteenth century the geographical vogue had changed the profession so profoundly that the term geography now adorned the title pages of historical texts. In 1894 George Adam Smith published the *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (1894), and nine years later A.P. Brigham's *Geographic Influences in American History* and E.C. Semple's *American History and its Geographic Conditions* (1903) announced the inextricable bond between geography and history. Based on the abundance of cross-disciplinary studies at the turn of the twentieth century, some scholars, such as Schlögel, even went so far as to identify a "simultaneous trans-border international discourse on space, territory, borders, location, and networks around 1900" (7). At the very least, however, we can safely assert that geography and history were two very closely related subjects as the century came to a close.

The interest in geography at the turn of the nineteenth century was, however, not limited to the discipline of history, but permeated the literary discourse as well. Beginning with the Romantic Movement, writers rediscovered their natural surrounding as a source of artistic inspiration as well as a worthy subject for creative contemplation. While the Romantics yearned for a return to an Edenic state of nature, the succeeding generation of realist and naturalist writers were bent to uncover the depravities of an increasingly industrialized world by analyzing the space responsible for moral and ethical decay: the city. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, European authors like Emile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, Nikolai Gogol, and Gerhart Hauptmann traced the merciless machine of modern capitalism and the impact on its victims. Simultaneously, in the New World, bleak accounts of the rapidly changing face of American society replaced the “Psalm of Life” of the American Renaissance. Writers such as Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, William Dean Howells, and Upton Sinclair, to only name a few, now focused on an analysis of the urban geography of modern America and often announced the focus of their inquiry in the titles to their works thereby mirroring the trend in historical writing. Crane’s *Maggie, A Girl of the Street* (1893), Norris’ *McTeague, A Story of San Francisco* (1899), and Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906) are only three examples of this fashionable practice.

While the later chapters of this dissertation are certainly designed to show the connection of postmodern writers to their nineteenth century predecessors, thereby uncovering a geographical tradition within American discourse, this project also proposes a shared conceptualization of space among the two. Literary figures such as Parkman, similar to his postmodern counterparts Thomas King and William T. Vollmann, perceived nature as a sensed, relational space. This perception of space, as we will see in the following, is uniquely individual because it is determined by the subjective interpretation of an appearance. In this regard, sensed space is the

individual interpretation of material objects in a time-space relation and consequently can neither be scientifically reproduced nor universally generalized.

1.4 The Question of Space

“Beyond’ signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary- the very act of going *beyond*- are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the ‘present’ which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced.”

Homi K. Bhabba *The Location of Culture*

It is one of the premises of this project that geography and history are inextricably interwoven disciplines. The claim that the study of history presupposes an acknowledgment of the spatial dimension and vice versa is, of course, not just the result of the “spatial turn” in critical theory. Although the works of Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Michel Foucault, and David Harvey have undoubtedly helped to reintroduce the question of space into postmodern philosophy, social theory, historiography, and economics alike, the interdisciplinary study of space had, as we have seen, a much longer tradition in American and European thought. The return to a geographical discourse had, however, become necessary because the early twentieth century had previously abandoned the interdisciplinary approach of the late nineteenth century. Instead of continuing the trend of prominent nineteenth-century historians outlined above, the acknowledgment of, what Leibniz called, “sensed space” as a fundamental building block for human existence and its study, spatial thinkers turned to a mathematical understanding of space that effectively severed the link between history and geography. This post-Einsteinian understanding of space characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century described space as a universal signifier, a mere frame of reference, that had little effect on and even less significance to the individuals inhabiting it. By doing so, the relational quality of space so crucial for the historical and literary writers of the romantic period had been erased from the theoretical debate. The accomplishment of postmodern theorists of space such as Foucault, Soja, and Harvey thus lies in their acknowledgment that a concept of sensed, experienced space reveals valuable

insights for the study of human history, and that nineteenth century writers had something useful to say about it.

Historically speaking, the first concepts of space were based on the dependency of human existence on their immediate surroundings. Robert Sack calls this natural space where people are linked to the land “a primitive space alive with the spirits and history of the people” (*Conceptions of Space* 22). This concept of space is marked by tribal practices, inhabited by nomadic hunters and gatherers who dwell in temporary camps. In this archetypal space, which Deleuze and Guattari described as a “great ungended stasis” (155) physical space and natural space are one. In these pre-industrial societies physical space (the world of geographical, biological and physical phenomena) is relegated to the absolute space of nature. In the discussion of Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* we will see how the hunting camps of the Dakotas evoke this concept of “primitive space” (Sack 22).

What is crucial to understand here, however, is the fact that scholars like Sack claim that humans, from the very beginning, conceived space as a geographical location and a mental concept. Even the seemingly undifferentiated space of first nature serves, according to Rob Shields, already as a representation of space because it revolves around the distinction between nature and wilderness (172). As a mental concept, space is always concerned with ontological discourse; for a discourse on space is not only concerned with the human element within a spatial paradigm, it is first of all produced by humans. The study and practice of space is thus an ontological inquiry in that it investigates the manifestation of being within a particular time and space, while simultaneously participating in the very object of its inquiry. It is because of this inextricable relation between being and space, that my analysis of historiographic space in this project involves the careful study of the principle protagonists in both literary and historical

texts.⁵ In particular, this study will show how spatially-aware authors, such as Parkman, King, and Vollmann use their characters as a means to investigate the interplay between ontology and space while advancing a theory of sensed space and an understanding of space as the intersection of geographical location, cultural interaction, and the individual interpretation of material objects and events in a time-space correlation.

Exactly because spatialization reveals ontological information and vice versa, models of space underwent significant changes as human existence alienated itself further and further from its natural habitat. As nomadic tribes were replaced by empires, kingdoms, and later nation states, spatial concepts became ever increasingly abstracted from any reference to natural space. Newton's revolutionary distinction between absolute and relative space finally completed this spatialization of denaturalization and laid the foundation of a spatial discourse void of location. In the early nineteenth century, thinkers such as Georg Riemann in Germany and his colleague William Clifford in England continued the mathematization of space that Newton had begun, defining space as a transcendental category. Now, space could be understood as an absolute category liberated from the human element. By the end of the nineteenth century, this notion of space as a purely mathematical system of reference could now include such concepts as "social space," a term first coined by Emile Durkheim in the eighteen-nineties. Social space, as much as mental spaces (utopias, dystopias etc.), are almost, if not completely, removed from location. This continual abstraction of space into a model of dislocation, describes, in fact, the shift from the experience of place to the discourse of space. Space was no longer perceived as a dwelling

⁵ Martin Heidegger's philosophy emphasizes the connection between being and space in an especially powerful manner. The very term Heidegger chose to describe being, *Dasein* means literally to be *there*, to exist somewhere. Similarly other key terms of his philosophical vocabulary, such as *Gegenwart* or *Anwesenheit* carry temporal and spatial connotations.

place or the site in which human life unfolds, but as mathematical category that existed independently.

This discourse of space, the attempt to theoretically describe and define the nature and production of various spaces and its components, of course always existed. From Aristotle to Zeno, all major philosophical figures of antiquity attempted to describe the constituent parts of material nature, the existence of absolute spaces (like the universe) and its relationship to and reception by the human consciousness. It is, however, during the enlightenment that mathematicians, physicists, and philosophers alike shaped our contemporary understanding of space. It seems therefore necessary to revisit two turning points in the history of spatial discourse.

1.4.1 Leibniz's Intuitive Intervention

“The true criterion regarding the objects of the senses is the connection between phenomena, that is to say the linking up of what occurs in different places and times, and in the experience of different men, who are themselves very important phenomena to one another.”

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz *New Essays*

Challenged by the speedy transformation of the natural space surrounding them (through the rapidly increasing industrialization of the European mainland, the ensuing transportation revolution, and the rise of the urban landscape, to only name a few factors that altered the geographical surface of the world), enlightenment thinkers were forced to reevaluate the philosophical foundations of spatial theories. The ensuing debate that was fought with equal vigor by proponents of the philosophical and the mathematical camp, focused primarily on Aristotle's twofold theory of nature. Aristotle argued that there are two possible positions on the subject. The first concept posits that nature includes more than matter, in which case there must be a first philosophy of nature. The purpose of this first philosophy of nature then is to deal with

the basic substance that exists in nature besides, or *before*, matter, while matter itself is examined by physics. The second concept Aristotle proposes argues that nature only includes matter and consequently physics becomes first philosophy (Garnett 9).

While Aristotle's philosophy had dominated the intellectual inquiry into matters of space and nature for centuries, a new generation of enlightenment thinkers perceived the classical model as increasingly unfit to sufficiently explain a world transformed by ground-breaking discoveries such as the laws of planetary motion (Kepler 1609), the infinitesimal calculus (Leibniz, Newton 1675), and the law of universal gravitation (Newton 1687). These scientific innovations, especially in the context of the radical social and economic changes outlined above, certainly challenged established understandings of the physical universe in general and the conceptualization of human and natural space in particular. This process of the scientification of early modern society, however, gradually pervaded philosophical discourse and successfully established the scientific method as a valid metaphysical methodology. Specifically, René Descartes' publication of *The Discourse on Method* in 1637 announced the discontent with traditional philosophy among a growing number of scientifically minded scholars. For Descartes, philosophy and theology, in their present form, had become ineffective because they have "been studied for many centuries by the most outstanding minds without having produced anything which is not in dispute and consequently doubtful and uncertain" (8). Subsequently, Descartes proposed a combination of scientific empiricism and philosophical intuition aiming at establishing the mathematical rigor and certainty of algebra and geometry at the center of any philosophical inquiry. Although Descartes' work did not trigger a univocal scientific revolution of philosophy, it most certainly inspired the development of European rationalism and empiricism. Whereas true empiricists such as Locke, Hume, and Hobbes would criticize

Descartes for his lack of scientific rigidity, rationalists such as Spinoza and Leibniz further developed the Cartesian dualism of the mental and physical world.

Among the second generation of rationalists, the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), along with his English contemporary Isaac Newton, stands out as one of the most influential and innovative guardians of Descartes' legacy. While Leibniz's philosophy by no means marks a categorical continuation of Descartes' *Discourse* (many of Leibniz's theories, in fact, directly critique Descartes' dualistic model), Leibniz is certainly influenced by Descartes' concept of space. Specifically, Leibniz was intrigued by the principle of Cartesian extension as it laid the foundation for Leibniz concept of sensed space.

In his *Meditations Concerning First Philosophy* (1641), Descartes discussed how questioning all things material and immaterial will lead "our minds to become independent of the senses" (71). This step, he believed was essential to clear the scientific mind from false opinion and uncertain assumptions that had been "acquired from the senses or by means of the senses" (Descartes 76).

Over the course of the *Meditations*, Descartes develops this initial differentiation between the mind and the senses into a dualistic system that differentiates two faculties of knowledge: the intellect and the imagination. The intellect, according to Descartes, is concerned with entirely abstract entities, such as reason, doubt, or ideas, and rejects assumptions derived from the senses, as they are mere representations. Further, the intellect considers simple natures, the smallest building block for knowledge that can only be understood directly and intuitively by the intellect. The imagination, on the other hand, projects images of the corporeal world, such as "the shape of extended things, their quantity, or size and number, and also the place they are, the time that measures their duration, and so forth" (Descartes 78).

While Descartes considered the intellect the superior faculty, he also recognized that there is an inherent interdependence between the two. The intellect is capable to interrogate concepts or ideas symbolically represented by the imagination, and thereby relate to the concrete manifestations offered (faulty or not) by the senses. It is, however, incapable of representing the abstract entities it considers and therefore dependent on the imagination to convert these general, abstract articles into “specific magnitudes” (110). Therefore, as Stephen Gaukroger nicely summarized, the intellect depends on the imagination “because the intellect by itself has no relation to the world at all. Entities conceived in the intellect are indeterminate. The imagination is required to render them determinate” (Gaukroger 110). In his *Rules for the Direction on the Mind* (written in 1628-29, published in 1701), Descartes further explained the relationship between the intellect and the imagination by highlighting the principle of extension. Descartes explains:

By “extension” we understand everything which has length, breadth, and depth, without inquiring whether it is really a body or only a space, nor does it seem to need more explanation, since there is nothing more easily perceived by our imagination [...] The abstract entities, therefore, such as extension, are never formed in the imagination apart from something which is extended, whatever the intellect believes about the truth of the matter. And because we are to do nothing from this point on without the aid of the imagination, it is useful to distinguish carefully the ideas by which the meaning of the several words are represented to our intellect. For this reason we propose for consideration these three ways of speaking: “extension occupies space,” “body has extension,” and extension is not body. (Descartes 214-215)

Descartes’ concept of extension refers to the imaginative perception of an abstract entity through the senses. Thereby, the intellectually formed, indeterminate idea is rendered determinate as a specific magnitude and extends into the sensually perceivable realm of the imagination.

Uniquely, Descartes’ theory of extension bridges the dichotomy between the intellect and the imagination, thereby creating a concept of space that defines geographical space as intellectual

ideas made manifest in a perceivable reality with the help of intuitive imagination. It is this notion of Cartesian extension that would inspire Leibniz to formulate his theory of sensed space.

For Leibniz, as for Descartes, there is no universal space. Both thinkers reject the notion of void space, because it presupposes that bodies are completely at rest or fixed. However, since no body can ever be absolutely at rest there is no such thing as universal space (Garnett 56). By rejecting the notion of a universal, or void, space, Leibniz resolutely opposes Aristotle's first concept of nature and thereby effectively excludes philosophy from the discourse of space. Instead, Leibniz identifies mathematics and physics as the only disciplines to adequately frame the question of space (as much as the question of philosophy thereby indirectly acknowledging the philosophical nature of spatial discourse). In his rejection of void space, Leibniz opposes Newton's assertion that space can exist without matter.

Although Leibniz and Newton diverge on the question of void space, it is crucial to point out the significance of Newton's thought because it adds an important methodological observation to the conceptualization of space. Although space can exist without matter, Newton argues, material objects require a space in which they are located. Therefore we have to distinguish between absolute and relative space. Newton writes: "All things are placed in time as to order of succession; and in space as to order of situation" (qtd. in Northrop 427). Consequently we can assert that while Leibniz regards space as a subject of mechanical science, Newton acknowledges the possibility of a philosophical discourse of science by emphasizing the laws of contradiction and sufficient reason.

Although it seems, after a first glimpse into Leibniz's spatial theory, that the German mathematician had little interest in the ontological qualities of spatial discourse as far as it relates to nature, a closer look into his work yields surprising results. In "A New System of Nature and

Communication of Substances, and of the Union of the Soul and Body” an anonymously published article in the *Journal des Savants* (1695), Leibniz explains, unexpectedly, his conviction that empirically verifiable matter alone proves insufficient as the foundation for a theory of space:

I perceived that it is impossible to find the principles of a true unity in matter alone, or in what is only passive, since everything in it is only a collection or aggregation of parts to infinity...I found then that their nature consists in force, and that from this there follows something analogous to sensation and appetite, so that we must conceive of them on the model of the notion we have of souls. (139)

Surprisingly, Leibniz’s essay evokes inherently intuitive qualities to describe the interplay of matter and space that echo the principle of Cartesian extension; traits such as “sensation,” “appetite,” and even “the soul.” The unity between matter and space that Leibniz proposes in his transcendental idealism, is thus created through the interplay of empirical data, matter and the intuition, perceived through the senses of the individual and mediated by reason. Leibniz’s “intuitive spatial turn” then marks a decisive step in the redefinition of space, for it validates the importance of identity, intuition and reason for the spatial discourse of the enlightenment.

Introducing the principles of transcendental idealism to the debate is certainly one of the key achievements of Leibniz’s spatial thinking. This is, however, not the only innovation Leibniz contributed to the debate at the end of the seventeenth century. In addition, and important for my understanding of space employed in this project, Leibniz insisted on a crucial distinction in the theory of space: the difference between a sensed space, an individually perceived space or nature (a concept of nature that is uniquely private), and an absolute space, a mathematically and scientifically perceived and absolute space of matter. This distinction is vital to understand, as it is the sensed places of history that are analyzed in this dissertation. If nature is perceived as a sensed space, the perception of space is distinctly individual because it is determined by the

subjective interpretation of an appearance. In this regard, sensed space is the individual interpretation of material objects in a time-space relation. Consequently, sensed space can neither be scientifically reproduced nor universally generalized. In contrast, the notion of scientifically verifiable, mathematical space is the subject of science, and should not be confused with the object of this inquiry, which is solely focused on the investigation of sensed space and its individualized manifestation in a specific temporal setting. Whereas the distinction between the two is crucial, the tragic fallacy of the epistemology of space is, as Northrop rightfully notes, to explain sensed space as merely the appearance of empirically verifiable, absolute space (445). In a sense, and in contrast to Newton, Leibniz therefore rejects the notion of a mathematically verifiable absolute space in favor of a concept of space that is reliant upon the human consciousness as a formative force. For him space is “the relatedness of phenomenal matter within the content of consciousness of the individual monad” (Northrop 438). This ultimate and inherent bond between space and consciousness does not, however, simply reproduce the Cartesian dualism of mental and physical space. Instead, Leibniz’s assertion that the production of space is inextricably bound to the human consciousness introduces a new form of space that is concerned less with actual physical reality (actual space) than with the unlimited amount of possible spaces produced by the human consciousness (ideal spaces).

Leibniz’s assertion of ideal space marks a significant intervention in the increasingly scientific spatial discourse of the enlightenment, for it asserts that knowledge of and about space is different from the scientific observation of matter. This differentiation between spatial knowledge and scientific knowledge rests on Leibniz’s observation that space is observed through the senses and comprehended through the interaction of intuitive perception and rational

assessment.⁶ In addition to asserting the intuitive component of spatial production, Leibniz identified another characteristic that is crucial for my understanding of space in this study: the fact that space, as a result of the interplay between observable matter and intuitive perception, involves an element of abstraction and is therefore fictitious in nature. Space for Leibniz, Garnett clarifies, “is universalized place. Both space and places are metaphysically unreal; both are abstract, but space, involving a certain presupposition which contradicts the nature of phenomena, is, in addition, fictitious” (Garnett 55).

1.4.2 *Nacheinander* and *Nebeneinander*: The Kantian Order of Space

“It is evident that instead of the determination of space following from the positions of the parts of matter relatively to one another, these latter follow from the former.”

“Space is metaphysically unreal.”

Immanuel Kant *On the First Grounds of the Distinction of Regions in Space*

Although this is not a book on the development of theories of space during the enlightenment, it is necessary to highlight, in detail, the contributions of one more thinker to the discourse on space: Immanuel Kant. Both Kant and Leibniz believed that space does not merely exist as an empirical or mathematical category, but is actively created through the interplay of scientifically observable data (matter) and the senses of the individual subject. Further, Kant and Leibniz agreed, this interaction of intuition and science was shepherded by the mediating power of reason. Nonetheless, Kant did depart from Leibniz’ understanding of space in several

⁶ Leibniz’s theory of space involves an intricate interplay between consciousness, intuition, and matter. One of the problematic aspects of this complex relationship is the fact that space here is observed through the senses, but not made up of sensual objects. Instead, space is made up of material objects. Leibniz’s solution to this problem is the introduction of reason as a spatial catalyst. Through the intervention of rational thought the phenomenological content of the individual consciousness is thus related to the observed material matter.

important aspects and thereby promoted a notion of space that is both empirically real and “transcendentally ideal.”

It is an often overlooked fact of Kant’s biography that for forty years (from 1756 to 1796) he lectured on geography at the University of Königsberg. Questions of spatial relations were therefore, it seems safe to assume, an integral part of his professional life. Moreover, his very first publication focuses on the relationship between space and substance. In 1747, a good fifty years after Leibniz wrote “A New System of Nature,” Kant published “Thoughts on the true Estimation of Living Forces.” In this essay, Kant comments on the nature, quality, and components of space by saying:

It is easily proven that there should be no space and no extension, if substances had no force whereby they can act outside themselves. For without a force of this kind there is no connection, without this connection no order, and without this order no space.
 (“Thoughts” 10)

This statement, somewhat representative of Kant’s first phase of spatial inquiry, stresses the importance of order for any concept of space. In fact, space, for Kant, depends on order. Similar to Leibniz who emphasized that empirical space is defined by the coexistence of bodies, Kant assumes that space is the result of the interaction, and subsequent connection, between matter (or substances). The connection generated through this interplay of substances ultimately produces a distinct order. But space, for Kant, is not only the result of an ordering process but also the condition of that interaction. If space is both the result of, and the pre-condition for, an ordered arrangement of substances, then we have to differentiate between two forms of space. One, the product of the interaction between matter and intuition, is relational, whereas the other, the condition for this interaction, must be absolute. Kant explains this “absolute world-space [that has] a reality of its own, independent of the existence of matter” (“First Grounds” 20) by writing:

Since absolute space is not an object of outer sensation, but a fundamental concept which first makes all such sensations possible, it further follows that whatsoever in the outline of a body exclusively concerns its reference to pure space, can be apprehended only through comparison with other bodies. (“First Grounds” 28)

The excerpt cited above nicely exemplifies the differences between Kant’s theory of space and Leibniz’s. For Leibniz, everything the observer understands about space originates within the subject as a result of the interaction between intuition and consciousness. Kant, on the other hand, insists on the existence of a priori knowledge and a priori space that is absolute space. Kant, therefore, rejects a purely relational model of space (as proposed by Leibniz), and suggests an absolute model of space that, in a sense, produces other spaces, a space “of which every extension must be a part” (“First Grounds 20).

While Kant’s early writings on space establish the existence of an absolute space as the grounds for all subsequent localized spaces, his later texts explore the a priori nature and perceptual characteristics of space. In the *Dissertation* from 1770 Kant arrives at the seemingly contradictory statement that “space is something objective and real, neither substance, nor accident, nor relation, but subjective and ideal” (Garnett 145). The question here, of course, is how can something (a space) be “objective and real” while at the same time be “subjective and ideal?” For Kant, space exists a priori because it is impossible to perceive an object or a person without space. We can only imagine matter or individuals in space. This observation further implies that space is a transcendental category inseparably bound to perception. In other words, space is an a priori element of perception. Space and time, for Kant, represent a priori categories of perception that structure the chronology (time) of human experience and the simultaneity (space) of human existence. Whereas history structures events in a temporal, diachronic order, geography records phenomena in a spatial, synchronic order.

Kant understands space and time as categories of perception that are fundamental.

Consequently, they are empirically real in that every external object that is perceived by an individual depends on the diachronic and/or synchronic order to reveal it to the self. Nonetheless, space and time are also subjective in that the subject can only perceive reality as negotiated by its own perception; it is eternally unable to view objects as they really are in themselves. Therefore, as Körner justly notes, space, as well as time, “is empirically real and transcendently ideal” (38).

Kant’s theories on space combine the relational model of Leibniz with Newton’s insistence on the existence of an absolute space. Kant’s unique contribution in the spatial discourse of the enlightenment, however, is his acknowledgement of the subjective, transcendental nature of space. By insisting on the perceptual nature of space he acknowledged the constituent part space plays in the construction of human reality and identity, paving the way for representational concepts of space employed by thinkers such as Foucault and Lefebvre who have dominated postmodern understandings of space.

1.5 Historiographic Space

“Space takes for us the form of relations among sites.”
Michel Foucault “Of Other Spaces”

Whereas archetypal concepts of space were founded upon physical and social relations among peoples, the enlightenment discourse on space interrogated the interplay of scientific empiricism and subjective perception. While mathematical theories triggered the growing acceptance of absolute models of space, other thinkers, such as Leibniz, insisted on the purely subjective, relational qualities of space by stressing the importance of perception and rational meditation and the productive interplay of the intellect and the imagination.

Similar to Leibniz, Hegel, in the nineteenth century, denied the existence of void space and defined space and time as conditions rather than preexisting matter; “since they are the exterior forms without which things would not be” (Taylor 356). Hegel’s theory of space, most completely formulated in his *Philosophy of Nature* (1830), also continues Descartes’ legacy of extension as it perceives space as the specific manifestation of an abstract idea. But for Hegel, unlike his predecessor, time takes supremacy over space as time represents the ultimate negation of space, which relegates space to a second category defined by temporally unstable movement. Ultimately, however, Hegel resolved the time-space dichotomy in what is arguably his greatest contribution to the discourse of space, namely the principle of place: “a spatial point enduring through time” (Hegel 254). Although Hegel’s theory of space introduced the principle of place, his focus on temporality is somewhat indicative for the changing focus of the philosophical debate in the nineteenth century. Mathematicians such as Gauss and Poincaré now experimented with geometrical models that transcended the Euclidean formulas in an attempt to interrogate the question of curvature of space. As a result, the relational, perceptual models of Leibniz and Kant were replaced by a purely mathematical system of thought.

In the early twentieth century, Einstein's relativity theory completed the total mathematization of space and proclaimed the end of the relational model of transcendental idealism proposed by Leibniz. Ever since, post-Einsteinian models of space define space as emptiness, as a frame of reference, a "co-ordinate system (along with time) within which all reality exists" (Smith 68). By asserting and promoting a universal space (such as the systems of global commodity and information exchange), we ignore, as Rob Shields rightfully notes, the complexities of spatial practice and our vision of space becomes restricted to "perceived space," thereby overlooking the qualitative meaning of places, regions and their myths (162). This theoretical dilemma, I believe, is most adequately addressed by Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre, and it is their responses to the growing abstraction of space that are most helpful for this project.

For Lefebvre, spatialization is a model with three essential components: spatial practice, the representation of space (discourse *of* space), and the spaces of representation (discourse *on* space). In conjunction with Leibniz's concept of sensed space, it is the last notion of Lefebvre's theory, the spaces of representation, the idea of a space as it might be, and a fully lived space, that is most valuable for my interrogation of historiographic space in Parkman's texts; for Lefebvre and Leibniz present relational models that allow for an analysis of space and history through the individualized, experienced, even fictionalized, lens of the author and his protagonists. In contrast to mathematical models of space, these relational approaches will allow for a careful analysis of the interaction of space and history. Ultimately, applying a relational model of space to the works of Francis Parkman will uncover the interdisciplinary process of writing America's past in the nineteenth century and his unique approach to American landscapes. In a similar manner, analyzing the relational hybrid spaces of postmodern authors

such as Thomas King and William T. Vollmann will exemplify how these authors strive to produce a literary discourse of history and space that is both contradictory and differential. Indeed, works such as *Truth and Bright Water* and *Fathers and Crows* challenge the quantitative spaces of postmodernity by depicting the importance of human practice and the unbroken relevance of what Joy Porter termed “sacred geographies” (27) for cultural identity formation.

In this relational analysis of space, I will employ Foucault’s theories of spatial history to extrapolate the construction of lived space in Francis Parkman’s writing, as well as to analyze how spatial writers such as King and Vollmann reclaim the mental spaces of history and restore them as places of lived, or sensed, experience. For Foucault, external spaces must be understood as a set of “relations among sites” (230). In contrast to psychological or phenomenological spaces, external spaces, as Foucault understands them, do not exist in a void, or mathematical totality. Instead, external spaces form a network of relationships in which human life takes place. These spatial relations can be sites of transportation, relaxation, trade, and warfare and grouped into two major categories: utopias and heterotopias. Utopias, “sites with no real place” (Foucault 230), are imagined places in which individual and communal desires are negotiated and envisioned in a perfected state. Heterotopias, on the other hand, are physically existing places of “effectively enacted utopia” (Foucault 230). In other words, heterotopias (or counter-sites as Foucault sometimes calls them) are real sites that allow access to the purely imagined idealization of the utopia. Consequently, heterotopias connect the unreal to the real, the imaginary to the physically existing.

For Foucault, heterotopias are phenomena shared by all cultures in which each space fulfills a “precise and determined function within a society” (232). In his essay “Of Other Spaces,” the French philosopher explains that modern heterotopias include places such as prisons, retirement

homes, even cemeteries, but also cinemas, gardens, and museums. Since this study is concerned with historical spaces, the notion of the museum must be of special interest in Foucault's concept of heterotopias. The museum is, in fact, a special category of heterotopias, in the sense that it not only relates various places to each other (if we think about a museum of fine art, for example, it allows the visitor to experience paintings from French, Italian, German, or American artists), but also different time periods (as a museum like the Louvre features exhibitions from Renaissance masters, Classicists, Impressionists, Expressionists etc.). Besides establishing heterotopias, a museum thus also creates a space in which, as Foucault puts it, "time never stops building up and topping its own summit" (234).

While Foucault limited his analysis of counter-spaces to physical structures such as museums and libraries, I would like to extend his definition of heterotopias to include written texts. More specifically, I would like to suggest that the Romantic historicism of the nineteenth century and the postmodern novels of aforementioned authors create literary heterotopias. A good example for illustrating this continuing employment of literary heterotopias is the work of Francis Parkman. Parkman's histories, I will argue, depict sites of exploration and commerce (as on the Oregon Trail), or sites of invasion and conflict (as in New France) and thereby establish a retrospective heterochrony, combining the utopia of an idealized past with the textual space of the author's and the reader's present. Thereby, these literary heterotopias create idealized textual spaces that invert, juxtapose, transgress, and combine historical spaces that are both mental and physical. Further, Parkman's heterochronies, i.e. his historical works, not only accumulate time but also establish relationships between formerly unconnected temporal planes. By recording history they establish, as Foucault puts it "a place of all time that is itself outside of time" (233).

Parkman's historiographic spaces are, however, juxtapositions of competing spatial models. For in Parkman's representation of New France we witness the combination of eighteenth century locale and situation (geographical data, maps etc. that Parkman used to reconstruct his description of New France) and nineteenth century discourse on space. By doing so, Parkman's spaces juxtapose in a real place several mental spaces, linking them to other spaces while simultaneously contradicting them. Parkman's approach thus neatly mirrors a relational understanding of space, by enforcing Leibniz's doctrine of transcendental idealism. In his accounts of the French and Indian War, for instance, he relates the experience of his characters to the imagination of his readers, thereby forming a new image of the historical event and the geography in which it took place, thus establishing literary heterotopias very similar to his postmodern successors. A great example of Parkman's technique is his description of Fort Duquesne:

Fort Duquesne stood on the point of land where the Alleghany and the Monongahela join to form the Ohio, and where now stands Pittsburg, with its swarming population, its restless industries, the clang of its forges, and its chimneys vomiting foul smoke into the face of heaven. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 987)

Here Parkman's geographical identification of the French fortress is achieved by relating the location to a modern landmark familiar to his nineteenth-century readership, the city of Pittsburgh. Thereby, the historical description leaves the temporal horizon of the eighteenth century and is expanded into the present of Parkman's perceived audience.

Among the varying geographies that the concept of historiographic space evokes are not just colonial counter-spaces (French Canada vs. British New England, Native American vs. frontier settler) or sites of westward expansion, but also spaces of imperial domination. After all, Parkman's texts attempt to claim and indefinitely secure the physical space described. These spatialized imperial aims are achieved through a retrospective analysis of the spatial

transgressions (as in border warfare and Indian raids) and their protagonists within a period of epistemic rupture. To achieve his nineteenth century goal of American dominion over the continent, Parkman employs an eighteenth century strategy, “the conviction that geographical knowledge reflected the domination of nature and natives and verified ability to control, extend, and rule the empire” (Arias127).

While chronicling the violations (from all parties involved) of loosely established geographical and cultural borders played a crucial role in defining permanent borders between empires, and later nations, violence becomes a central theme of the national American narrative of domination. Describing the violence of the Native American tribes and the French and later British colonial powers served to undermine their claim for the American continent. The perpetrators of unjustified violence were thus effectively marginalized in the public consciousness of the American settlers, in turn providing fertile ground for reciprocal efforts to rid the contested space from their threat. While the violence of the indigenous population, and even of the colonial powers to an extent, was labeled as uncivilized and even barbaric, the fight of the American settlers for independence became stylized as a necessary response to restore the Edenic equilibrium.⁷

The desire for a new American Eden thus always incorporated the element of transformation. Although the vision of a new Garden of Eden was distinctly pastoral in nature, it soon became tied to the gospel of progress and invited technological advancement such as the railroad, and later the automobile, as welcomed tools to achieve that vision. As the technological developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth century began to radically transform the

⁷ Parkman, for instance, harshly criticizes the French practice of masquerading regular soldiers as Native Americans and sending them on border raids with their Indian allies, thereby participating in gruesome acts of violence, including scalping, rape, and decapitation.

pastorally idealized American landscape, historians evoked the excessive violence of the frontier as the defining virtue of the American character and a transformative force serving the accomplishment of the American destiny. It is therefore no surprise that especially heavily contested border spaces, such as the Mexican-American or Canadian-American border, are the preferred site of the actual and theoretical interplay of violence and space. The contested spaces of the border (in all its manifold forms), however, are by no means a phenomenon of the past, but continue to impact the American experience. In fact, as Giles argues, postmodern representations of the border have taken the dialogue between violence and space to another level, thereby creating entirely new concepts of space. In *The Spaces of Violence*, Giles explain that the extreme and excessive violence described by authors such as DeLillo, McCarthy, Ellis, or Banks “contaminates implied thirdspace, severely limiting its potential for new freedom and liberation, and thus produces co-opted fourthspace” (15). Although I do not entirely share Giles entropic vision of an unredeemable border space characterized by senseless violence and moral apathy, the transnational contact zone of the border is, undoubtedly, continuing to challenge established models of space.

In contrast to scholars such as Giles who transfigure the postmodern fascination for entropic spaces and excessive violence into an equally bleak and abstract understanding of space, void of any possible return to communal spatial practice, I wish to identify an alternative understanding of space. I believe, following Foucault, that the postmodern literary representations of space, as for instance the heterotopias of New France and the Oregon Trail, also involve the “détournement (the re-adaption or hijacking of sites) of space, as in the tradition of occupying key spatial sites or buildings as a means of protest” (Shields 165). Therefore, the second half of this dissertation will be concerned with tracing the re-negotiation of Parkman’s heterotopias by

postmodern authors in an attempt to show that the “production of space is [not only] a process that is configured or reconfigured in any historical period” (Shields 167), but that authors like William T. Vollmann and Thomas King aim at returning the notion of lived, sensed space into the discourse of the American past, thus producing a postmodern concept of space diametrically opposed to the corrupted fourthspace of violent excess Giles describes.

While analyzing the use of space in the works of King and Vollmann, I am particularly interested in the continuation and deconstruction of nineteenth century spatial models in postmodern American historiographic literature. I will analyze how both authors challenge or continue established historiographic spaces, such as Parkman’s New France or Oregon Trail, by enforcing or replacing existing spatial concepts. Additionally, I will argue that postmodern authors might not only refashion historiographic space, but also introduce a new set of historical subjects and events that challenge American national history at large. As a result, these postmodern renditions of historiographic space necessitate not only new representations and understandings of space and undo the hegemonic concepts of spatial control, but, in turn, also produce new forms of narrating the past. These re-negotiations will uncover epistemic ruptures within the history of the American landscape that both supplement and dispute existing narratives and contribute to the ontological portrait of American settlement history. The above outlined examination of historiographic space will enrich existing scholarship on Francis Parkman and his postmodern legacy while generating new insights into the ways American writers continue to shape the past and its memory.

1.6 The Question of Temporality in Historical Discourse

Der historische Sinn, wenn er ungebündelt waltet und alle seine Konsequenzen zieht,
entwurzelt die Zukunft, weil er die Illusionen zerstört und den bestehenden Dingen ihre
Atmosphäre nimmt, in der sie allein leben können.”
Friedrich Nietzsche “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben”

Space in the context of this study becomes a tool to uncover the fallacies of overemphasizing temporality and chronology. For the focus on space unveils the fictitious nature of all chronologies. With a reinsertion of space into historical discourse thus also comes a changed understanding of the limits of history. History here no longer is bound to the past but also extends itself to the future and the present of the historian. Unmasking the dependency between historical representation and periodization is crucial to bridge the “gap between historical events and the language used to represent them” (Kosselleck *Practice of Conceptual History* xiii). In Parkman’s case the dialectic between the mode of representation (language) and the historical event exists on multiple layers. On the first one there is a clear juxtaposition between the pre-colonial subject and romantic perspective. The language of Parkman is both romantic and imperial. Thus the retrospective reconstruction, by necessity, imagines the struggle for North America as a prelude, a prophetic vision, of the realized nation. In addition to retrospective reconstructions, Parkman further uses the transcendentalist method of immediate observation to comment on American history. In his account of the Oregon Trail, for instance, Parkman reverses his strategy, and writes about the present in an attempt to link the past to the future. By describing the impact of the Anglo-American advance on Native American culture Parkman not only explores the ongoing destruction of indigenous culture and its inevitable disappearance in decades to come, but also explores their past prior to colonial contact.

Additionally, the work of the romantic historians is an attempt to rekindle a certain unity between history and nature. The increasing focus on temporality, chronology and periodization

in historiography had also produced two modes of temporality: historical time (the time of the calendar and historical narratives) and natural time (the time in which events unfolded).

Although these two temporalities are inherently interrelated there is a fundamental disconnection between the two. On a fundamental level, historical time relates to natural time in that the latter is the reference point of the former. Historical time, however, is always artificially constructed and therefore subject to manipulation. For instance, when Parkman endeavored to write the history of *France and England in North America* he decided to focus on certain crucial events, like the battle of Quebec and the assault on Fort Ticonderoga in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, thus slowing down the time of the narrative and highlighting specific events. At the same time, Parkman omits events and individuals from his account of colonial America and thereby creates a time-lapse effect through which the reader experiences an acceleration of historical time within the text. The effect of this technique is that for the reader a paragraph-long summary of the first one hundred years of French settlements in New France will appear much shorter compared to a detailed battle account of the assault on Fort William Henry. The example of Parkman's deliberate distortion of historical time nicely exemplifies a trend among Romantic historians. Authors such as Bancroft, Motley, or Prescott would frequently employ narrative strategies that highlight the interplay between literary discourse and concepts of temporal perception, stressing the conviction that time, like space, is, as Leibniz would agree, relational as well as sensed.

Besides addressing the correlations between time and space as sensed, experienced categories, Parkman's writing further explores the relationship between history and futurity. History (both as historical event and as academic discipline) is always concerned with the relationship between past, present, and future. Indeed, Heidegger explains that history attempts to capture the future, or the destiny of being, in that history collectivizes and objectifies the

manifestations of being(s) in the past. Once the individual appearances of beings (historical characters) have been collectivized as history (Geschichte), they are sent (geschickt) to the present revealing “itself to man as the disclosure, as the truth or how of being” (Gillespie 152). In this process, historical and literary texts function as the medium that establish the connection between the past and the present by relating past phenomena to the present of the reader. In addition, the revelation of a historic truth Heidegger refers to ties the act of narrating the past firmly to the future, as this revelation is disclosed to inspire and instruct future generations.⁸

Not only are historians concerned with evaluating the past to make sense of it for their present readers, but also to preserve historical memories and lessons for future generations. As a future-directed discipline, historiography is always, in some shape or form, concerned with the betterment of society and the individuals within it. Historians may analyze the follies of governments and the fateful mistakes of individuals to teach lessons to succeeding generations, or mythologize past empires and individuals to create role models worthy of imitation. Francis Parkman was involved in both. By uncovering the tactical and political blunders of the French and English he created an effective lesson plan for the young nation and its leaders. At the same time, however, Parkman saw representative men, such as Montcalm or Wolf, as supreme individuals whose strength of character and military cunning represented valuable traits for his fellow citizens worthy of embracing. In an effort to transmit the lessons of history, Parkman related the account of contingent individual actions of notable historical figures to trans-epochal

⁸ A short digression into Heidegger’s historical theory helps to further underscore and understand the distinctly spatial element of historical practice. History and its lessons, as much as ontological truths, are representations of being that have to be revealed, disclosed, and discovered. Moreover, for Heidegger, history as a discipline is not only concerned with the revelation of being in a particular period, but also represents the attempt to explain being within the horizon of human subjectivity. Therefore, the discipline of history must be divided into two modes: a) the history of metaphysics and of being and b) the history of being itself.

patterns of continuity. Thereby he was able to present individual actions resulting from subjective reasons unknowable and unknown to the public as part of larger (initially unrelated) historical processes. These formerly unrelated categories, contingent, individually-motivated actions and continual epochal or even trans-epochal patterns, thus become inextricably linked in the present of the historian who labors to unite them in a retrospective historical narrative (Gaddis 31).

The importance of the present and the future for historiography is not limited to simply extracting educational lessons from the past. Realizing the connections between the past and the future enables the historian to productively reintroduce another spatial element into the historical process, what Reinhart Koselleck terms “the temporalization of utopia” (*Practice of Conceptual History* 84). Utopias are mental spaces that propose an ideal state of social and individual freedom generally realized in the near or far future. As a term derived from a literary work, Thomas Moore’s *Utopia* (1516), utopias are as much concerned with imaginary communities as they are tied to very specific places, in Moore’s example an island of the same name. The writers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century (Defoe, Swift, Moore and others) located their utopian society conventionally in the future and/or in a remote, ideally obscure or fictitious, geographical location. Aligning the notion of a utopian space with geographical antipodes seems logical as the exploration of the world was not yet complete, thus offering plenty of wondrous regions that could serve as potential utopian societies. As the mental space of utopias became mapped onto a geographical matrix, the concept also became vulnerable to extinction. As colonial exploits and nautical explorations cleared with rapid speed the map of the world of the blank spaces that had been the sanctuaries of utopian fantasies, writers had to locate new sites that could harbor their perfected societies. One logical but unlikely space was the past. Now,

authors and historians alike would turn to the past to locate civilizations of ideal grandeur and rediscover them as prophetic visions of, as in Parkman's case, a great American nation.

Geographical spaces of the past (such as ancient Rome for example) now became invaded by the mental space of utopia creating a unique concoction of mythmaking, idealization, and revisionism. The unique advantage of relegating a mental concept of ideological potential (for a utopia always advocates a specific vision of an ideal society) to the past, of course, is the fact that it can be checked, adapted and controlled by the historian who inscribes into the past. If located in the future, the utopian vision carries a sense of uncertainty that remains unstable and questionable.

While the analysis of nineteenth-century writers such as Parkman will highlight the relegation of persisting utopian desires to literary heterotopias of the past, scrutinizing the postmodern heterotopias of Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* and William T. Vollmann's *Fathers and Crows* will also reveal a changing perception of utopian spaces. Compared to the Romantic period, postmodern writers see in our existence a very limited utopian potential with an even more limited chance of realization. This cynical, post-utopian vision, of both society and history, has dominated (with the exceptions of such subcategories as postcolonialism and border studies) postmodern discourse for decades but failed to produce any veritable alternatives. Instead of simply lamenting the vanishing of utopian spaces in postmodern literature, I will therefore utilize Marianne DeKoven's theory of postmodern utopias in an attempt to trace the continued fascination with utopian spaces in postmodern literature and its importance for the negotiation of literary heterotopias. For DeKoven, postmodern society and literature is marked by a post-utopia consciousness. However, these post-utopian assumptions stand in direct opposition to persistent utopian desires and, in fact; it is precisely this tension that characterizes

the most important postmodern fiction. Furthermore, DeKoven suggests, that the utopian desires of postmodern society have not ended with the cultural revolution of the nineteen-sixties as others suggest, but persisted and transformed into a localized utopian vision. This utopia limited, DeKoven argues, has on a localized, particularized, and individualized scale harnessed the post-utopian promise of the late sixties while effectively replacing the notion of a global utopia. Although limited, this concept of utopia “is still critical, still a motivating force for progressive change” (DeKoven 24).

Consequently, the analysis of postmodern heterotopias and sensed spaces will reveal a much more diversified and particularized set of spatial relations and utopian visions than the texts from the nineteenth century. Whereas Parkman, for instance, was driven by the desire to capture the world spirit from his historical subjects and the geography surrounding them, authors like Thomas King are interested in giving voice to the silenced stories of marginalized minorities. This reversal of historical master-narratives not only highlights the formerly excluded protagonists of American history, but also introduces the indigenous understanding of geography as a means to reclaim the protagonists’ cultural identity. Counter-geographies, to use Peter Nabokov’s term, thus are an integral part of Native American postmodern fictions and employed by the authors in question as a powerful symbol for cultural and political resistance.

1.7 The Historical Event: From *Erfahrung* to *Erlebnis*

“Wodurch also nützt dem Gegenwärtigen die monumentalische Betrachtung der Vergangenheit, die Beschäftigung mit dem Klassischen und Seltenen früherer Zeiten? Er entnimmt daraus, dass das Grosse, das einmal da war, jedenfalls einmal *möglich* war und deshalb auch wohl wieder einmal möglich sein wird; er geht mutiger seinen Gang, denn jetzt ist der Zweifel, der ihn in schwächeren Stunden anfällt, ob er nicht vielleicht das Unmögliche wolle, aus dem Feld geschlagen.”

Friedrich Nietzsche “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben”

While the interplay of time and space is at the heart of any theoretical inquiry into the practice of history, these two categories also provide the boundaries for the actual subject of historiography, the historical event. The task of a historian, one might propose, is “the transposition of once-direct experience into historical knowledge” (Kosselleck *Futures Past* 106). This process, the adaptation of a concrete lived experience into an abstracted, thereby condensed, and often accelerated, trans-historical narrative, is governed by several structural factors, most important of which is the element of temporal sequence or chronology. A historical event can only be considered an event and produce meaning if it is regarded within the frame of its beginning and end, for if there are no points of reference and connection we merely deal with a series of isolated incidents (no doubt is it possible though to insert here other sequential markers that highlight turning points within the sequence of actions that constitute the event). Kosselleck, following Gadamer’s conceptualization of *Erlebnis* (the lived/experienced) has argued that historical events operate on multiple temporal planes and must be analyzed in relation to its content and its consistency. The content, Kosselleck explains, is the “before and after, [and] might be extended” (*Futures Past* 106), that is, explained in greater detail, depending on the historian’s preference of where to locate the beginning and the end point of the event. It is thus unstable. The consistency of events, however, is rooted in “temporal sequence” and “dependent upon a chronologically measurable sequence” (*Futures Past* 106). Kosselleck’s

distinction is important for several reasons. First, it emphasizes the creative, formative role of the historian who reconstructs and defines events based on his selection of suitable beginnings and ends. This selection is defined as inherently arbitrary since there are no criteria for what constitutes the beginning of an event and its culmination. Some might say the conclusion of the American Revolution was reached with the signing of the constitution, while others will argue that it was not until the British defeat in the War of 1812 that American independence was secured. It might be beneficial to illustrate this point with the help of some well-known examples of nineteenth-century historiography from both sides of the Atlantic.

Thomas B. Macaulay's *History of England* (1848-1861), William H. Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843), and Henry Adams' *History of the United States during the Administration of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison* (1889-1891) are three examples that share a distinct sense of temporal selectiveness and their authors certainly do not hesitate to omit some events along the way, those that contradict their visions of history, and emphasize others, those that nicely support their grand narratives. While all three, Macaulay, Prescott, and Adams, arbitrarily determine the events included in their histories, they use a spatialized gaze to delineate the significance of an event. More specifically they present a historical space that is sensed and experienced by their readers. In their description of the English countryside outside of London, the temple of Tenochtitlan in the heart of the Aztec Empire, or the physical and economical conditions of the American colonies, these histories gravitate back and forth between a perspective of intimate immersion and distanced "elevation" (Gaddis 17). Whenever the narrative zooms in to recreate the lived experience of the period, the precise details evoke proximity and caution the reader to record the important particulars of history, thereby teaching them individualized lessons (not only factual information or data, but also impressions of

character, such as values, manners, attitude, etc.) On the other hand, a perspective of distance and elevation (freed from the intrusion of overwhelming details, such as sensual details, that, while they immerse the reader in the historical projection, impede his ability to rationally evaluate the events presented) allows the reader to survey the events of the past from the privileged position of reflection and objectivity and extract their universal lesson.⁹

Second, the fact that the selection of the start and conclusion of an event are subject to historiographic arbitration necessitates the assumption that historical events are the result of a process of narration that attempts to reclaim the lived experience of participants. The dilemma of the historical profession, of course is, the impossibility to accurately reconstruct these experiences. Because all attempts to reclaim a historical event are fictitious in nature, modern history focuses on the element of consistency and establishes said measurable sequence in an effort to produce a “fiction of actuality” (Kosselleck *Futures Past* 112)

Historians long before and after Parkman have struggled with the inherent challenges of representing historical events. What many of them have in common, including the romantic school of American historians, is the continued effort to create events that are both recognizable and salutary for their contemporary audience. The challenge for the historian in this endeavor, to create a trans-historical event that is both unique enough to be inspiring and relatable enough to learn from it, is to isolate characteristics in past events that are applicable to modern conditions. Parkman’s use of historical events aims at precisely that function, to establish a historical precedent for the American experience. The struggle of the Acadians highlighted in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, for instance, is presented as a historical precedent for the revolt of the American

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the employment of a spatialized gaze in historical writing and the function of elevation and immersion in historical writing see John Lewis Gaddis. *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

colonies two decades later. Parkman's employment, however, differs from many of his contemporaries in that he is attempting to reclaim the lived experience of individuals not as reality but as mythologized literary fable. By doing so he acknowledges, and cleverly averts, the unique challenge of representing an event, its claim to singularity. Parkman, in fact, denies the trans-historical dogma of progressive history that certain events transcend history because they cannot be repeated, and instead emphasizes the recurrence of historical structures. Parkman's technique thus neatly mirrors the extension of intellectual ideas into his imaginative space of history. In an effective application of Descartes' principle of extension, Parkman uses his romantic histories to allow his readership his abstract ideas and theories of history through a decisively sensual description of events. Thereby he creates a sensed space of history that transmits his romantic theory of history and heroic individualism in a determinate, concrete manner. A passage that nicely exemplifies Parkman's narrative technique is the description of the surrounding of Fort Duquesne that directly follows the scene cited earlier. Parkman writes:

At that early day a white flag fluttering over a cluster of palisades and embankments betokened the first intrusion of civilized men upon a scene, which, a few months before, breathed the repose of a virgin wilderness, voiceless but for the lapping of waves upon the pebbles, or the note of some lonely bird. But now the sleep of ages was broken, and bugle and drum told the astonished forest that its doom was pronounced and its days numbered (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 987).

The historian's desire to trace recognizable patterns through the centuries must be understood as the result of two preliminary assumptions about the nature of history. The first conjecture that prompts historiography to identify objectifiable structures is the conviction that history teaches a lesson to future generations. More specifically, the didactic view of history posits that history resembles a genuine experience, what Gadamer calls *Erfahrung*, which is generated by the work of history (as it is similarly produced by a work of art). As a result of this experience, the reader/student of history is changed. Gadamer's description of historical inquiry establishes an

interrelational model that identifies the interaction between reader and text as the production site of historical knowledge while establishing a “primordial connection between the two” (217), as the subject is simultaneously involved in the act of making history (as an acting subject in a specific time-space constellation) and studying it. History then is not simply the subject of study but the very ground in which we stand at every point of our existence.

The second assumption, according to Gadamer, that leads the historian on a quest for recurring patterns is the acknowledgement that the experience and representation of historical events is incapable of presenting the “full truth of what it experiences in terms of definite knowledge” (86). The essential meaning of an historical event is therefore, as Heidegger would say that which hides, and can only be revealed if the historian develops an awareness of his interpretational situation (Gadamer’s *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). It is precisely this incapability to disclose the meaning of the historical event per ipsum that motivates the hermeneutical historian to reconstruct the contextual the horizon of the past and ultimately relate it to the horizon of the present reader. As a result of this fusion of the fixed historical horizon of past events with the continuously forming interpretational frame of the interpreter, the past actively extends into the present.

1.8 Chapters Outline

The first three chapters of this project will interrogate the work of Francis Parkman in relation to his use of geography. More specifically, chapter one describes Parkman's methodology in relation to earlier generations of American historians and his contemporaries. Further, chapter one traces the emergence of his unique brand of romantic historicism and chronicles important influences. Parkman's method marks a decisive shift in the development of American historiography and is therefore the starting point for my analysis. In Parkman's historiographic method, space is not merely the theater in which history unfolds, but the very essence of historical memory and historiographic methodology. For Parkman, space is sensed and experienced by his historical characters and therefore an essential component of historical experience and its representation. The spaces Parkman conceived are therefore more than representations of past geographical locations; they are highly condensed metaphors that reveal valuable insights into the American historical consciousness of the nineteenth century and the methods a historian like Parkman used to construct it.

Chapter two analyzes Parkman's first major work: *The Oregon Trail*. In my discussion of the text I interrogate how Parkman's account of his trip to the far West reconstructs the Oregon Trail as a historiographic counter-space. Parkman's text, I argue, describes forts and trading posts along the trail as sites of cross-cultural interaction and markers of geographical conquest. The text, the chapter suggests, creates utopian and dystopian geographies that are employed by Parkman to critically examine American westward settlement (such as the Great American Desert, the Ogillallah Village, and Fort Laramie). Further, the chapter interrogates Parkman's description of the far western frontier as a testing ground for American virtues and breeding ground for a new American identity. Characters such as Henry Chatillon and other mountain

men and frontier trappers are evoked by Parkman as trans-historical heroes that symbolize American imperial power. Finally, the chapter scrutinizes Parkman's ambivalent description of Native American tribes and villages.

Chapter three analyzes Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, arguably his greatest work and the center piece of his seven volume series *France and England in North America*. The text explains American history and American consciousness as intrinsically related to the violent struggle between France and England for domination in the New World. As an antagonistic history, *Montcalm and Wolfe* chronicles the clash between the two empires in the transnational border spaces and primordial forests of New France. My discussion of *Montcalm and Wolfe* interrogates, following the same structure as in chapter two, Parkman's employment of geographical and mental spaces as historiographical tools. Thereby, I am specifically interested in his conceptualization of wilderness fortifications as markers of spatial control and sites of economic and cultural interaction between colonizers and colonized. In addition, the chapter discusses Parkman's description of the French-English border as a site of trans-cultural exchange and the important role border raids and other forms of partisan warfare played in the conflict. Finally, the chapter also examines Parkman's depiction of historical characters (including both French and British combatants as well as Native Americans) under special consideration of future American heroes (George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Rob Rogers).

Chapters four and the afterword of the dissertation trace the postmodern continuation, deconstruction, and contention of the spatial histories I have identified in Parkman's work. Chapter four focuses on Thomas King's novel *Truth and Bright and Water* and begins with a discussion of the changing significance of the U.S.-Canadian border over the course of the last two hundred years. Chapter four further focuses on tracing the continuation of Parkmanian

themes in contemporary Native American fiction, but, more importantly, chronicles the ways in which King's text uses the American landscape to challenge Anglo-American hegemony and historical master-narratives. Chapter four will therefore specifically focus on three models of space that King's text employs to interrogate postmodern Native American identity: heterotopian spaces of separation, simulated spaces, and sacred geographies. While Parkman's representations of Native Americans emphasized the transformation of indigenous cultures through the presence of trading posts and forts along the Oregon Trail, thereby chronicling the assimilation of indigenous customs and cultures by an ever-expanding Anglo-American cultural dominant, the counter-geographies of *Truth and Bright Water* attempt to re-appropriate sacred Blackfoot sites as well as discover new ways to narrate the American experience. Chapter four thus investigates how postmodern Native American writers replace the geography of cultural destruction of the nineteenth century with spaces of cultural affirmation such as heterotopias and sacred geographies. My discussion of King's fiction is especially informed by the theories of Gerald Vizenor. Vizenor's writing seems especially appropriate for this chapter because texts like *The Heirs of Columbus* and *Manifest Manners* not only focus on debunking the myths of alleged liberation of Native American culture in casinos and reservations, but also aims at populating American historical memory with formerly excluded protagonists.

Finally, the afterword will be dedicated to William T. Vollmann's novel *Fathers and Crows* within the context of his *Seven Dreams: A Book of American Landscapes* series and simultaneously serve as a conclusion to this dissertation. Interestingly, both Vollmann's 1992 novel and Francis Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* mark the center piece of a seven volume series on the history, geography, and population of North America. Similarly, Vollmann's and Parkman's work focus on the bloody struggle for dominance on the American continent while

extracting the tragic element from the clash of their protagonists. However, whereas Parkman's romantic history of North America focuses on the inevitable clash between two colonial powers who equally claim North America for their respective crown, Vollmann concentrates on the colonial onslaught's impact on Native American culture. Vollmann's postmodern history of New France reverses Parkman's epic encounter of representative men and turns the progressive determinism of his predecessor into a trans-historical mosaic of peripheral voices. Thereby, *Fathers and Crows* refashions Parkman's New France, the ancestral birthplace of American revolutionary virtues, as a space of violent tyranny and colonial oppression. In my discussion of the novel I will specifically emphasize Vollmann's reconfiguration of Canadian geographies (for Parkman New France was defined by its forests, for Vollmann Canada is marked by its waterways) as well as his attempt to construct a postmodern counter-narrative of New France. Further I will show how Vollmann's "symbolic history" (*Fathers and Crows* 939) sets up textual heterotopias that thoroughly reconfigure our understanding of American space and history by supplementing, or even replacing, the principle performers of established historical texts with a host of formerly marginalized characters and events.

CHAPTER 1: FRANCIS PARKMAN AND THE WRITING OF AMERICA'S PAST

"He told the red man's story far and wide.
 He searched the unwritten records of his race;
 He sat a listener at the Sachem's side,
 He tracked the hunter through his wildwood chase.
 A brave bright memory!
 His the stainless shield No shame defaces and no envy mars!
 When our far future's record is unsealed,
 His name will shine among its morning stars."
 Poem dedicated to Francis Parkman by Oliver Wendell Holmes.

2.1 The Invention of the Past: Historiography in America

"History as he [Parkman] conceives it, is not a dry skeleton, which one drags from the tomb;
 it is a vanished shadow which must be reanimated, clothed with flesh and muscle, filled with
 red blood, and made to palpitate with an immortal breath."
 Abbé Henri Raymond Casgrain

Ever since the colonial appropriation of America by European powers, the continent's geography and its inhabitants have challenged established Old World modes of geographical and historiographical representation. Understandably, the vast foreign land and its population presented a troublesome, at times even frightening, enigma to the European mind. It is therefore no surprise that the European desire to understand the mysterious New World is as old as the colonial conquerors' longing for its riches. As we have seen in the earlier discussion of the geographical appropriation of America, the process of mapping the newfound space progressed swiftly due to the entanglement of political control, economic exploitation, and geographical knowledge: for both the affirmation of imperial rule and the extraction of natural resources depended on understanding the country's geography. More surprisingly, however, the New World was also, from the very beginning of European contact, a site of immense historical interest. European philosophers identified America as the endpoint of Western history, the place of its inevitable completion, or the starting point for a new chapter in the history of the West.

Remarkably, it was not only European historians, theologians, and philosophers that identified the “virgin continent” as the ideal blueprint for theories of history, but the colonists and settlers themselves that engaged in the unmediated historicizing of America. John Winthrop and William Bradford are just two examples of colonists who attempted to situate their own social, political, and theological vision within the context of a larger historical process, sometimes, as in the case of Winthrop, even before they arrived in the proverbial Promised Land.

The interplay between geography and history is thus an integral part of American settlement history and has, in one form or another, always played a seminal role in the historiographical discourse of the nation. As this chapter is dedicated to Francis Parkman’s use, some might say abuse, of both geographical and historiographical methodology, it seems appropriate at this point to recount some of the turning points in the development of American historiography.

American historiography of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century can be divided into two schools of thought. Both of these attempts to explain the American experience were founded on the assumption that American history was inextricably linked to the Old World. For some, the United States resembled a perfected continuation of Old World tradition and culture, while others defined the American experience as a conscious attempt to reject a stifling European legacy. Accordingly, the first school of American historians “builds on a sense of historical community” (Mathiopoulos 93). In this interpretation of Euro-American history, the Old and the New World are seen as manifestations of the same universal principles of western civilization, both founded on identical cultural and political values. This transatlantic approach stresses the necessary continuation of social as well as artistic practices to subjugate the New World to European, more specifically enlightenment ideas of historical contingency.

The second school of thought sees European history as the prelude to a redemptive and providential American historical destiny. In contrast to the transatlanticists, these chronological historians deny a European-American progressive simultaneity, and relegate the importance of European history to the pre-modern time. Here, Europe is perceived as the land of the past, whereas America, as Hegel remarked in his *Philosophy of History*, is conceived as the “land of the future” (87). While the above described model of historicity is inherently circular, stressing the repetitive nature of human development, the later views history as a series of subsequent stages, in which the succeeding historical period, by necessity, eclipses its predecessor. This progressive model of history understood the American experience as inherently unique and modern, in contrast to the antiquated, stagnant state of European societies.

Although progressive historians forcefully announced the American liberation from the constraints of European hegemony, many of them were, of course, indebted to European intellectual traditions and participated in a fruitful transatlantic exchange of ideas. Many of the young guard of American historians even studied at Göttingen or Heidelberg under the tutelage of European masters such as Schleiermacher and Heeren. Bancroft and Prescott, to name only two of the most prolific examples of this generation, eagerly employed Hegel’s dialectical system, as well as Herder’s historical idealism to fashion a distinctly American form of narrating the past. By pairing Ranke’s doctrine of authenticity and archival documentation with an unwavering notion of American determinism, progressive historians thus placed the young nation on the highest ladder of world history.

Consequently, the process of emancipating the American historical profession from its European mentors occurred gradually and not without an occasional detour. By no means did every subsequent generation of American historians share the same sense of urgency to craft a

distinctly American brand of historiography. This lack of a unified position or dominant methodology can, at least partially, be explained by the fact that historians until the nineteenth century were “amateurs in authorship, romantic in tone, literary in style, nationalist in mission, and multivolumed in scope” (Krieger 238). It seems, however, at this point beneficial to recount some of the major identifiable currents in American historical thought.¹⁰

The first notable stage of distinctly historical texts in the American colonies was the Puritan era which produced remarkable musings on the function and nature of history. Among the most notable Puritan texts with an historical agenda rank those of Edward Johnson, Thomas Hooker, Cotton Mather, or John Cotton. Although these texts had very little historical source material to draw on, they were astonishingly confident in announcing their providential explanation of American history. Here American history emerges as the narrative of a New Jerusalem, what Sacvan Bercovitch termed an “elect nation” (40), whose prosperous fate was undoubtedly tied to divine benevolence. The Puritan period thus initiated the continual mythologization of space and time in American historical writing. John Winthrop’s Puritan settlers imagined their new home as a City of God, a realization of biblical principles on earth and therefore a revival of a prelapsarian state of existence. But when they arrived in the New World the inhospitable New England coast resembled a post-apocalyptic wilderness rather than a new Eden. Their new home was a fallen world which had yet to be touched by the light of the gospel. In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, his history of the early settlers, William Bradford describes the hopeless scenery upon the pilgrim’s arrival in Cape Cod in the winter of 1620:

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion of the development of American historiography in the nineteenth century please consult Maria Mathiopoulos’ excellent book *History and Progress: In Search of the European and American Mind*. New York: Praeger, 1989 and Michael Kraus’ classic volume *The Writing of American History*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985 (1937).

Besids, what could they see but a hidious & desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts & willd men? And what multitudes ther might be of them they knew not. Nether could they, as it were, goe up to the tope of Pisgah, to view from this wilderness a more goodly cuntrie to feed their hops; for which way soever they turnd their eys (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respecte of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weatherbeaten face; and the whole cuntry, full of woods & thickets, represented a wild & savage heiw. If they looked behind them ther was the mighty ocean which they had passed, and was now as a maine barr & goulfe to separte them from all the civill parts of the world. (60)

This excerpt from Bradford shows that the Puritan idealization of America as a New Jerusalem was only one of many conflicting views of the continent and its function in the context of both secular and theological history. For some, the New World was a beacon of light, for others an island of darkness, but despite their often times irreconcilable differences, these varying explanations on the historical fate and function of America share the notion that this new space is important for world history as a whole. Eventually, however, by the late eighteenth century, Winthrop's myth of the City of God had taken precedence over the rivaling foundation myths of the seventeenth century and the gospel of divine providence and individual prosperity replaced the more sinister view of alienation and temptation Bradford had identified in his chronicles of Plymouth plantation.

Soon, this utopian vision would, as Michael J. Meyer observes, "become the archetypal vision that would be labeled the American Dream" (95). The Edenic fantasy of the Pilgrims in consequence became discredited as historical method but quickly secularized and appropriated into mainstream political ideology. Thus, the complex vision of a second Garden of Eden popularized by the early settlers was reduced to a gospel of geographical expansionism (Manifest Destiny), individual opportunism (Rags to Riches ideology), and social determinism (Frontier Thesis). Nonetheless, one characterization of the original Puritan vision remained constant,

namely the continued celebration of the distant past. The past became the constant measuring stick for the value of the present.

In the era of colonialism historical authors attempted to place the discovery and settlement of the New World into the context of world history. As many of the authors were religious refugees themselves, these texts emphasize the role of the American colonies as a religious refuge and unprecedented manifestation of social and religious freedom. Quickly, however, historians would also turn their attention to the history of the colonial process itself and produce chronologies of the settlements. Thomas Prince's *Chronological History of New England* (1736), William Stith's *History of the First Discovery and Settlement of Virginia* (1747), and Samuel Smith's *History of the Colony of New Jersey* (1765) are excellent examples of that initial body of works.

As the influx of enlightenment ideas brought theories of social and political reorganization to the colonies that would eventually trigger the American Revolution, so did secularized notions of history arrive at the country's shore. This new brand of historiography drew its inspiration from Greek and Roman historians such as Plutarch, Tacitus, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Following ancient models and enlightenment conventions, writers such as William Paley and Benjamin Rush but also politicians such as Jefferson and Madison, now stressed the linear and progressive nature of history. In these accounts of American history individual happiness and democratic ideals replaced the Edenic vision of a divine nation. This generation of historians reflected, what Michael Kraus labeled, "the growing national spirit" (48) in the colonies. In search for a national consciousness, historians would now begin to look beyond state borders and local boundaries in search for a national history of the American provinces. Even before the achieved political union of the colonies, historians such as Yale president Ezra Stiles, who famously announced the need

for a national historical consciousness, were working diligently on the intellectual declaration of independence. A fitting example for this period in American historiography, William Douglass' *Summary, Historical and Political of the British Settlements in North America* (1752), for instance, reflects the mid-century shift towards secular histories in American historiography and the growing interest in transcending localized narratives and conceiving the American provinces as a unified geographical and political entity.

In the next phase, the decades following the Revolutionary War, historians continued the exploration of a national history and quickly focused on the task of explaining American history as the inevitable process towards freedom. The Revolution thus not only provided the dominant theme for this generation of writers, but also imposed its structure on the historical process in that all previous American history was now regarded as the prelude to the glorious completion of American destiny. Among the long list of able historians of the revolutionary period, Benjamin Trumbull certainly deserves special mention. Trumbull's *General History of the United States of America to 1792* (1810) represents one of the finest examples of synthetic historiographies of the period with a heavy influence on the struggle for national freedom and independence. The field of American history nonetheless became also more diversified. As the Revolutionary War had split Americans into loyalists and rebels, so did it separate the league of American historians. While some authors embraced the Revolution as the fulfillment of the American promise and were able to capitalize on the national sense of exuberance, others, the loyalist historians who stressed the inalienable ties of the colonies to the British crown, had to delay the publication of their works until the revolutionary storm had passed. For authors like Robert Proud whose *History of Pennsylvania* appeared in 1797 and Thomas Hutchinson, author of *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts*, the golden age of the American colonies lay in the past. When the

conflict between crown and colonies escalated into open war, some of them, like Hutchinson, even opted to leave their native country and seek refuge from the revolutionary turmoil in the British mother country. When he heard of the American victory, Hutchinson decided to never return to America again.

Yet like the fighting during the Revolutionary War, historical responses to it were fragmented and multi-faceted. Some narratives from the late eighteenth century reject the grand, national design outlined above, but instead stress the local and heroic nature of the American struggle against the colonial oppressor, thereby foregrounding the regional contributions in the national event. These local accounts of the American Revolution reflect the sense of uncertainty that followed in the wake of the intoxicating achievement of independence. In the unstable period following the war, many local politicians and historians feared the advent of an all-powerful national government that would simply overpower and suppress regional interests. The return to localized histories thus mirrors the prevailing socio-cultural desire for state sovereignty that would soon enter the federalist debate. David Ramsay's *History of the Revolution in South Carolina* (1785) and Jeremy Belknap's *History of New Hampshire* (1784-92) are principal examples in this tradition.

The localized accounts of the revolutionary period did, however, introduce another key element of American historical writing that would shape the profession for the better part of the nineteenth century. The post-revolutionary historians introduced the heroic character to narratives of the past and delineated the shift to hagiographic biographies. Texts such as Washington Irving's *Columbus* (1828), William H. Prescott's *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic* (1838), and John L. Motley's *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (1856) accordingly employ individuals who bear an eerie resemblance to biblical saints, thereby

announcing the gradual shift to the histories of great men that would dominate the historical field for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

In previous accounts of American history, first and foremost in the Puritan tradition, the elements of divine providence and geographical explication took precedence over the individual's role in history: for the past was designed, realized, and undone by God's almighty wisdom alone. The Revolution, however, had produced its very own set of heroes of flesh and blood that were now hailed as the embodied forces of history. The correlation of enlightenment ideals of individualism and self-realization had thus not only wrestled the American independence from the seemingly eternal grip of British colonial power, but simultaneously snatched the American past from the hands of divine providence. Once wrestled from God's almighty palm, the American destiny was firmly placed into the hands of extraordinary men.

The emerging emphasis on the heroic individual in history was continued, if not furthered, by the romantic interpretation of American history. The Romantic school was clearly a response, or even rejection, of rationalist and increasingly empiricist models of history. Instead of following the empiricist concerns for political processes and economic trends, romantic historians continued to stress the virtues of individualism and emphasized a sense of American exceptionalism: but it did not emerge over night. A number of exceptional historians helped to usher American historiography into the Romantic age, and, along the way, completed the quest for a proper national history. Among the most noteworthy representatives of this transitional period are Jared Sparks and George Bancroft. Sparks, in his functions as editor of the *North American Review*, first professor of American history at Harvard, and prolific writer and researcher shaped the historical profession like no one else at the time. His multi-volume biographies of Washington and Franklin, as well as his *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the*

American Revolution set new standards in archival research and editorship.¹¹ Similarly Bancroft's *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* helped catapult historical writing into the modern age. Bancroft had studied under some of the great German idealists at Göttingen, including Arnold Heeren and Gottlieb Planck. After he returned to the United States he circulated these new theories of history through his regular contributions to the *North American Review* and his teaching position at Harvard. The principles of an idealist philosophy of history that Bancroft brought with him from the lecture halls and salons of Europe would soon come to dictate the method of the Romantic historians.

With the archival research of Sparks and the methodological innovations of Bancroft the stage was set for the arrival of the Romantic historians. This new school of historical writing combined the focus on primary sources Sparks had introduced with the grand scope of the national school, while infusing the record of the past with a unique concoction of philosophical idealism and literary character formation. This continued emphasis on individual greatness that defines the Romantic school was, of course, also the product of the Romantic understanding of art which hailed the poet/author as an extraordinary person. It is therefore not surprising that the heroic characters of Romantic histories were not ordinary citizens but exemplary men of epic proportions, whose salutary actions placed them outside of the ordinary mob. In his essay "The Failure of Universal Suffrage" (1878), Francis Parkman pointedly summarized this aesthetic principle:

Through the long course of history, a few men, to be counted by scores or tens, have planted in the world the germs of a growth whose beneficent vitality has extended itself through all succeeding ages; and any one of these men outweighs in value to mankind

¹¹ While Sparks was probably the first American historian to really base his work on primary sources, he is also remembered for sometimes omitting, editing, and revising some of the material he consulted. His biography of Washington, for example, famously excludes information that Sparks felt was not appropriate for his portrayal of the founding President.

myriads of nobles, citizens, and peasants, who have fought or toiled in their generation, and then rotted into oblivion. (5)

The shifting focus within the historical profession, away from universal signifiers and geographic emphasis towards a history of the individual, also caused a stylistic debate over the purposes of historical writing. Romantic historians, as their European counterparts, understood themselves not simply as the interpreters of past events but equally as theorists of the world spirit. In that function they were driven by the perceived obligation that, as philosophers of history, their task was to extract the universal metaphysical lesson transmitted by history. In a sense, the Romantic revolution in the construction of history significantly expanded the scope of duties for the historical writer while extending its significance to society to be comparable to that of philosophers, even theologians. This redefinition of the purpose of historical writing and the subsequent expansion of its value, then also required a re-conceptualization of the nature and functions of historical facts. Literary elements were integrated, such as character development, dramatization, suspense, climactic plot structure, and allegories, in order to distill the philosophical underpinnings of history and make them detectable for the audience.

But the Romantic historians were not only concerned with the metaphysical component of history; they also rebelled against some very real changes in the space they inhabited. The landscape of the first hundred years of American history, that Edenic idyll that had provided the background for the revolutionary struggle and caused historians of the first hour, like Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, and John Winthrop, to announce a providential view of history, now had become corrupted by technological innovation and industrial progress. While the Edenic vision of a New Jerusalem remained the ideological backbone of the rhetoric of westward expansion, this very process of continued colonization destroyed the pre-lapsarian utopia the founding fathers were seeking. Consequently, the spatial transformations of the nineteenth

century most certainly impacted the historiographical understanding of the Romantic historians and inspired some of them to seek new ideological models. After the Civil War, for instance, some thinkers, as Daniel McCarthy explains, abandoned the initial mythology meant to create a cultural self for the young nation, which had originally focused on the Puritan New Jerusalem myth, and instead forged a new national narrative through which “the primary Edenic Myth was destroyed and replaced [...] and the traditional American Adam was transformed into a refigured American Cain” (24). These more and more particularized master-narratives would include evolutionary interpretations of history as well as imperial concepts of the past designed to accommodate the awakening colonial desires of the American nation (both on their own continent and abroad).

As the nineteenth century came to a close in the New World, American historiography had matured into a greatly diversified discipline. While some embraced the empiricist, scientific vogue of modern times, as for example Henry Harris, Henry Adams, and even John Fiske, others, like Moses C. Tyler and John A. Doyle, applied an imperial lens to the American past.

2.2 Biographical Interlude

This is not a biography of Francis Parkman, nor is there any need for yet another assessment of Parkman's work on the basis of his life and well-documented personal struggles. Generations of capable historians from John Fiske to Howard Doughty have exhaustively analyzed that particular aspect of Parkman's scholarship. Nonetheless, it seems justified to offer a brief reflection on some of the turning points in Parkman's life in so far as they shaped his historiographic method. Readers interested in Parkman's biography may consult the works by Richard Vitzthum, Mason Wade, Wilbur Jacobs, Howard Doughty, and Mason Wade for a more detailed account of Parkman's undoubtedly interesting life.

Parkman's family lived and breathed American history. His ancestors supposedly included Puritan celebrities such as the infamous John Cotton and many influential clergymen and revolutionary heroes. Among those mythic forefathers was Parkman's great-grandfather Samuel Brooke who not only fought in the Revolutionary War but actually witnessed the shot that was heard around the world in the battle of Lexington on April 19 1775. While some of Parkman's ancestors helped to lay the political foundations of the nation, others participated in the radical economic expansion that would secure the country's independence in the decades after the Revolution. One of these initial entrepreneurs of American capitalism was Parkman's grandfather Samuel Parkman, a prolific merchant, who amassed a sizeable fortune in the China and India trade during the eighteenth century. Due to the grandfather's exemplary Puritan work ethic and frugality, grandson Francis would, in fact, be relieved from the mundane responsibilities of securing an income. In other words, Parkman was free to worry about research rather than rent.

Parkman enjoyed a privileged childhood partially spent at his maternal grandparents' farm in Medford, Massachusetts, where his father sent the sickly eight year old to be toughened up. The extensive stays at the farm of grandfather Hall gave him the opportunity to experience and explore Middlesex Fells, at the time a "rough and rocky woodland, four thousand acres in extent, as wild and savage in many places as any primeval forest" (Fiske 227). The area, today a Massachusetts State Park, was first explored by Puritan preacher and Governor John Winthrop, and provided young Parkman with ample opportunity to explore the lush woods that would become the subject of his later histories.

Once his interest in the great American wilderness was sparked, Parkman would remain devoted to it for the rest of his life and make the experience of historical locales an anchor of his historical method beginning with *The Oregon Trail* and climaxing in *Montcalm and Wolfe*. While at Harvard, Parkman was fortunate to meet influential mentors, such as the renowned historian and editor of the *North American Review* Jared Sparks who was just appointed as the first professor for American history in the nation (1839). After Parkman approached Sparks with a letter asking for research assistance, the historian helped him to jump start his investigation of the French and Indian War, the very topic that would dominate his entire historiographic oeuvre, by supplying him with a generous list of sources and documents. Other mentors of Parkman in this formative period of his life included Edward Tyrell Channing, his rhetoric professor at Harvard, who is said to have encouraged Parkman's love for the English language and aided him in developing his writing style.

Parkman's college career at Harvard barely resembled that of a traditional student. More interested in firsthand experience than second hand accounts, he continued to roam the frontier sites of the Northeast. In 1841, for instance, he visited the White Mountain Wilderness in New

Hampshire with his Harvard classmate Dan Slade. This episode, including a near fatal accident, was later incorporated into “The Scalp Hunter,” one of Parkman’s anonymously published early stories that appeared in *Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1845.

Biographers unanimously stress the importance of these excursions for Parkman’s works mainly because Parkman would record his observations in his journal: including detailed descriptions of geographical formations, weather conditions and other data that would later serve as vivid sources of verisimilitude. Not unlike Thoreau, Parkman would employ his journal as a treasure chest of inspiration and a major resource for his formal histories. The journal’s blend of personal experience and scientific facts constitutes a major element of his technique meant to ensure the verisimilitude of his narratives. The technique remained a trusted tool in the composition of *The Oregon Trail* and *Montcalm and Wolfe*. In the latter, for instance, Parkman employs his observations of the weather conditions at Lake George to illustrate the possible conditions an Indian scalping party might have encountered in 1757 and to recount the siege of Fort William Henry.

The second major element biographers highlight in Parkman’s life is his fragile physical constitution which asserted the notion of struggle as the *primum mobile* of all history in his work. Parkman’s focus on the struggles between nations, religions, and individuals might be the result of his continuing personal battle with a number of diseases, including insomnia, rheumy, and aniseikonia, a rare eye disease causing temporary blindness that continuously interrupted his work. Some scholars, such as Mullin, even speculate that Parkman’s admiration for the English General Wolfe stems from their shared experiences of physical ailments (287).

Although it has been established that Parkman suffered from several serious conditions throughout his life, some biographers suggest that part of his numerous breakdowns were also

the result of a mental condition. Wilson Sullivan, for one, suggests that Parkman's correspondences exhibit "a marked hypochondria" (145), whereas Wilbur Jacobs even diagnoses the historian with an underlying neurosis. For Jacobs, Parkman

unconsciously [...] created for himself what is called a 'struggle situation.' He may well have been dissatisfied with his 'selfhood' and wanted to see himself in another way. As a consequence, he forced himself to play the part of an exceedingly vigorous and aggressive man of action [...] Struggle became the keynote of his life, and through adherence to it he maintained his self-respect. (19)

Jacobs' psychoanalytical hypothesis is certainly fueled, if not validated, by the fact that Parkman, in his diary, personified his illnesses as "the Enemy" (Wade *Journal* Vol. 1 XVI).

But Parkman's personal struggles did not simply urge him to view history as a continuous struggle between rival forces; it also impacted his perceived readership. Almost all of Parkman's biographers have stressed the fact that Parkman was allegedly writing for his own social class, the patrician Bostonians; as Richard Vitzthum puts it, he conceived and wrote of an "idealized image of himself" ("Francis Parkman" 204). Parkman thus imagined an elegant, romantic, and educated reader who expected more from a work of history than historical facts and temporary delight. As an idealist historian, Parkman was clearly interested in also conveying the philosophical lesson of history and thereby instructing his audience. Ideally, his works would not only make his readers see and understand the follies of past actions, but enable them to "respond heroically to life" (Vitzthum "Francis Parkman" 207). In a sense, Parkman viewed his histories as a tool to preach a self-reliant and heroic code of behavior not unlike Emerson's transcendental doctrine described in *Self-Reliance*.

2.3 Francis Parkman's Historical Method: Romantic Idealism and Humboldtian Crossroads

“Parkman is the most American of all our historians, because he deals with purely American history; but at the same time he is a historian for all mankind, and all time, one of the greatest that ever lived.”

John Fiske

The Romantic school of history dominated American historiography for the better part of the nineteenth century. It was driven by the desire to define the American experience and position modern America within the context of world history. For many contemporary authors such as Emerson and Cooper, this search for national and literary identity was meant to negate European social and literary conventions. This “protest against antiquity” (Lewis 160) was, however, not limited to one specific branch of written production, but permeated the entire literary circus. In the realm of historical writing, this quest for cultural independence manifested itself in two dominant schools of thought. On the one hand, George Bancroft attempted to explain the American past and its emancipation from colonial rule by narrating universal histories. These vast, metaphysical musings became increasingly popular in the middle of the nineteenth century and described history as the succession of several grand stages, with the present as the grandest of them all. The application of the Hegelian dialectic allowed Bancroft to investigate the underlying reasons for the constant change that, for him, defined American history, while establishing historiography as the appropriate method to make sense of it. Accordingly, for American universal historians, “history became a myth which revealed the purpose behind the change: an explanation of the very essence of the New World became the crown, the key, and the consummation of a universal historical process” (Lewis 162).

The second school of thought promoted a tragic vision of history. Most significantly Francis Parkman and William Prescott explained the American past as a story of loss rather than a story

of gain.¹² In this “Hobbesian state” the world was a place of violence and conflict (Lewis 168). In the eyes of a tragic historian this topography of war always had and always would define human history. However, for Parkman, this view of history as the bloody encounter between rivaling forces also produced the very virtues necessary for human progress. In the case of American history, Parkman located the defining struggle for American freedom in the clash between France and England. Parkman argues that it is out of this encounter and its culmination in the French and Indian War, with the forced participation of the American colonists, that the revolutionary spirit emerged.

Parkman’s historical approach is most definitely a product of the Romantic movement in American arts and letters. Yet, it is also a reflection of the earliest tradition of historical writing in the New World: the Puritan view of history. Although Parkman had an ambiguous relationship towards his Puritan heritage and hardly fits the description of a religious historian—neither in terms of content or style—he promoted a vision of history that lauded Puritan virtues and embraced British control over the continent. For readability’s sake he overcame his acquired distaste for the Puritan faith of his ancestors and recognized its value for character formation. Many of his greatest historical characters, in fact, display distinctly Puritan ethics and thereby advertise “the virtues Parkman most admired: manliness, independence, patriotism, and enterprise” (Salamon 60). As a New Englander, he not only represented the New England historical tradition, but also felt the moral obligation, characteristic of this school of thought, to incite a sense of ethical virtue and moral purity in his readership. But his admiration for the early American colonists was not limited to his appreciation of their moral strength and capacity for

¹² It is important to remember, however, that both universal and tragic historians viewed the course of history as inherently progressive. Although Parkman’s histories lament the loss of the American forest, for example, they still reflect the belief that the American experience mirrors the social, moral, and intellectual evolution of human civilization.

enduring hardship and suffering. Beyond this tragic faculty, Parkman also respected their unwavering optimism in the process of history. In his historical method, Parkman therefore adopted the “cosmic optimism” (Salamon 72) of the founding fathers which unquestionably asserted that divine providence will safely guide the history of mankind to its necessarily glorious completion. In the same manner as he praised Puritan virtues as universal American values, he embraced a progressive optimism that posited universal freedom as the endpoint of the historical process. While the Puritans awaited a second coming as the necessary endpoint of all history, for Parkman the American Revolution occupies this trans-historical significance. As a result, his writing mirrors a “secular millennialism” not unlike the prophetic vision of history early Puritan writers of history had advanced (Salamon 72).

Possibly, as John Fiske suggested, Francis Parkman is the most American of all historians who wrote during the nineteenth century. Not only did his historiographic gaze remain focused on the analysis of American freedom and independence even when analyzing the conflict between two European powers, but Parkman’s technique further mirrors the introduction of uniquely American themes and motifs. Nonetheless, we would do injustice to Parkman’s complex methodology if we do not appreciate his other inspirations; stimuli that came not from previous generations of American writers, but from European intellectuals, explorers, and artists who investigated similar questions on the nature and function of history.

One of the most important and least recognized of these transatlantic kindred spirits was the German explorer, philosopher, and geographer Alexander von Humboldt. Parkman’s naturalist method, the exploration and subsequent integration of natural settings and geographic locations into historical writing, owes much of its literary success to Humboldt’s groundbreaking scholarship. As I mentioned, Humboldt’s expedition to South America, as much as his

subsequent visit to Philadelphia and Washington, marks a decisive turning point in nineteenth century science in general and American self perception in particular. Humboldt's unique blend of interdisciplinary scientific research, paired with his seemingly insatiable enthusiasm, passion, and creativity undoubtedly prepared the ground for Parkman's histories.

Although Parkman was not a direct member of what Laura Dassow Walls named the transnational "Humboldt network" (which included such notable contemporaries and acquaintances of Parkman as George Ticknor, Edward Everett, Washington Irving, George Bancroft, and John Pickering) he still was familiar with Humboldt's many explorations and publications, especially because Parkman's friend E.G. Squier, with whom he frequently exchanged letters, also cultivated a correspondence with Humboldt. The most powerful link between Parkman and Humboldt, however, is the historical work itself. Parkman not only shared with the German scientist an enthusiasm for the landscapes he visited and depicted, he also showed a keen eye for the people and cultures there. Although Humboldt is undoubtedly more humanist in his portrayal of the native inhabitants of the Orinoco system and the Andean highlands, the two authors are linked by the shared conviction that nature devoid of human presence is incomplete.

First and foremost Parkman shared with Humboldt an appreciation for the natural world. Both of them understood the vital importance of geography for a proper and complete understanding of human existence. In this regard, Parkman learned from Humboldt that he "inhabited a continent that is unstable, shifting, uncertain; [where] the solid ground of the familiar shakes underfoot and betrays our placid belief in continuance" (Walls 152). Humboldt was aware, and so was Parkman, that the history of human progress was a relentless assault on nature, that human progress could only be obtained at the price of transforming the sublimely

primordial wilderness of North and South America into manageable geographies subservient to human usage. Nonetheless, that does not mean that the two writers approved of the practice. Quite the contrary is true. While both Humboldt and Parkman were keen observers of the environmental destruction caused by European colonial conquest, they also identified the devastating effects on the environmental equilibrium. Humboldt, for instance, as Laura Dassow Walls notes, argued “as early as 1805 that cutting down forests causes climate change, and in later works attributed the alarming and inexplicable fall in water levels in both Mexico’s Lake Tetzaco and Venezuela’s Lake Valencia to deforestation by the Spanish” (9). Similarly, Parkman, who was also a respected horticulturist and the author of a book on roses, was quick to detect the environmental tragedy tied to ruthless territorial expansion in North America. In a letter to Abbé Casgrain from 1892, Parkman lamented the continued destruction of Lake George: He writes:

When I first knew Lake George, the islands of the Narrows were thickly covered by pine, spruce, and fir trees [...] the *nouveau riche*, who is one of the pests of this country, has now gotten possession of the lake and its islands. For my part, I would gladly destroy all his works and restore Lake George to its native savagery. (Jacobs *Letters* Volume 2 65)

The above letter is just one example of Parkman’s environmental consciousness. Actually, as Wilbur Jacobs explains in his article “Francis Parkman: Naturalist-Environmental Savant,” Parkman wrote at least two more articles during his life in which he directly attacked deforestation and called for the implication of government funded forest conservation measures.¹³ For Parkman, the continuing destruction of the great American forest directly translated into a process of human degeneration that caused a loss of virtues, values, and principles. Parkman was surely not an environmentalist in the modern or postmodern sense of

¹³ The first article, entitled “The Forest and the Census,” a book review of Sprague Sargent’s latest work, appeared in the June issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1885. The second piece, “The Forests of the White Mountains,” was published on February 29 1888 in *Garden and Forest*.

the term, but his work, without question, was concerned for the environment. As Parkman most forcefully shows in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, he perceived the disappearance of the American forest as tragic catastrophe that equated to the loss of a vital part of American history itself. Parkman's histories were indeed unthinkable without the sublimely beautiful and primordially unforgiving wilderness as its backdrop. His is a history, as he himself termed it, of the American forest; and his lifelong promotion of the immeasurable value of nature for the formation of the American character makes him a "nineteenth-century wilderness advocate" (Jacobs "Naturalist" 343).

As much as Parkman shares Humboldt's concern for the environment, his historical writings echo the principles of a naturalist observer in the Humboldtian tradition. Similar to Thoreau, Parkman internalized the romantic credo of personal experience over second hand reports and was eager to visit and explore the sites of historical action. As I mentioned earlier and will discuss in greater detail in the subsequent chapters, these on site observations, in revised form, would then serve prominently in his volumes as the foundation for the comprehensive descriptions of weather and climate. While he shared Humboldt's passion for exploring the sites of history first hand, Parkman was also a scientist. Besides his personal immersion in his subjects, he conducted meticulous archival research and geographical surveys. In addition, he studied and collected archaeological artifacts from Native American cultures and owned an extensive collection of photographs, daguerreotypes, and other source material which are a record of his methodical determination to unlock the secrets of the past with the help of modern science.



Figure 2.1: This carte de visite, entitled *Squaws Guarding Cornfield from Depredations of Blackbirds*, from Parkman's private collection testifies to Parkman's lifelong fascination with Native American culture and customs. In addition to photographs he also collected indigenous archaeological artifacts.

Image from the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Not to be reproduced without permission.



PUBLISHED BY WHITNEY'S GALLERY, ST. PAUL, MINN.

TEPEES OF THE SIOUX INDIANS,
MINNESOTA.

Figure 2.2: *Tepees of the Sioux Indians, Minnesota*. This hand-colored carte de visite also comes from Parkman's photography collection which is now housed by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

While Parkman's treatment of nature and the environment reproduces many of Alexander von Humboldt's attitudes toward space, his principles on the form and function of historical narratives were inspired by another Humboldt; namely Alexander's older brother Wilhelm. In 1821 the Prussian minister of education and renowned linguist penned an essay entitled "On the Historian's Task" which he delivered that same year to the Prussian Academy in Berlin. In the essay, Humboldt outlines the key ideas of what would become known as one of the most influential schools of historical thought in the nineteenth century: an idealist philosophy of history. Over the course of its fifteen or so pages, Humboldt locates historical writing at the intersection of intuition and science, thereby challenging the claims of absolute and objective truth by other historians. For Humboldt, historical facts, are merely the "skeleton of an event" and "the result of tradition and scholarship which one has agreed to accept as true" (Humboldt 58). These facts only resemble the outward truth of historical events. In order to reveal the inner truth of history, Humboldt explains, the historian must transcend the world of mere appearances and interrogate the eternal ideas manifest in every event of history. In this process of the combination of outer and inner truth, the historian must employ certain tools otherwise his account will be a falsification overlooking the essence of the historical process. Further, Humboldt asserts, the historian must be receptive of and eventually employ eternal ideas, while pursuing "all the manifestations of the mind" (Humboldt 59). These preparatory elements, according to Humboldt, form the foundation for a twofold historical method. The initial step must be the critical investigation of the events, their temporal ordering and meticulous study. Subsequently, once the outward truth (the factual framework) is established, the historian must connect the events and enter the stage of subsequent understanding. History, Humboldt assures us, is not an unchecked employment of the imagination, but the historian "subordinates his

imagination to experience and the investigation of reality (58). While the poet attempts to capture the truth of form, the historian strives to unearth the truth of the content. This distinction between poetry and history leads us to the heart of the matter. Humboldt's theory of history is idealist in nature, that is, it is concerned with ideas. For Humboldt, as for Leibniz, ideas exist as an antecedent in the human mind. These include not only conscious thoughts of human individuals, but also a priori subject-object relationships, in essence an eternal maelstrom of truths. However, in reality they are obscured or obstructed by form and appearance. A truthful and complete understanding of reality, objects, and events is therefore only possible if we can see past the distracting veil of appearances and uncover the ideas, and ultimately the universal processes, behind it. As these eternal ideas are manifested in and reflected by historical events as such (as history is both the result of these primordial current while at the same time reflecting them), the historian can discover them through a careful contemplation of the events themselves. The presupposition of a priori ideas manifest in the process of history leads Humboldt to announce the existence of what he calls the "essence of history." The revelation of this trans-historical idea and the subsequent study of its manifestations in the historical process is the true task of the historian.

In short, Humboldt's understanding of history posits the existence of a transcendental idea in everything that is or happens. Therefore, all events in the history of the world are interconnected and linked to a general nexus. This eternal design is not directly perceptible as it is obstructed by the world of appearances and the limits of human perception. This idea can only be sufficiently revealed by the historian through the careful study of historical events, as they are both manifestations and reflections of eternal truth. Accordingly, the task of the historian is to actively pursue, perceive, and finally articulate it in an attempt to fuse the outward truth of historical facts

and the inner truth of the sublime idea. This is achieved first through the careful study of events and the related facts, and secondly the imaginative, or creative act, of pursuing the idea with all available intuitive faculties of the mind. This process must become second nature to the historian and applied to every historical inquiry.

Parkman was, of course, familiar with this school of historical thought. Many of his acquaintances studied in Germany and returned the continental philosophies to their homeland. Especially Bancroft, as mentioned earlier, was influential in spreading the principles of German idealism among the intellectual elite of America. In Göttingen, Heidelberg, and Berlin he had studied under some of the greatest scholars of continental Europe, including Eichhorn and Heeren. Additionally, in the German salons Bancroft had met many of the eminent intellectuals of the time, including Wilhelm von Humboldt himself; he also dined with Goethe, discussed philosophy with Hegel, and made the acquaintance of Alexander's old mentor Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. After his return to America, Bancroft tutored Greek at Harvard and opened a boy's school with his friend and fellow Göttingen alumnus Joseph Cogswell (1816-1819). At Round Hill Farm, Bancroft and his colleagues adapted the principles of education many of them had experienced and become electrified by during their expatriatism. In the next years, until Bancroft traded the principal's office for a seat in the Massachusetts state senate, his school would shape the minds of such future luminaries as Ellery Channing, James Lowell, and John Motley. Although Parkman had not studied at a German university as some of his contemporaries had, he did, of course, travel the European continent extensively and was exposed to the flourishing brand of idealism conceptualized by Herder and others.

It is then no surprise that Parkman's work is, in fact, so Humboldtian that it can be easily described as a showcase in idealist philosophy. Parkman's *History of France and England in*

America, like no other work in American history, articulates in dialectical fashion the slow and painful emergence of a single, universal idea out of the sustained conflict between two nations. Centuries of conflict ultimately reveal a general motif which Parkman identifies as the primum mobile of world history. The idea that for Parkman rests at the foundation of all humanity is the idea of freedom and his entire life work does nothing more and nothing less than trace the progressive struggle for freedom on the American continent. Humboldt would undoubtedly have been delighted (Wilhelm von Humboldt died in April 1835 when Parkman was twelve) to see the work of an author who wholeheartedly agreed that “the historian’s task is the presentation of the struggle of an idea to realize itself in actuality” (Humboldt 70). But Parkman did not only endorse Humboldt’s methodology for historical writing and agree with the philosophical function of the discipline. Indeed, the American historian even agreed with the German linguist on the very essence of history. There is no question that Parkman and Humboldt consented that “all world-historic progress of mankind is based on the degree of freedom and on the nature of its reciprocal effects” (Humboldt 68).

2.4 The Geographic Turn

It is nothing new to assert that Parkman's work is defined by what David Levin termed an "acute sense of place" (*History* 223). Merely looking at Parkman's texts reveals a keen interest in topography and the places where the historical dramas of the American continent unfolded. Parkman's volumes are filled with illustrations, maps and other supplemental material to furnish the reader's spatial imagination. Parkman was fascinated with geography because, to him, it represented a scientific field that could be observed, measured, and verified. It was therefore an ideal candidate to occupy the scientific substructure the Humboldtian method called for. In geography Parkman had found the ideal interdisciplinary supplement to his histories, as it allowed him to support the factual details with the accuracy of geographical data. The fragile skeleton of archeological artifacts and limited chronologies had suddenly, thanks to the addition of verifiable topographical details, matured into a solid foundation for historical interpretation. Geographic information thus helped Parkman to bolster the scientific impetus of his research and prepare the ground for the actual task of the historian: the discovery of the essence of history. Moreover, it equipped his historical method with an invaluable asset, as the added stratum of spatial historiography undoubtedly enriched Parkman's interpretation of events, thereby producing a unique view of history that certainly accounts for the continued popularity of his work. It is therefore safe to say that geography is the binding element in the combination of scientific base and literary superstructure that so distinctly defines Parkman's oeuvre.

Despite the fact that Parkman's geographic methodology remained largely unacknowledged in its methodological significance among historians and literary critics alike, some scholars have drawn attention to isolated facets of the issue. Jonathan M. Smith, for instance, suggests in his essay "Moral Maps and Moral Places in the Work of Francis Parkman" (2001) that in Parkman

“historical geography is the ground of moral judgment” (305). In this reading of Parkman’s historical landscape, the history of the United States becomes a canvas of “territorial acquisition and loss” which juxtaposes the utilitarian use of space (equated with vitality) in the British colonies with France’s heavy handed institutionalism in Canada (equated with sterility) (Smith 306). In addition, Smith sees Parkman’s treatment of space as tied to a moral message. This conflation of moralizing historiography and descriptive geography then produces “moral crucibles,” places of “formative experiences” and moral judgment (Smith 306). Although this reading of Parkman’s panorama of struggle is by no means a radical revelation, it does offer some very helpful conclusions about the theoretical foundations of Parkman’s agenda.

According to Smith’s analysis, Parkman deals with two forms of locations. The first subcategory consists of what Smith’s termed “impossible places:” sites that exclusively exist in the imagination. These purely mental spaces correlate with what I earlier referred to as “historiographic utopias.” They are both physically unreal and temporally unmarked. Impossible places engage in what Henri Lefebvre referred to as the discourse of representation, an investigation of the very process of conceiving spatial relations in the human mind. The second, and more concrete, category Smith’s essay submits are “improbable places.” Similarly to impossible places, improbable places are imagined products of the interaction between the intellectual faculties of the mind and the sensory process of spatial recognition. In contrast to impossible places, however, these improbable places are grounded in a specific temporal, or historical, existence. In other words they are places that existed at one point or another in a specific geo-historical setting but have been modified in both the author’s and the reader’s imagination. This imaginative rendition of real historical places (such as the city of Montreal at the eve of the Battle of the Thousand Islands in 1760) at the hand of the historian is for Parkman

the primary tool to advance a moral objective, for it allows the author to re-inscribe historical sites with contemporary ideology. In his depiction of Fort Duquesne, for instance, in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman uses the description of the old fort and the surrounding wilderness to criticize the rapid industrialization of nineteenth century America and the ensuing environmental destruction in the region.

While Smith's distinction between impossible and improbable places in Parkman's histories is a useful maneuver to engage the geographical dimension of the texts, it underestimates, I believe, the complexity of the problem at hand. For what is improbable in Parkman's descriptions of specific sites and general topographies of history is not so much the places themselves, but their detailed manifestations in a certain time and space in conjunction with the events and actions that happened there (the most sustained literary heterotopias of this category are the trading posts and forts on the Oregon Trail and the wilderness fortifications of New France). Consequently, the improbable element in Parkman's technique is the combination of geographically real locales and the only partially verifiable account of historical action. Together they form the now nebulous category of the historical event.

R.W.B. Lewis has called Parkman's *History of France and England in North America* the "story of the constant assault upon the American forest and its inhabitants" (168). This fitting characterization neatly summarizes the key elements of Parkman's methodology. For Parkman, history chronicles the conflict between competing individuals, armies, and empires for domination over a geographic space. While doing so both invaders and inhabitants of, for example, specific sites or regions (as for example New France as a colonial space and Fort Laramie as an example of economic inter-cultural exchange) enter a unique relationship with the place of struggle, both on the level of practical existence and theoretical abstraction. While

previous studies of Parkman's historical methodology attested the historian's "sense of over-all geography" (Pease 57), they had surprisingly little to say about the exact role geography plays in his histories. It seems therefore long overdue to articulate the intricate use of space in Parkman's text and to untangle the various intersections of history and geography that produce his unique concoction of historical narrative and spatialized ontological exploration. To rectify this scholarly void, I will, in the following chapters, offer a detailed analysis of the literary sites in *The Oregon Trail* and *Montcalm and Wolfe*. I would further like to suggest that Parkman's use of space in truth occupies the structural center of his historiographic method. At the epicenter of Parkman's geographical system stands the attempt to create sensed historiography, heterotopias of national memory that reflect trans-historical ideas (the proverbial "essence of history" Humboldt demanded the historian to unearth), govern the narrative, and serve to expand the reader's historical horizon.

While Parkman's texts labor to establish a suitable mental correlative to the not fully known spaces of New France and the Oregon Trail, this space-bound strategy is also a historiographic methodology to affirm the concrete value of the past for the American present. In fact, Parkman's method achieves two objectives. First, the histories of New France and the Oregon Trail formulate a distinct colonial claim to those geographical regions by defining them as "American" (by making them key sites of the realization of the American project). In this effort Parkman uses *Historie* (the writing of and about history) as a tool to realize expansionist politics of the present. He does so by inscribing contested areas and locales into the collective historical consciousness as already belonging to the nation because they have been sites, or are still sites, as in the case of the Oregon Trail, of nation building. In the case of *Montcalm and Wolfe* which de facto chronicles events prior to American independence, Parkman highlights the importance

of the conflict for the formation of an American self and emphasizes the seminal role future American heroes such as George Washington and Rob Rogers played in the French and Indian War.

Second, Parkman's writings attempt to reverse the process of increasing abstraction of space and its growing alienation from lived human experience. This, of course, is also an attempt, to counter the temporalization of history. By insisting on the concrete spatial realization of historical events Parkman tries to rescue history from the pitfalls of both the diachronic tradition of historical representation (historical accounts that focus on the chronological progression of history as realized by individuals or groups) and the synchronic method (the unfolding of history as simultaneous actions that act upon and influence the future) defining history as "a permanent present in which past and future are contained" (Kosselleck *Practice of Conceptual History* 30). Parkman, in an interesting combination of the two schools, then tries to assert the significance of concretely American space within the historiographical discourse (in other words undo the exclusion of space in the diachronic model), thereby moving away from the global progressive models of his contemporaries. Furthermore, accentuating the American environment allows Parkman to circumvent the fallacy of overemphasizing temporality. Thereby he is able to counter the progressive historians' tendency of relegating the study of the past to a space of pure consciousness, an exercise of pure representation as the byproduct of an unchecked overemphasis on synchronic models of historical representation. Instead, Parkman's physical geo-history firmly positions the past in the concrete reality of the American forest and the experience of its inhabitants.

In *Montcalm and Wolfe*, for example, New France functions as a multi-layered metaphor. The vast North American forest resembles the intellectual vacuum an absolute monarchy has

produced for its colonial subjects. In contrast to the British colonies, here the population lives in an intellectual darkness where knowledge is controlled solely by priests and royal officials. Therefore, the corrupt Catholic universe of Bishop Laval diametrically opposes the awakening desire for liberty in the British colonies. Parkman employs the Jesuit missionaries as representative figures for the Old Regime, and stylizes characters like Bishop Le Loutre as an emblem for the devastating Jesuit practices in the French colonies in North America. The thoroughly negative portrait of Laval Parkman develops in *The Old Regime in Canada* thus mirrors his apparent discontent with the French attempts to create a Church state in the New World. For Parkman, the absolute dominance of the church not only prohibited enlightenment ideas and scientific innovations to positively impact the colony, but, in turn, draped New France in a veil of mystery and superstition that would ultimately cause the colony's demise. Even the alternative to Jesuits supremacy in the colony, Louis XIV's attempt to redistribute control to political authorities, was judged by Parkman to be similarly catastrophic, as it only replaced the metaphysical and moral darkness upheld by the Jesuits with a corrupt system of royal patronage.

But for Parkman, New France is also a reminder of the violent exploits of colonial power. His volumes chronicle the plight of the indigenous inhabitants of New France and describe their corruption through French rule. As a result, colonizer and colonized enter an unstoppable maelstrom of reciprocal violence representative of the general process of individual and social deterioration Parkman saw at work in the French controlled territories. As the achievements of enlightenment thought were revoked by the return of mystical superstition, the inhabitants of the primordial landscape reverted to barbarous exploits such as unspeakable acts of torture and cannibalism. *Montcalm and Wolfe* and *A Half Century of Conflict*, for instance, vividly describe the rampant practice of border raids. For these guerilla operations, French authorities would not

only enlist the services of Indian war parties but sometimes, Parkman assures us “a few Acadians, dressed and painted in their way, could join them to strike the English” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 916). Meant to terrorize the frontier settlers, the French and Indian warriors would hide “in the outskirts, waylaying stragglers, or shooting men at work in the fields, and disappearing as soon as their blow was struck” (402).

Finally, Parkman’s complex geographical metaphor views New France as the seed of American independence. Later American national heroes such as Rob Rogers and George Washington overcame both the deadly environment and their French and Indian adversaries as soldiers in the militias of Virginia and New Hampshire. In addition, as the theater of asserted English dominance over the American continent Canada, once liberated from French influence, also resembles the triumph of enlightenment rationalism over medieval mysticism. Once wrestled from the hands of papal henchmen such as the vicar-general of Acadia LeLoutre who, during the British attack on Beaubassin in April 1750, “with his own hand set fire to the parish church, while his white and red adherents burned the houses of the inhabitants” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 924), the spaces of New France become re-inscribed as the successful testing ground for American virtues of liberty, individualism, and freedom. Spatial metaphors in Parkman’s work therefore undergo several transformations over the course of his histories. While the brooding woods of the early volumes represent the epistemological darkness of the French colonial system, they later resemble the testing ground for American freedom and independence. Geographically grounded history is thus the centerpiece of Parkman’s historical method as well as his model for the creation of historical writing. By exploring the interaction of space, character, and conflict Parkman creates a historiographic panorama that allowed him to extract what he perceived as the “essential character” of the past.

2.5 Sauntering in the Past

In his teenage years, Francis Parkman began to study nature rather than simply living in it. Instead of roaming aimlessly through the woods fighting imaginary Indians and hunting make believe buffaloes, he began to record topographical data, collect plants, and visit historical sites. Little did Parkman know that the leather journal that he began to carry on his excursions would soon become the single most valuable resource for his geo-historical narratives. He had, of course, always been a boy who enjoyed the outdoors and was blessed with ample opportunity to exercise his inquisitive imagination and desire for physical activity in the extensive forests of Middlesex Fells. While attending Chauncy Hall and later Harvard, Parkman continued to vacation predominantly in Maine and Canada to fulfill his desire for the great American wilderness and to scout the sites of the French and Indian War that would come to dictate his life. Between 1841 and 1843 alone, he scaled Red Hill, Mount Clinton, Pleasant, and Washington in New Hampshire, took several trips to the White Mountains and Greene Mountains in eastern Maine, and visited Lake Champlain, Montreal and Quebec. At a visit to Lake George during his sophomore year, for instance, Parkman spent several weeks surveying the area, “scaling its mountains, and studying all the historic places, the battle-fields where French, English, and savages shed so much blood to so little purpose” (Frothingham 9).

Observing and experiencing the sites of his grand history allowed Parkman to develop meticulously detailed descriptions of the geographical make up of the area. This obsession over accuracy would in turn allow the reader, as Howard Doughty put it, to let “recreation and interpretation fuse in a totality” (247). To capture his impressions from sites and locations, Parkman would often resort to his journal and then rework and expand his journal entries to

chapters in his books (Doughty 242). It is therefore no stretch to assert that the Boston historian, as many New England Transcendentalists of his time, was also a writer of the portfolio.

But his interest for places and people was not limited to the American continent. After his junior year at Harvard, Parkman took a lengthy trip to Europe (12 November 1843-17 June 1844). On November 12th 1843 he boarded the barque *Nautilus* at Boston's Central Wharf. Once seaborne, Parkman found himself in a "cabin dark as Hades" and at the mercy of a "devil of a sea" (Wade *Journal* Vol. 2 107). Clearly not an experienced sailor, Parkman "grew sea-sick by the time [they] were fairly out of sight of land" (Wade *Journal* Vol.2 107). With Parkman battling the effects of sea sickness throughout, the *Nautilus* sailed via Gibraltar to Malta, then on to Sicily. After over a month at sea Parkman was relieved and anxious to set foot on solid ground again and to experience the marvels of Europe. During his seventh months stay he visited many of the glorious sites of the Old World: Milan, Basel, Paris, Strasbourg, Geneva, Pompeii and Herculaneum, London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Bologna, Parma, and Lake Como. With the Transcendentalist clergyman Theodore Parker he climbed the Vesuvius and marveled at the spectacle of Holy Week in Rome. In the Eternal City, Parkman stayed for two months, joining a vibrant community of American expatriates that included the painter William Morris Hunt and Parkman's cousin J. Coolidge Shaw, a recent convert to Catholicism. While in Rome, Parkman was particularly interested in collecting material on Catholic orders and monasteries. After visiting several convents he eventually was granted permission to spend some time in a Capuchin monastery. The observations from his stay in the monastery are meticulously recorded in his

journal and would later influence his portrayal of the Catholic priests and missionaries in *The Jesuits in North America*.¹⁴

In a letter to his mother from April 5th 1844, Parkman praises his hosts as “a very good kind of men” and is quick to emphasize that the “Passionists [are] the strictest order in Rome, —who thrash themselves daily with iron lashes, wear hair shirts,—get up at midnight to make procession and prayer—and live on peas and fish” (*Letters* Volume 1 16). Although Parkman was not a particularly religious man, in fact in the same letter he describes his cousin’s recent conversion to Catholicism as a “farce” (16), he most certainly admired the monks’ discipline, dedication, and their capability for suffering. Moreover, Parkman understood that in order to fully comprehend and represent the history of the American continent he had to acknowledge the fundamental importance of Christianity as a force of history. His stay at the convent is therefore not simply a result of his curiosity for ancient practices, but also an attempt to understand and experience the very spirit that had driven the Catholic conquest of the New World: a theme that would feature prominently in almost all of his volumes on France and England in North America. His first-hand observations of Catholic monks would serve as a main source for his depiction of Jesuit missionaries in works such as *The Jesuits in North America*, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, and *Montcalm and Wolfe*. For Parkman, firsthand experience of Jesuit determination and devotion was, undoubtedly, an integral part of his methodology and would ultimately aid him in portraying the very essence of the part of American history he was going to write.¹⁵

¹⁴ The experience was, in fact, so formative to Parkman’s work that he would commemorate his visit to the monastery more than forty years after the event in an essay entitled “A Convent in Rome,” which appeared in the August issue of *Harper’s Magazine* in 1890.

¹⁵ Parkman’s European tour has been documented well in his own journal and by his biographers. For more detailed accounts of his fascinating excursions on the European continent

Parkman's secular pilgrimage to Europe, as much as his inner-American expeditions to New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine and other eastern frontiers during his early adulthood, are more than biographical incidents in the life of a young historian who enjoyed travelling. They would set the stage for the greatest adventure of his life, his trip on the Oregon Trail, while the journals and observation reports of these excursions would lay the foundation for the vivid character sketches and spectacular landscape descriptions characteristic of Parkman's histories. Especially in later years when his failing health prevented him from new expeditions, the records from his past endeavors would become invaluable resources for his descriptions of the natural world and its inhabitants. On the Europe trip Parkman had the opportunity to carefully examine the vast differences between European conceptualizations and uses of space in comparison to American geography. Most notably, Europe appeared to him as a continent that was historically complete and thoroughly industrialized, with a carefully tamed countryside that was the site of leisurely play rather than dangerous exploration. In contrast to the still primordial wilderness of the far western and northern frontier, even the European Alps must have seemed like a pastoral garden to Parkman. Spoiled by his frequent exposure to the untamed forests and savage mountains of the northeastern frontier, even "the highest, wildest Alpine pass he could find, the Splügen, disappointed him, and he compared it unfavorably with his beloved Notch in the White Mountains" (Gale 42). Although the Alps couldn't quite match the seemingly endless wilderness

see Frothingham's *Parkman: A Sketch*, Gale's *Francis Parkman*, Wade's *Francis Parkman: Heroic Historian*, and Doughty's *Francis Parkman*. Recently, Parkman's travels have received attention by scholars investigating American attitudes toward Catholicism in the nineteenth century. Such studies include Jenny Franchot's *Road to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* and Luca Codignola's "Francis Parkman's Roman Experience." After describing Parkman's trip to Europe, Frothingham comes to the conclusion that Parkman's travel accounts show an "indifference to music, of which he says no word, and [a] comparative indifference to architecture, which impresses him mainly by its vastness, and general grandeur of effect" (14). However, "his appreciation of power, space, dignity, and of human greatness is universal" (14).

of his home country, Parkman nonetheless discovered places of “utter savageness” (*Journal* Vol.1 211). Clearly moved by his discovery of a scenery “like ours of New England,” he was thankful for the change from the polished “Italian beauties of the Lake Como” and could even fancy himself “in the American woods with an Indian companion” (*Journal* Vol.1 212).

While the European landscape could provide Parkman with a sense of ancient history and a possible glimpse into America’s industrialized future, the inhabitants of the Old World offered him a trans-historical vision of cultural practices and intellectual development. Similar to his study of the Native American tribes inhabiting the Great Plains in *The Oregon Trail*, Parkman was interested in the common people of Europe and what he perceived as the remnants of primitive existence. Fascinated by the religious mysticism of the devoutly Catholic Italian monks, he recognized his stay at the convent, for example, as an opportunity to capture the spirit of another epoch. There in the autarkic cosmos of the Capuchin’s an age of mystical wonder and dutiful devotion had survived in the midst of an increasingly rational world. Here, Parkman was allowed to glimpse at the very historical essence that he was seeking to express in his work.

Chapter 2: “WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY:” FRANCIS PARKMAN’S *THE ORGEON TRAIL*

“Wer weit gereist, wird oftmals Dinge schauen,
 Sehr fern von dem, was er für Wahrheit hielt.
 Erzählt er’s dann in seiner Heimat Auen,
 So wird ihm oft als Lügner mitgespielt.
 Denn das verstockte Volk will ihm nicht trauen,
 Wenn es nicht sieht und klar und deutlich fühlt.
 Die Unerfahrenheit, ich kann mir’s denken,
 Wird meinem Sange wenig Glauben schenken.”
 Hermann Hesse *Die Morgenlandfahrt*

3.1 Prologue: Migrants and Mythmakers

In February of 1854 the the German-American painter Emmanuel Gottlieb Leutze sent a letter to Montgomery C. Meigs, an army engineer and supervisor of the U.S. Capitol renovation project that had begun one year prior in Washington. In the letter, which he wrote from his atelier in Düsseldorf, Leutze proposed “that a series of pictures representing the history of our country may be painted for the capitol” (3). These paintings, Leutze further explains, should display the “glorious deeds of our patriots” (3), serve as a witness to “our struggles [sic] for liberty” (3), while reflecting the “the truth of history, with regard to the exhibition of the glorious examples of our great men for the benefit of future generations, and as a token of a nation’s glory, that they may be continued as our history advances” (3). Meigs and his superiors received Leutze’s suggestions enthusiastically and the painter was commissioned to create a mural for the Capitol that depicts the winning of the American West. Leutze completed the project in 1862 and to this day the mural adorns the western staircase of the Capitol. Leutze’s intention in proposing the fusion of political space and artistic expression was twofold. On the one hand, he saw the renovation of the Capitol as a unique opportunity to display the achievements of American art on a national scale while the project further presented an ideal opportunity for defining the purpose

of American art. Leutze's union of art and politics freed American painters from the accusations of practicing a vain and futile profession and tied American art firmly to the cause of American nationalism and the glorification thereof. Leutze's project is thus an integral part of the emancipation process of American art in the middle of the nineteenth century as it helped to cement the profession's thematic orientation and undergird its public reputation.

In an effort to summon the historical determinism of American history, the work was quite obviously intended to celebrate continental expansionism and the recently completed colonization of the western territories as the fulfillment of American destiny. As an artistic synthesis of historical events and political ideology, Leutze's mural nicely mirrors the dominant understanding of westward migration in the middle of the nineteenth century. To populate and control the vast territories beyond the Mississippi River was not only understood as divine providence but also regarded as a political necessity as rapidly growing American industries as well as land-hungry American farmers were eager to satisfy their appetite for new lands and markets. The painting, however, depicts not a concrete historical event (as Leutze had previously done in his portrayal of Washington crossing the Delaware (1851)), but rather embraces a trans-historical totality that was designed to summon the last one hundred years of westward expansion within one radiant image. Accordingly, the canvas is populated by a representative myriad of kneeling missionaries, forest-clearing axe men, trail-blazing trappers, and peak-scaling mountaineers. In the wake of these initial conquerors of the western frontier follow the crawling wagon trails of Tennessee migrants to settle the newly claimed space.

The painting is framed by an "ornamental border" (Leutze 6) which is adorned with the title-giving inscription from George Berkeley's 1726 poem *America or the Muse's Refuge: A Prophecy*. The margins further display the American eagle shield, scenes from the Old

Testament (including Moses leading the Israelites out of captivity) and Greek mythology (such as Hercules creating the Strait of Gibraltar). In addition, Leutze included portraits of Daniel Boone and Captain Clarke and a view of the Pacific Ocean to signify the successful completion of the great American migration. Most importantly, however, the painting neglects the indigenous population of the continent. Only in the frame do we find Leutze's sole reference to Native Americans. Completely eradicated from the painting itself and quite literally relegated to the very margins of western history, Native Americans are displayed as already extinct. Grouped with the ancient myths of a distant past they have been effectively removed from the American present and have become mere representatives of the primitivism of the Americas prior to Western settlement. To be exact, Leutze portrays American Indians in two ways: as a violent threat to white settlers and as infidels. Accordingly, the upper left margin shows an Indian "creeping, discharging his arrow at the hunter" (Leutze 6), thereby enforcing the image of Native Americans as a source of constant danger and deceit. Further, the upper right margin depicts "an Indian covering himself with his robe sneaking [sic] away from the light of knowledge" (Leutze 6). The image clearly underscores the widespread view that Native Americans were primitive savages whose near extinction and displacement need not be lamented.¹⁶

¹⁶ Leutze was, however, not entirely oblivious to the question of ethnic diversity in America. In the final version of the painting he included several African American characters to echo the promise of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.



Figure 3.1: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* creates a synthetic history of westward expansion. The painting attempts to summon the larger historical significance of the winning of the West for American history and contributes to the mythological distortion of historical reality.

If Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* marked the canonization of Manifest Destiny ideology in American landscape painting, then Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* did the same for literary representations of the West. This at least is the standard interpretation of Parkman's account of his trip to the western frontier with his cousin John Quincy Shaw in the spring of 1846. Past research, however, often overlooked that the depiction of the West in American literature is much more diverse than, if not to say antithetical to, the representation of spatial expansion in landscape painting, and that Parkman's text, although certainly innovative in its own right, was part of a larger literary exploration of the West that had started centuries before with Spanish texts such as Garcí Rodríguez Ordónñez de Montalvo's "Queen of California" and continues to this very day.

Yet Parkman's Oregon Trail excursion and its subsequent publication mark the peak of a literary discourse that transformed America's cultural landscape. Beginning with Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), American writers began to not only reevaluate the relationship between nature and art in the New World, but also to regard the travel narrative as a suitable and legitimate genre for poetic expression. Previously, travel narratives were considered fit to record geographic data and biological specimen, to track weather changes and measure distances. Scientific explorers and leisurely travelers would publish their travel reports to share innovative scientific discoveries, relate memorable sites, or simply describe the interesting encounters on their journey. Yet others would enlist the genre to convey moral or religious messages in accounts of temptation and tragedy averted.¹⁷

¹⁷ Travel narratives, both autobiographical and fictionalized in nature, of course, date back to the beginnings of Western Literature. Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, for instance, are accounts of heroic travels. In the thirteenth and fourteenth century reports of world travelers such as Marco Polo or Ibn Battuta captured the imagination of their readers before writers like Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver's Travels*), Daniel Defoe (*Robinson Crusoe*), Samuel Johnson (*Journey to the Western*

In American literature, travel accounts underwent a significant shift in scope and form as the result of a changing understanding of man's place in and relationship to nature. Writers of previous generations had, of course, looked to nature for glimpses of sublime enlightenment and divine predestination, but the geographical context of American life had always remained an external element that existed in opposition to human existence: venturing in this antithetical realm, and writing about it, was thus perceived as an act of intellectual regression.

Coincidentally, early American writers, such as Susanna Rowson, Mary Rowlandson, Lydia Maria Child, William Bradford, Cotton Mather, and Charles Brockden Brown perceived nature as the enemy of civic and moral progress, a place of primordial desires and satanic temptations. At best, the wooded wilderness of the early colonial period appeared as the testing ground for Puritan virtues, at worst the backcountry frontier signaled complete human deprivation.

Beginning with William Bartram's *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country* (1791), but peaking in midcentury, publication after publication left the New England presses that not only debunked the dominant interpretation of the American landscape but also advanced new methods of how to understand it. Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* (1836), William Ellery Channing's *Self Culture* (1838), Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* (1840), Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847),

Islands of Scotland), and Wolfgang von Goethe (*Italienische Reise*) in the seventeenth and eighteenth century expanded the genre to include both elements of political satire and romantic musings. In American literature, early examples of popular travel narratives include Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the travel journal of Sarah Kemble Knight, John Quincy Adams' *Letters on Silesia*, William Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line Run in the Year 1728*, William Bartram's *Travels*, but also captivity narratives such as Mary Rowlandson's *A True History of Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, Cotton Mather's *The Captivity of Hannah Dustan*, and James Riley's *An Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the Brig Commerce*. For a more detailed discussion of American travel narratives see: Brown, Sarah Rogers. *American Travel Narratives as a Literary Genre from 1542 to 1832*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993.

and Henry David Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) are just some of the titles that suddenly encouraged, even demanded, the personal immersion and experience of nature instead of its technological transformation, overcoming, and destruction. In a time of increasing political tension and violence regarding land claims (Indian Removal, Mexican American War, Missouri Compromise etc.) writers turned to nature to discover new insights about American life in particular and the human condition in general. Parkman's decision to explore the Great West thus coincides with, what David Levin has called "a time of great literary concern with American character and destiny" ("Francis Parkman" 80). In fact, this trend was not limited to the United States but flourished equally in the Old World. Beginning with Georg Forster's *A Voyage Around the World* (1777), European explorer-writers began to recount their experiences around the globe. What set these travelogues apart from previous generations of travel writers, however, was their attention to indigenous geography and customs and embrace of the romantic enthusiasm for personal experience and literary creativity.

Parkman's description of the Oregon Trail is thus not an isolated incident of recounting personal experience, but rather a representative example of a major paradigm shift in American letters around the middle of the nineteenth century: it was a reorientation among American authors meant to rediscover the travel narrative as literary genre and to reclaim the American landscape as motif and symbol. What sets Parkman apart from his literary contemporaries is the fact that his trip was not only what Wilson Sullivan termed a "romantic lark in the Byronic tradition" (141), but also a historiographic research trip that captured a historical reality that would soon be extinct. The collected information laid the methodological foundation for later works such as *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth*

Century, and *Montcalm and Wolfe*. In this sense, Parkman's narrative is certainly a valuable "source book for historians" (Gale 93).

The history that Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* captures is of course the history of western exploration and migration; the history of fateful wagon parties (like the Donner group, which Parkman actually met on his trip); and the history of traders, mountain men, and vanishing Indians. Like the Native American way of life Parkman was so keen to observe, this transitory world of conquest and exchange was already disappearing under the author's eyes. Beginning with the Lewis and Clark expedition, the American government, as well as industrious New England merchants, saw the exorbitant potential of the West. Aided by the peaceful retreat of both the Russian and the Spanish presence on the West Coast and the amicable Treaty of Joint Occupation (signed in 1818 and renewed 1827) that was brokered with England, America was diplomatically positioned to sooner or later bring the western territories fully under its sole dominance. In the years that followed, it was, of course, mountain men and trappers that cut the trails into the northwestern landscape and thereby enabled the colonizing posse of merchants, farmers, laborers and their not so reputable sidekicks of prostitutes and gamblers to enter the Oregon and California territories and establish permanent settlements.

While the often anonymous frontiersmen and explorers provided the necessary courage and spirit for adventure to tame the West, obtain permanent control over the new territories also required the tenacious dedication of visionary politicians and ruthless businessmen. An example of the former, Dr. John Floyd, congressman from Virginia, proposed as early as 1820 the formation of a committee to investigate settlement strategies for the Pacific Coast. Clearly ahead of his time, his motion was denied by Congress. Similarly, Hall Jackson Kelley, author of *A Geographical Sketch of that Part of North America called Oregon* (1830), tirelessly tried to lure

people to the Oregon territory, as did the page-long advertisements for Oregon farmland that his contemporary Nathaniel J. Wyeth ran in Boston newspapers. In conjunction with politicians and land speculators it was mainly inventive New England businessmen who opened up the West for American capitalism and subsequently for political domination. Decades before American settlers poured into the San Joaquin Valley via the main land, maritime entrepreneurs who sought their profits in the Pacific fur, lumber, and whaling business, anchored in the California ports and thereby established a growing American economic foothold even in the decades of Spanish and Mexican control. In the beginning years of the nineteenth century, the maritime traffic on the western seaboard grew rapidly, and by the time of the Bear Flag Revolt passenger shipping had become an integral part of the inter-coastal exchange steadily adding to the growing stream of emigrants arriving in the new republic.¹⁸

¹⁸ One of those increasingly popular passenger ships that arrived in the San Francisco harbor on May 6th of 1850 was the bark *Orion* under Captain H.C. Bunker. The *Orion* had left Boston harbor on November 12th 1849. On board the ship was passenger F.H. Jenkins who left a journal of his voyage. His account describes the 175 day trip as “though rather long [...] a very pleasant one” (91). His report of the life on board a typical passenger ship of the time also nicely exemplifies the peculiarities of a trip to San Francisco in 1849/1850. The journal is mostly concerned with logging the daily position of the ship and cataloguing sightings of other vessels and marine life. Besides these detailed records of nautical information, Jenkins notes that the things on board now wear quite a quiet aspect for the passengers have about all drank their liquor up, and have nothing to get high on, but it is to be feared it will only serve to make them the worse when we get in port and to secure a double quantity for the remainder of the voyage, as there are an abundance of such characters, who love it more than their money and when within their reach are not satisfied with moderate drinking (29).

Besides drinking, the passengers seemed to pass their time mainly with speculating about and betting on the ship's arrival date. The treks to the West, both via land and sea, were temporary communities of strangers. As these fellow travelers spend months in an involuntary but necessary communion, the success of their journey was frequently threatened by the outbreak of violence and lawlessness among the emigrants. Often the physical strain and psychological stress of the journey to California or Oregon was released aggressively. Therefore it was common sense and practice to establish a makeshift body of law, a simplistic frontier constitution, for the remainder of the journey. Often modeled after the state constitutions of Tennessee or Missouri this body of law was intended to ensure safe and orderly travels. Similar

When Parkman sets out on the Oregon Trail in the late spring of 1846 he immerses himself in the first phase of the large scale overland migration to the West that would eventually complete the colonization of the Northern American continent. It is crucial to remember that in the mid eighteen-forties organized convoys of farmers and settlers heading to California from the agricultural frontier of the Mississippi Valley were a very recent phenomenon. In fact, it was not “until 1841 [that] the first sizable parties t[ook] to the trail” (Billington 92). One of them was the Bidwell-Bartleson party that embarked on the journey to California on May 19, 1841. After a journey of five and a half months they reached the San Joaquin Valley and became the “first major emigrant party to reach the Far West” (Billington 95). Prior to the Gold Rush of 1849, California’s northern neighbor Oregon proved to be much more effective in attracting emigrants, partially because at the end of the trail to Oregon Sutter’s Fort awaited the weary travelers offering food, protection, and work to the emigrants.¹⁹

In order to compete with the lush fields of Oregon and the shorter trail to the north, California advocates such as Lansford W. Hastings, self-proclaimed governor of California and tireless advertiser of the western Eden, not only penned colorful and frequently untrustworthy travel reports about the journey westward, but also quickly discovered the persuasive power of

provisions were also made on passenger ships that journeyed to California via the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific. On Jenkins’ boat, the very first order of business after successful departure from the harbor of Boston was, indeed, the establishment of said laws. After solving the important issue of dining arrangements, Captain Bunker specified that “there shall be no music or card playing after 9 o’clock,” and “no smoking, and lighting, cigars or pipes in the cabin,” as well as “great care taken in the use of matches, gun powder, fire arms etc” (2). These rules were enforced strictly as an Irish emigrant on board the *Orion* who had frequently been violating the card game curfew soon learned. After ignoring the captain’s request to stop playing, the “large, stout Irishman replied that he did not care for the captain nor any of the passengers, and that he would play as long as he had a mind to” (21). At the next port, Rio, the disobedient Irishman was purged from the ship.

¹⁹ The Swiss born businessman John Sutter gave every new arriving settler work for a fair wage as part of his way to lure people to the West.

modern advertising. Hastings himself, for instance, penned the *Emigrants' Guide to Oregon and California* (published by George Conclin in 1845) to make California the desired exile to his East Coast readers, but also used the book to advertise a quicker new route to the Pacific; this “most direct route” (137) Hastings referred to would soon become known as the infamous Hastings’ Cutoff. The deadly disasters caused by this reckless route, which suggested a departure of the trusted Oregon Trail south of Fort Hall and proposed an alternative path through the Salt Lake Desert, are all too well documented but possibly best exemplified by the cannibalistic fate of the Donner Party. Nonetheless, the efforts of Hastings and other like-minded advertisers of the far western frontier is exactly what fueled western migration and helped sustain the continuous flow of willing migrants.

While modern media schemes played their part in luring Americans westward, literature, either based on actual personal experience or an overactive imagination, was certainly a contributing factor to the ever growing fascination with the West in the collective consciousness of the nineteenth century. California promised relief for the desperate masses from a laborious life in their native states, the great myth of California that Parkman described as “an insane hope of a better condition in life, or a desire of shaking off restraints of law and society” (*Oregon Trail* 13). For the New England elites the West stood represented one of the last authentic adventures in the rapidly shrinking American wilderness.

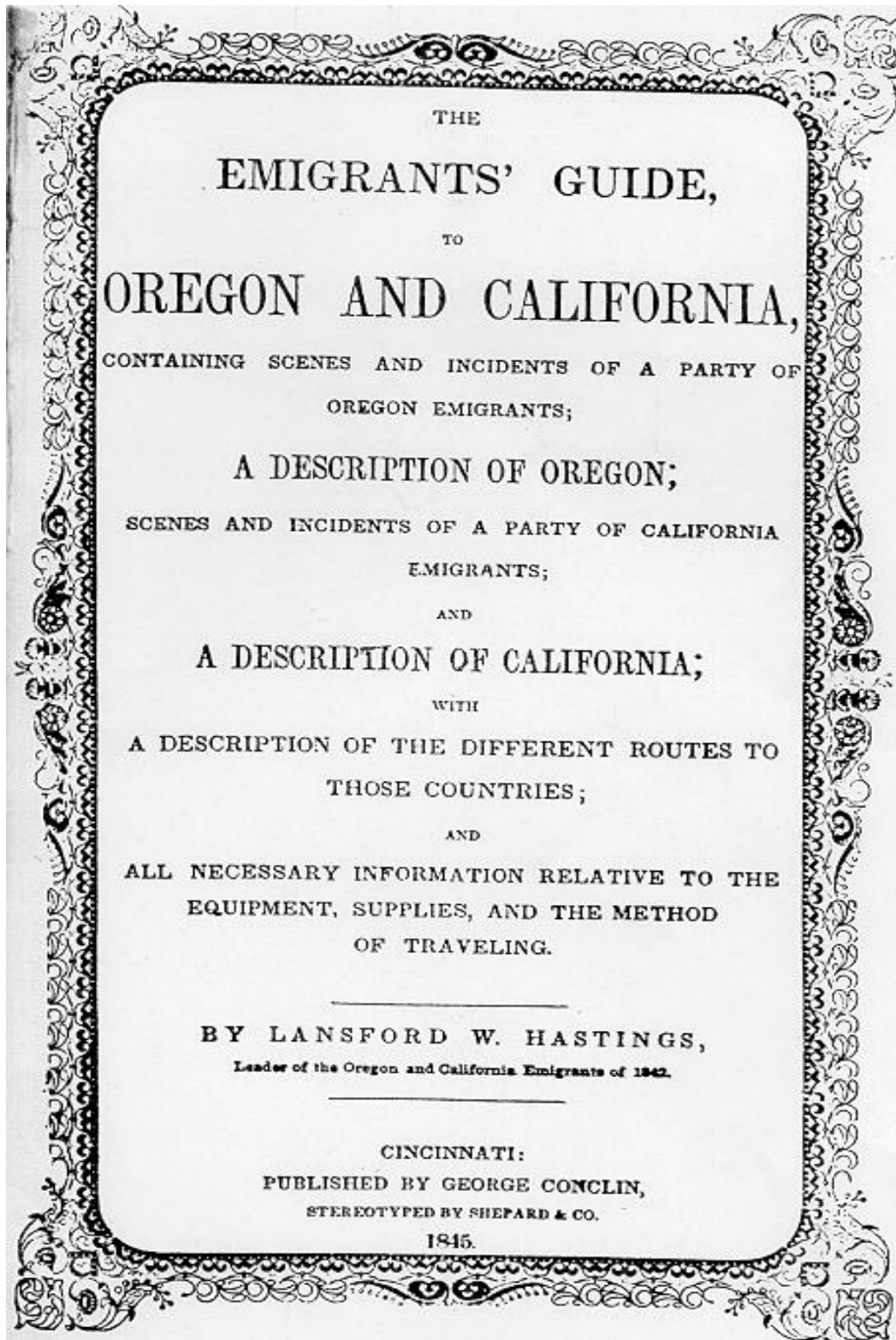


Figure 3.2: Cover page of the 1845 edition of Lansford Hastings' *Emigrants' Guide*.

3.2 The West as Sensed Space

Parkman and Shaw must, without a doubt, be considered travelers of the second category. They were as, Parkman put it, two young men “on a tour of curiosity and amusement to the Rocky Mountains” (*Oregon Trail* 9). This, however, does not mean that *The Oregon Trail* is solely a collection of boisterous tales (although it certainly also features those episodes). In tune with his established practice to carefully observe and take account of his surroundings, the Oregon Trail trip represents as much an expedition as it is a leisurely trip of two young men on a quest for frontier adventure and Indians. Parkman’s detailed description of weather conditions, plant and animal life, even sensory impressions make the narrative an excellent example of a spatialized narrative that not only contributes to the mythological creation of the West in the popular imagination of the time, but further fashions the American West as a sensed historiographic space. *The Oregon Trail* allows the reader to come in contact with an exotic environment in a safe way. As the Indian territories were physically and ontologically dangerous, sometimes even deadly, the travel narrative brought the worlds of the author and the reader together, obviating the need to expose oneself to it. The textual space of *The Oregon Trail* thus becomes a way to introduce the alien space of the West to its readership, ease the fear of its inclusion in the Union, and initiate the epistemological conquest of the region. The text then resembles a blend of the natural history in Alexander von Humboldt’s tradition, romantic travel account, political ideology, and spatial creation myth.

Parkman’s account of his journey begins with a description of St. Louis. The town, overflowing with emigrants and activity, is set up as a last reminder of urban industry and an example of the productive frontier spirit. Immediately, Parkman establishes a theme that governs the entirety of the narrative: the concept of transitory space, geography in flux. St. Louis is

presented as a city of passers-by and emigrants who are only staying as long as they need to gather the necessary provisions to conquer the space beyond the relative security of the urban frontier, thereby capturing the increasing intensity of westward migration. The portrait of St. Louis thus resembles the first stage of Parkman's spatial system and the initial step of the characters' gradual immersion into the alien space that is the Oregon Trail.

While the first chapter of *The Oregon Trail* provides an historical snapshot of the urban frontier, it also introduces the infrastructure of westward expansion. As Parkman and Shaw board the *Radnor*, the depiction of the efficacy of riverboats for the interior trade system and the migration to California and Oregon, initiates the economic discourse Parkman will sustain throughout the text. For Parkman, economic networks shaped the geography of the United States as much as, if not more so, than conquest and warfare. Throughout his career, and especially in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman highlights the interrelation between economic exchange, cultural interaction, and geographical domination. Further, the Missouri River, as all the rivers in the text, functions as a divider between the varying geographic locales, here separating the urban from the trading post frontier. Consequently, the rivers challenge the travelers' determination, thus functioning as guardians of the wilderness to the West and natural borders between two separate spaces. More often than not, the journey on the water is as dangerous as the trek on land, and we learn that Parkman's boat indeed has "since [been] snagged and lost" (*Oregon Trail* 9). As complex spatial metaphors, rivers transcend a mere geographical significance in *The Oregon Trail* and are endowed with a twofold historical relevance. First, Parkman, in a clearly romantic view of waterways, sees rivers as representations of change and intersection. They resemble the fluidity of time and the process of eternal becoming. Parkman writes:

The Missouri is constantly changing its course; wearing away its banks on one side, while it forms new ones on the other. Its channel is shifting continually. Islands are

formed, and then washed away; and while the old forests on one side are undermined and swept off, a young growth springs up from the new soil upon the other. (*Oregon Trail* 10)

Second, the river here also becomes a metaphor for the process of American history and the ensuing colonization of the West. This process, the metaphor implies, involves the destruction of old customs, even cultures as in the case of Native American life, for the sake of future progress and innovation. Parkman realizes, from very early on, that the trail he is about to travel is a path of destruction that eventually will destroy the wilderness that stands in its way.²⁰

The final phase of Parkman's threefold induction into the space of the West is his stay at Westport. As soon as they set food on the "muddy shore" (*Oregon Trail* 11), Shaw and Parkman immediately realize that they have reached the "extreme frontier" (*Oregon Trail* 11), for Westport is "full of Indians" (*Oregon Trail* 12). The arrival at Westport further marks the transition into a true border space and, in fact, becomes the first of many hybrid spaces that Parkman will describe along his journey. While St. Louis, as well as the closed off space of the *Radnor*, had so far shielded Parkman from interaction with and exposure to both Native Americans and migrants, Westport forces Parkman out of his established conventions and natural habitat, and exposes him to the diversity of the migrant community. However, his initial reaction toward the desperate travelers is one of cynicism. From a perspective of unchecked New England snobbery, Parkman comments that "among them [the emigrants] are some of the vilest outcasts in the country" (*Oregon Trail* 13) and that "certain it is, that multitudes bitterly repent the journey, and after they have reached the land of promise, are happy enough to escape from it" (*Oregon Trail* 13). Restrained by his discontent for the settlers, Parkman opts to avoid, for

²⁰ Jack Scherting has even suggested that Parkman's description of water in the *Oregon Trail* influenced Melville's technique of describing the Ocean in *Moby Dick*. For a more detailed analysis of Parkman's description of waterways and its impact on Melville consult his essay "'Tracking the Pequod along the Oregon Trail' The Influence of Parkman's Narrative on Imagery and Characters in *Moby Dick*." *Western American Literature* 22.1 (1987): 3-15.

now, close contact with regular emigrants, and instead picks a British hunting party as his preferred company. While this choice of affiliation certainly affirms the uneasiness of Parkman at this point of his journey, Mason Wade even goes so far as to see the decision as an indicator for “Parkman’s shortcomings as an observer of western life” (*Francis Parkman* 239). However, what both Shaw and Parkman and the group of Englishmen have in common is the fact that they are all travelling for pleasure.²¹ The description of Westport is therefore also an unconscious exercise in tracing the formation of the Western self. Parkman serves as the representative of New England virtues that are compared to the emerging spirit of the West. However, it is not so much the characters on the wagon treks that represent the new spirit of the age but Parkman’s guide Henry Chatillon.

After Parkman completes the initiation phase for his readers—in a sense he represents the eastern readership that would read his travel account in the *Knickerbocker*—the remainder of the text follows a similar pattern. Chapter by chapter the book completes the geographical imagination of the West. Parkman’s narratological strategy compartmentalizes the West into different sections marked by their geographic specification or economic purpose. The major caesuras in the narrative are: the Great American Desert, forts and trading posts, and Indian camps. Parkman’s descriptions of these western locales highlight his attempt to fully experience and comprehend the West in its primordial state while subduing an alien geography by literary means. It is here that the dominant themes of *The Oregon Trail* are developed most fully, climaxing with Parkman’s stay at Fort Laramie (as a description of a hybrid space) and at the

²¹ Parkman’s limited perspective is certainly visible when he is unable to understand people’s motives to go west (see the quotation on the previous page) and when he ridicules the different emigrant parties they encounter.

Ogillallah village. The temporary immersion is then completed by the re-introduction of the travelers into the familiar space of civilization and society.

3.2.1 A Space to end all Spaces: the Great American Desert

“And so long thou wilt be, until though comest to the dreadful sand.”
Dante *The Divine Comedy, Inferno* Canto XIII

One of the most intriguing examples of historiographic space making in *The Oregon Trail* is Parkman’s discussion of the Platte and the desert in chapter six. As the group reaches the eastern fringes of the desert they stop and marvel at the prospect. Parkman writes:

It was right welcome; strange too, and striking to the imagination, and yet it had not one picturesque or beautiful feature; nor had it any of the features of the grandeur, other than its vast extent, its solitude and its wildness. For league after league, a plain as a level as a frozen lake, was outspread beneath us; here and there the Platte, divided into a dozen thread-like sluices, was traversing it, and an occasional clump of wood, rising in the midst like a shadowy island, relieved the monotony of the waste. No living thing was moving throughout the vast landscape, except the lizards that darted over the sand and through the rank grass and prickly pear, just at our feet. And yet stern and wild associations gave a singular interest to the view; for here each man lives by the strength of his arm and the valor of his heart. Here society is reduced to its original elements, the whole fabric of art and conventionality is struck rudely to pieces, and men find themselves suddenly brought back to the wants and resources of their original natures. (*Oregon Trail* 63)

On first inspection, Parkman’s description is consistent with the myth of the Great American Desert that reduced this vast region covering large parts of modern day Nebraska and Colorado to a monotonous, hostile environment unfit for civilized existence. Not unlike the Dantean plain of burning sand in the seventh circle of hell in the *Inferno*, the Great Desert appears as a frightful and dangerous space to the nineteenth century traveler, and rightfully so. The prospect of traversing this entropic deathtrap on horseback, wagon, or even on foot, must have been truly agonizing. This portrayal of the Platte as “a monotony of waste” (*Oregon Trail* 63) was in tune with a whole generation of American travel writers, starting with Zebulon M. Pike (1810) and

Henry M. Brackenridge (1817), who had not only experienced the challenging journey through this barren locale and witnessed the fate of ill-prepared parties, but also subsequently written about it. This first generation of explorers helped to popularize the existence of a barren, inhospitable land in the far West that might just put an end to American westward migration. Throughout the first five decades of the nineteenth century travel accounts from western migrants and expedition leaders (including Stephen H. Long, Thomas J. Farnham, and Edwin Bryant) reinforced this myth of the Great American Desert (Smith 176-177). In addition to civilian wagon treks, government sponsored expeditions, mostly conducted by army engineers, returned with similarly bleak descriptions of the region. For instance, J.H. Simpson, a captain of the corps of topographical engineers for the U.S. Army who led an expedition into the Utah territory and the Great Basin in 1859, could not find any redeeming quality about the landscape and confirmed the dreadful scene described by his civilian contemporaries: “The whole scene is of a somber, dreary waste, where neither man nor beast can live for want of the necessary food and water, and over which a bird is scarcely ever seen to fly” (Simpson 47).

Once the arid plateaus of the far West had been identified as the second largest natural enemy to the settlers (the first one being the snowy passes of the High Sierra), authors of literary fiction soon recognized their potential for dramatic action. Both James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving employed the deadly desert as a powerful stylistic device to intensify the action of their plots and as an ideal new testing ground for the ever advancing legions of fictional frontiersmen. In *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*, Washington Irving describes the Platte not only as harsh environment but also as the cradle for a new kind of American race:

The Great Chippewyan chain of mountains, and the sandy and volcanic plains which extend on either side, are represented as incapable of cultivation. The pasturage which prevails there, during a certain portion of the year, soon withers under the aridity of the atmosphere and leaves nothing but dreary wastes. An immense belt of rocky mountains

and volcanic plains, several hundred miles in width, must ever remain an irreclaimable wilderness, intervening between the abodes of civilization, and affording a last refuge to the Indians [...] The amalgamation of various tribes, and of white men of every nation, will in time produce hybrid races like the mountain Tartars of the Caucasus. (422)

Cooper similarly recognized the unique capacity of the region for his saga of frontier life and the winning of the American West. Although Cooper does not go as far as to predict the emergence of a New American, the author of the Leatherstocking series does identify the Great Desert as the only possible “final gathering place of the red man” (vii). In the introduction to the 1836 edition of *The Prairie* he describes the region as a:

broad belt, of comparative desert, [which is the scene of this tale,] appearing to interpose a barrier to the progress of the American people westward. [...] [It] lies west of the Mississippi, at a distance of a few hundred miles from that river, and is called the Great Prairies. They resemble the steppes of Tartary more than any other known portion of Christendom; being in fact, a vast country, incapable of sustaining a dense population. (vii)

Both Cooper and Irving helped to sustain and broadcast the myth of the Great American Desert in nineteenth-century American culture. While doing so, they solidified the idea in the imagination of their readership that the desert is not simply a geographical barrier that prevents further westward migration but in fact marks a space that is unfit to harbor any civilized man. For the American author of the mid-nineteenth century the American desert was thus a space of savagery and immoral barbarism where only its Indian natives could survive. For any civilized American who dared extended exposure to this place it posed the grave danger of reverting them into primordial savages themselves. The depiction of the desert and western space in general must thus also be understood as a combination of racial ideology and imperialistic geography, a trend that was not limited to fiction writing, but was also manifest in the historical texts of the time. Probably one of the most famous examples is William H. Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Mexico*.

Prescott's depiction of the Spanish conquest of Mexico famously inscribed the image of an effeminate Hispanic culture that was both morally and physically inferior to their conquerors into the American consciousness of the time. This portrayal of Aztec culture was most certainly influenced by a racial ideology that placed the indigenous population of the Americas on the lowest possible rank of civilization. But, more importantly, *The History of the Conquest of Mexico*, published during a time of growing imperial ambitions, served as a legitimization of the ensuing annexation of Mexican territory as a necessary step in American progress. Prescott effectively reminds his readership of the inferiority of Mexican culture by saying:

Those familiar with the modern Mexicans will find it difficult to conceive that the nation should have ever have been capable of devising the enlightened polity which we have been considering. But they should remember that in the Mexicans of our day they see only a conquered race [...]. The American Indian has something peculiarly sensitive in his nature. He shrinks instinctively from the rude touch of a foreign hand. Even when this foreign influence comes in the form of civilization, he seems to sink and pine away beneath it. (19)

Although Parkman continued the literary tradition of mythologizing the Great American Desert he regarded himself not as part of the literary mythmakers but aligned himself with the true explorers of the West. He even scolded Cooper for his obvious lack of familiarity with the geographical region he was describing in *The Prairie*. In his 1852 essay "The Works of James Fenimore Cooper," Parkman proclaims:

The Prairie, the last of the *Leatherstocking Tales*, is a novel of far inferior merit. The story is very improbable, and not very interesting. The pictures of scenery are less true to nature than in the previous volumes, and seem to indicate that Cooper had little or no personal acquaintance with the remoter parts of the West. (373)

Indeed, Parkman's description of the desert, although it obviously echoes many of the above characteristics, transcends the negative portrayal of the region traceable in other writers of the period. Besides its obvious hostility, the desert was, for him, also an endlessly fascinating geography. As a sensed and experienced space, the desert is a location of physical agony and

brutal hostility and is thus conceived as the antithesis of civilization and pleasure. To adapt or survive in this extreme place requires a process of reversed anthropogeny—a return to pre-industrial virtues and skills. While for his contemporaries the return to such “primitive” human roots represents an intransgressible taboo, for Parkman, the anti-progressive locale of the desert becomes the ideal testing ground for man’s virtues. In Parkman’s conceptualization of the desert as a testing ground for human virtues and strength we see the emergence of a methodology that would govern all of Parkman’s work but find its most sustained employment in his portrayal of the Canadian wilderness of *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Similar to the conceptualization of the desert here, the ancient forests of New France become the ultimate testing ground for the protagonists of the French and Indian War and a powerful enemy in and of itself. In such extreme environments, stripped of the corset of civil society and returned to a truly natural existence “each man lives by the strength of his arm and the valor of his heart” (*Oregon Trail* 63); and it is exactly this spirit of rustic individualism that Parkman views as the driving force of American destiny. Nonetheless, Parkman’s conceptualization of the desert represents more than a simple critique of nineteenth-century progressivism and an embrace of simplistic physicality and frontier spirit. His description of the desert extends into a multi-faceted heterotopia that negotiates numerous nineteenth-century discourses of space and empire and marks the beginning stages of a methodology that would culminate in his seven volume series on France and England in North America.

First, as I have already noted, Parkman challenges the geographical consensus of his literary contemporaries in that he forcefully negates the vilification of the region and instead reinvents the desert as a space of individual invigoration and liberation similar to the primordial woods of *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Second, chapter six of *The Oregon Trail* diagnoses a fundamental malaise

at the center of American modernity and expresses the need to return to pre-industrial virtues in order to complete the colonization of the continent. Accordingly, Parkman denies the notion, that for example Cooper had voiced, that the desert could halt westward expansion permanently and instead presents a way to overcome it. Third, as a counter-space to the industrialized East, the desert combines the myth of an idealized prehistoric American past with the fable of a virgin land ready for conquest. As Parkman and his fellow travelers are traversing the desert, they are in consequence also taking the reader on a journey into what Parkman believes to be America's ancient history, thereby familiarizing the reader with their supposed "original natures" (Parkman 63). Of course, what *The Oregon Trail* offers is less an authentic glimpse into pre-colonial indigenous life and more an eyewitness report of the last of many stages of cultural conquest. The "original" Amerindian life that Parkman was chasing had ceased to exist the very moment European and indigenous cultures first clashed. If it ever existed it had surely become unknowable by the time Parkman went looking for it on the Oregon Trail.

3.2.2 Utopia Unleashed: Fort Leavenworth and Fort Laramie

"No man is a philanthropist on the Prairie."
Francis Parkman *Oregon Trail*

The Oregon Trail is a literary laboratory of Parkman's style and themes. At this early point of his career, Parkman was certainly experimenting with varying methods to capture the intricate relationship between history and geography that would distinguish his future publications in general but *Montcalm and Wolfe* in particular. In an early attempt of fusing the landscape and life of the nation, Parkman's account of his journey westward represents a remarkable sourcebook for eastern stereotypes about the West. Yet it is also a chronicle of the deconstruction of a simplistic image of an alien space and its replacement with a complex spatial theory that explains space as the nexus between geography and history. As the example of Parkman's

description of the Great American Desert shows, *The Oregon Trail*, by enlisting geographical description as a means to comment on American society past and present, not only challenges the established antithetical imagination of the West that had been initiated during the era of Jacksonian expansionism, but further criticizes the political ideology behind it. On a much more personal level, the experiences and events on the trail also logically dissemble the concept of the West Parkman created for himself. Prior to his journey on the Oregon Trail, the West and its inhabitants were familiar to Parkman only through the romantic legends of contemporary literature, his promising yet at this point of his life rudimentary research, and the popular press.

The West, for Parkman, thus existed first as a spatial extension of the romantic imagination popularized by Cooper and other authors in the eighteen-twenties and eighteen-thirties. This literary product resembles an imaginary, representational space of escapist fantasies and romantic mythmaking. Nonetheless, it is the recognition of geographical locales as powerful plot devices in these stories that influenced Parkman to formulate a spatialized historiography and extend it throughout his career. More importantly, the West as a concept, for Parkman, was a space of immense political and ideological heritage that was formative in the achievement of American independence and clearly would play an equally decisive role in the nation's future. Similar to the woods of New France in *Montcalm and Wolfe* the West here functions as a site of historical actualization in which the political and historical fate of the nation is played out. In his later works, most significantly in *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* and again in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman would extend his employment of geographical locales as narrative tools and conceive of the Canadian wilderness as an independent protagonist that actively shapes the narrative and controls the fate of its human counterparts. In *Montcalm and Wolfe*, for instance, Parkman stresses the dangerous potential of the forest by saying:

The forest was everywhere, rolled over hill and valley in billows of interminable green,—a leafy maze, a mystery of shade, a universal hiding-place, where murder might lurk unseen at its victim's side, and nature seemed formed to nurse the mind with wild and dark imaginings. The detail of blood it set down in the untutored words of those who saw and felt it. But there was a suffering that had no record,—the mortal fear of women and children in the solitude of their wilderness homes, haunted, waking and sleeping with nightmares of horror that were but the forecast of an imminent reality. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1074-1075)

Although Parkman's portrayal of the desert and the prairie lack the development and complexity of his conceptualization of the forest, he certainly recognized the West as an ideal utopian or dystopian space that allowed a historically inclined writer to interrogate the American past and speculate about its future. Accordingly, the West as a utopian ideal emerges as a space in flux, both geographically and temporally unstable and by no means restricted to specific territories or time periods.

It is thus no surprise that Parkman's West is structured by geographical as well as temporal displacement. The leisurely journey on the Oregon Trail that Parkman's book chronicles was also an opportunity for time travel. A trip to the great West promised the experience of a primordial time: a time of human development long eradicated from the American cities of the nineteenth century. Parkman's utopian West thus not only points towards the possible future of the American project, but also returns to a distant paths to both educate and entertain its nineteenth century readership. William Jordy, in his article "Henry Adams and Francis Parkman" called Parkman's principle an effort to "submerge the present in the past" (Jordy 59).²²

²² Jordy uses this characterization of Parkman's style to distinguish him from more scientifically oriented historians, such as Henry Adams, whom he sees to deliver historical events to contemporary readers (59). Jordy further sees Parkman's work defined by an "emphasis on narrative, synthetical progression, appeal to emotions, a passive reader, the reader's displacement into the past, episodic quality of history with a special focus on heroic actions and special events, and a tendency for explicit generalizations" (Jordy 67-68).

While I would not necessarily agree that Parkman “submerges” his own time in a glorified antiquity, but rather attempts to fuse the two together for the benefit of an ideal future, it is important to analyze the temporal displacement within the text. The *Oregon Trail* takes its reader back to a time before the radical scientific, economic, political, and philosophic revolutions of the Enlightenment heralded the dawn of a new modern age. In fact, *The Oregon Trail* takes its readers even further back, into a time without social restrictions (such as intermarriage and cross cultural exchange) and inhibiting organization (such as a national government and the set boundaries of a nation state), a mythical time of unlimited individual freedom and endless possibilities: a time that never was. This primitive past, historically verifiable or not, was desirable to many a disillusioned nineteenth-century American and the American West could still offer a glimpse of it, including a healthy dose of wild savagery as well as the occasional fatal encounter with the mysterious beings who inhabited this untamed land.

Scholars from Bernard DeVoto to Henry Nash Smith have aptly analyzed the nineteenth century’s fascination with Western savagery and primitive wildness and concur that the tendency to glorify the dehumanizing effect of exposure to unrestricted laws of nature stems from the dominance of two intellectual movements in the middle of the century. The first is American Romanticism and its specific deification of nature as it is expressed by the New England Transcendentalists in general and Emerson’s *Nature* (1836) in particular. The second is the glorification of nature as a response to the strict order of Unitarianism and the social etiquette of nineteenth-century society in general. Here, nature is conceived as a space allowing the individual to reclaim an authentic existence that had been increasingly overwritten by meaningless social conventions.

For Parkman, however, the West, although it certainly also functions as a playground for his romantic fantasies and childhood dreams, takes on a more complex role. As a sensed space, it does not only signify, as Howard Doughty stressed, a means to “to get for a while out of the nineteenth century” and thereby aid him “to a comprehension of the nineteenth century” (119), but it further becomes a complex heterotopia that merges different geographical experiences into a literary counter space that is neither entirely real nor entirely imagined. While it is certainly an ontological tool that helps Parkman understand his own time and place, the mere variety of individuals, languages, customs, and cultures soon renders the West a truly challenging environment for the New England traveler, leading critics such as Francis Jennings and James Barnes to claim that Parkman was unable to leave his Brahmin class behind. These scholars overlook, however, that Parkman’s descriptions of the Oregon Trail are not only inaugurating a new concept of both the West and American history, but also criticizing the very space he came from, the industrialized East. *The Oregon Trail* must therefore also be understood as a form of spatial criticism that, in dialectical fashion, assesses one space by describing its spatial other.²³

Parkman’s trail is clearly portrayed as the spatial antithesis to the increasingly urbanized East. In contrast to the historiographic vogue that often hailed the rapidly progressing industrialization of the nation’s cities as the fulfillment of historical destiny, Parkman was much more critical of this largely unchecked process. Parkman, as his later histories validate, recognized the importance of a national environmental consciousness and therefore incorporated the destruction of the American wilderness as a major theme in all of his works. In his

²³ Finally, for Parkman, the spatial utopia of the West, a place of possibility and eternal incompleteness, loses its fascination. In actuality, the western ideal ceases to exist once the indicators of a successful and permanent colonization arrive at the geographical scene that served as the projection for his utopia. Accordingly, Parkman has little concern for the semi-civilized vestibule of agricultural frontier life that prefigures the Indian territories: for him, this already tamed West was boring and its inhabitants “despised” (Smith 52).

environmental history of America, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, for instance, goes so far as to conceptualize the nation's history as a continual "assault on the American forest" (Lewis 170). As David Wall remarks, for Parkman the urban space resembles abysmal chaos and the growing decay of American virtues and values (30). Consequently, Parkman uses his travel narrative to pinpoint the reasons for the spreading urban malaise he identified at work in American society. In a classic act of literary displacement, he uses the Native American inhabitants of the Indian territories and the eastern emigrants that he encounters on his journey as stand-ins for the emerging urban working class that he perceived as the real threat to social stability. They appear as physically deformed, mentally unfit, and outright grotesque, thus mirroring physically the social disease that is spreading in the nation (Wall 34). While at Fort Laramie, Parkman, for example, recounts the unsettling arrival of a party of emigrants by saying:

A crowd of broad-brimmed hats, thin visages, and staring eyes appeared suddenly at the gate. Tall, awkward men, in brown homespun; women, with cadaverous faces and long lank figures, came thronging in together, and, as if inspired by the very demon of curiosity, ransacked every nook and corner of the fort. Dismayed at this invasion, we withdrew in all speed to our chamber, vainly hoping that it might prove an inviolable sanctuary. (*Oregon Trail* 103)

It is the main function of a utopia to present future solutions to present problems. In the case of Parkman's evaluation of eastern urbanization and social stratification, the cure is present in the guise of the ordering mechanisms that subdue the unorganized territories and their inhabitants and bind them to the laws and regulations of the modern nation state. The vanguards of the economic and political order of the American empire in the Wild West were the forts and trading posts. As they had done previously in the colonization of the American Northeast, these counter spaces first and foremost complete the geographical conquest of the region in that they facilitate and sponsor expeditions, surveys, and other activities that conclude the mapping of the space. Secondly, they represent the arrival of the federal law, although often in a simplified

version, and its enforcers (the army). Finally, sites such as Fort Leavenworth and Fort Laramie on the Oregon Trail as well as earlier sites from the French and Indian War discussed in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, such as Fort Ticonderoga and Duquesne, mark the inauguration of a new economic system (capitalism, money, fur trade, property ownership) and the destruction of the existing economy of exchange (gift exchange, trading, collective ownership). As I will show in a more detailed discussion of fortifications in the following chapter, fortifications are also always representations of the desire to organize and rationalize space, thereby subjugating the surrounding geography and its inhabitants to a centralized colonial or governmental power. The comparatively simple, almost exclusively wooden, fortifications of the Oregon Trail certainly differed greatly in form and function from the massive bulwarks of Canada meant to ward off the continental British army, but are similarly important as historiographical signifiers for Parkman's literary landscape.

As such, forts and trading posts in Parkman's estimation deliver the ideological tools for spatial conquest, but they are also valuable models for urban centers in need of spatial reorganization. The classical trading posts described by Parkman are sites of exchange and interaction between a myriad of interest groups including emigrants, fur traders, Indian tribes, soldiers, and missionaries. Most importantly, however, they are designed to regulate the exchange between these different groups. As a place of regulation, Fort Leavenworth, the first garrison Parkman visits on his journey, is a surprisingly inconspicuous structure. As a matter of fact, Parkman is genuinely surprised that Fort Leavenworth "is without defensive works, except for two block-houses" (*Oregon Trail* 26). Not only is the fort, in contrast to the fortifications Parkman had visited in the Northeast, at the time of Parkman's visit almost completely unfortified, it also lacks the regimen characteristic of a military complex. Instead of a heavily

armed outpost populated by battle ready battalions, they find the post in a state of peaceful tranquility with “the men [...] passing and repassing, or lounging among the trees” (*Oregon Trail* 26).

In contrast to other frontier outposts that Parkman describes later in the *Oregon Trail* and in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Fort Leavenworth resembles a picturesque gateway into a Wild West amusement park rather than an actual trading post. Certainly, this tame introduction to life on the trail serves Parkman well to ease his readership into the unfamiliar textual landscape: allowing for a both effective and poised submergence into the proverbial wilderness. Nonetheless, the very brief description (the entire chapter is a mere three pages long) of the post, displays some of the crucial characteristics of a historiographic heterotopia. First, like all the subsequent trading and military outposts featured in the narrative, Fort Leavenworth controls and orders the geography of its immediate surroundings. The garrison is located at a point of geographical convergence which recounts its function as a catalyst for cultural exchange and center of civilization. Emigrants on the Oregon Trail who passed the fort “could enjoy a strange contrast of opposite scenery” (*Oregon Trail* 26):

On the left stretched the prairie, rising into swells and undulations, thickly sprinkled with groves, or gracefully expanding into wide, grassy basins, of miles in extent [...]. Below us, on the right, was a tract of ragged and broken woods [...and] beyond their extreme verge, the turbid waters of the Missouri were discernible through the boughs, rolling powerfully along at the foot of the woody declivities on its farther bank (*Oregon Trail* 26-27).

Second, as a somewhat secure structure, it represents civilization’s domestication of the wild. While not comparable, of course, to the military bastions of the French and Indian War depicted in *Montcalm and Wolfe* and the complete and total transformation of natural spaces in urban locales, the fort is evidence for the western traveler that American domination of the West is strongly in progress. In that regard, the fort functions as a gateway into the very process of

occupying, ordering, and colonizing an unfamiliar landscape. Parkman is keenly aware of the stability the presence of the fort lends to his own perception of space. For as he and his companions leave the garrison to ride towards the nearby Kickapoo village, Parkman records that the route became “rather dubious and uncertain” (*Oregon Trail* 26). The area beyond the security of the fort is thus experienced as a terra incognita that not only fundamentally challenges the traveler’s sense of physical safety, but also forces him to make sense of a place and its people that he had perceived as entirely alien or even terrifying.

The existential chaos Parkman experiences after his party leaves the fort is further highlighted by his description of the Kickapoo village they pass. While he chooses to portray the Native American inhabitants of the community as “unfortunate and self-abandoned” individuals, the village itself is described as a “labyrinth of narrow, obstructed paths” (*Oregon Trail* 27). Here Parkman’s textual portrait of the spatial geography nicely mirrors the existential confusion he encounters in this foreign place. In contrast to the fort, whose familiar spatial signifiers trigger a sense of tranquility in Parkman, the unrecognizable patterns of the Indian village create quite the opposite effect.

Then again, Parkman’s literary construction of frontier outposts and spatial heterotopias must be understood as the starting point of an evolving theory of historical space. As such, his conceptualization of forts in *The Oregon Trail* reflects Parkman’s emerging interest in the formation of hybrid spaces of cultural interaction that would be continued in his portrayal of New France and the French and Indian War. And even in the short passage on Fort Leavenworth and the adjoining Kickapoo and Pottawattamie villages, he presents to the reader an example of the developing intercultural and interracial relationships that are forming along the Oregon Trail which defy the social conventions of the nineteenth century. Parkman’s case study for the impact

of frontier life and culture on the individual is an unidentified trader. The Kickapoo trader, “a blue-eyed, open-faced man, who neither in his manners nor his appearance betrayed any of the roughness of the frontier” (*Oregon Trail* 27), has three distinct functions in the chapter. First, he is a testimony to the lively frontier economy along the Oregon Trail and the importance of commerce as a means of spatial conquest in the winning of the West. In addition, the Kickapoo trader also must be regarded as part of Parkman’s idealization of frontier individuals such as his guide Henry Chatillon. Finally, the character portrait aids his ongoing effort to display a utopian American character that would embody a perfected combination of New England intellectualism and Western toughness. Once invited into the trader’s home, Parkman is surprised to find “a well-filled book case [that] would not have disgraced an eastern city” (*Oregon Trail* 28). But since this was an isolated log home in the Missouri wilderness and not a Boston town house, “pistol loaded and capped lay on the mantel-piece; and through the glass of the book case, peeping above the works of John Milton, glittered the handle of a very mischievous-looking knife” (*Oregon Trail* 28). Yet for Parkman the frontier is a space in which individuals not only combine eastern virtues and western qualities. The unexplored West is also a theater in which social restrictions, sexual taboos, and formerly prohibited relationships can be explored. While at lunch at the trader’s home, Parkman observes that his hostess was “a very rich and luxuriant specimen of creole beauty,” (*Oregon Trail* 28) thus highlighting the new forms of partnerships that developed among the unbound individuals along the far western frontier.

The description of Fort Leavenworth is a quick glimpse into trading post life and a methodological blueprint for his early strategy of exploring space through literature. For Parkman, however, the visit to the garrison was unfulfilling, short, and uneventful. The second major description of a frontier outpost appears much later in the narrative. By the time Parkman

reaches Fort Laramie he has been on the trail for about a month and a half and the episode follows significant turning points in the text, such as the crossing of the Platte desert and the participation in a buffalo hunt.

The account of his stay at Fort Laramie is constructed as a retrospective memory: another crucial narratological device that will inform all of Parkman's writing in the future.²⁴ In contrast to the report of Fort Leavenworth, which was covered in medias res in the fashion of a journal entry, Parkman deliberately reminds the reader at the beginning of chapter nine that the following pages were reconstructed from the distant safety of his Boston home:

Looking back, after the expiration of a year, upon Fort Laramie and its inmates, they seem less like a reality than like some fanciful picture of the olden time; so different was the scene from any which this tamer side of the world can present. (*Oregon Trail* 97)

The narrative strategy Parkman adapted for this passage clearly establishes a temporal as well as a geographical remove that serves to strengthen the notion of "time travel" discussed earlier in this chapter. As a result, Parkman, on one level, aims to bolster his depiction of Native American culture as primordial while simultaneously allowing for a stronger emphasis on authorial commentary and the intensification of historiographic authority. It is thus crucial to regard the "Scenes at Fort Laramie" (*Oregon Trail* 96) as a carefully reconstructed narrative rather than an extemporaneous travel report.

In contrast to Fort Leavenworth, the heavily fortified Fort Laramie is not a place of tranquil security and open hospitality that willingly welcomes wayfaring travelers. Upon arrival Parkman and his companions are greeted with immediate suspicion, even hostility, as the commanding bourgeois Bordeaux "did not honor [them] with a single word" (*Oregon Trail* 96). It takes the

²⁴ Parkman's description of LaSalle's expedition on the Mississippi, for instance, is largely based on his own tours on the river; so is the historian's description of Lake George and the surrounding mountain ranges in *Montcalm and Wolfe*.

negotiation skills of Henry Chatillon and a letter of permission from the American Fur Company to secure entry into the fort. While the opening scene of the chapter nicely exemplifies the growing bureaucratization of the Indian territories and the swift disappearance of limitless and uncontrolled space (now even a trip to the Wild requires a passport), it also shows the immense power of the trading companies in the western territories. Whereas Fort Leavenworth was controlled by the U.S. Army, Parkman here experiences the boundaries of governmentally sanctioned law and order. Instead of abiding by the American constitution, Fort Laramie obeys only to the laws of profit.²⁵ Consequently, Parkman quickly realizes that around Fort Laramie the American Fur Company's "officials rule with an absolute sway" and that "the arm of the United States has little force" (*Oregon Trail* 97).²⁶

The absence of proper law enforcement, quite surprisingly, creates an atmosphere of paranoia and entrapment among the inhabitants of the fort. Instead of depicting a place filled with frontier liberty, Parkman describes life at the outpost as a form of imprisonment: "Beneath us was the square area surrounded by little rooms, or rather cells, which opened upon it" (*Oregon Trail* 97). The gloomy sense of imprisonment that Fort Laramie exerts is further reinforced by the fifteen foot walls that surround the fort as well as the presence of heavily reinforced gates and other security devices that are meant to protect the inhabitants from Indian attacks. Overall, the garrison resembles a space of violence and fear, devoid of the enchanting optimism and

²⁵ The confusion of values and morale that Parkman senses at work at the post is nicely illustrated by his description of bourgeois Papin's apartment. Next to a crucifix, Parkman discovers "a recent scalp, with hair full a yard long, [...] suspended from a nail" (*Oregon Trail* 97).

²⁶ The fur companies' almighty power in the frontier wilderness represents another theme that fascinated Parkman for the rest of his life. While his texts hail the adventurous spirit of the backwoods trappers, he often laments the corruption and moral depravity that would permeate the business. Especially in *Montcalm and Wolfe* Parkman sees in the widespread bribery and fraud in the trading posts a reflection of the French colony's general failure.

peacefulness Parkman had traced at Fort Leavenworth. The construction of a space of voluntary self-imprisonment echoes the inhabitants' perception of their habitat. Especially because Fort Laramie is located in a contested territory quite different from the banks of the Missouri River that Parkman had traversed at the beginning of his journey, the outpost's architecture reflects the traders' anxiety in this hostile environment. Here, Parkman thus begins to develop the theme of an antagonistic geography later perfected in his portrayal of the Canadian forest in *Montcalm and Wolfe*. In and around Fort Laramie we consequently witness a much bleaker vision of the western conquest that is mirrored not only in the paranoid design of the fort itself but also by the geography surrounding it. Gone are the lush forests of the Missouri valley and the rolling prairie that Fort Leavenworth was overlooking, now Parkman can only record "the wild and desolate plains that surround the fort" (*Oregon Trail* 97). Out here in the far western frontier, the seemingly assured national destiny of civilization's dominance over the continent as Leutze had depicted seems much more uncertain than at the onset of Parkman's excursion.

Despite Parkman's ominous opening paragraphs of the chapter, Fort Laramie serves as a formidable historiographic counter space within his conceptualization of the West. Not only does the garrison mark the last stage of the travelers' immersion into the West—as they have now truly arrived in the "wild" West—it also symbolizes the mechanisms of frontier economy like no other passage in the text. The design of Fort Laramie, in fact, here functions as a spatial metaphor for the entire process of economic as well as cultural exchange on the Oregon Trail.

Parkman describes the layout of the post in the following fashion:

Within, the fort is divided by a partition; on one side is the square area, surrounded by the store-rooms, offices, and apartments of the inmates; on the other is the *corral*, a narrow place, encompassed by the high clay walls, where at night, or in presence of dangerous Indians, the horses and mules of the fort are crowded for safe keeping. The main entrance has two gates, with an arched passage intervening. A little square window, quite high above the ground, opens laterally from an adjoining chamber into this passage; so that

when the inner gate is closed and barred, a person without may still hold communication with those within, through this narrow aperture. This obviates the necessity of admitting suspicious Indians, for purposes of trading into the body of the fort, for when danger is apprehended, the inner gate is shut fast, and all traffic is carried on by means of the little window (*Oregon Trail* 98).

This description of the fort clearly conceptualizes the space of the trading post in two distinct ways. First, the garrison here is perceived as a place of protection for the traders inside and a space of refuge for passing emigrants; an intricate complex that protects smooth business operations even under dangerous, war like, circumstances. The fort marks first and foremost a space that is meant to guarantee operational functionality under all circumstances: yet by doing so it is also a space of ideological selection and separation. The view of the fort clearly distinguishes between potential aggressors and peaceful business man. It thus fashions a narrative of imperial American distress. In fact, in an ironic twist, Parkman's report on the fort depicts the traders of the American Fur Company as those in existential physical danger and threatened by looming genocidal extinction. Here, it is the white invaders, not the indigenous cultures that are threatened by devilish brutes and hostile environs.

Second, Parkman here conceives the fort as a selectively permeable membrane that regulates economy, communication, and cultural exchange. The specific layout of the garrison with its two gates, the inner and outer security ring, and the emergency window, allows the occupants to effectively prevent the invasion of "the body of the fort" (*Oregon Trail* 98) by harmful aggressors. Parkman thus also comments at this point on the effect of frontier life on the social and individual body. In other words, as Wall convincingly suggests, the metaphor of the body here becomes the "nexus of all of Parkman's cultural anxieties over control, instability and chaos" (40).

Unlike Fort Leavenworth, Fort Laramie, especially because it is surrounded and frequently invaded by Native American bands—whenever Indians are allowed into the fort for trading—transforms into a truly hybrid environment in which American, Franco-Canadian, English, and various Native American customs fuse together to form the very essence of Western hybridity Parkman was so fascinated by. Not only do the wall decorations in some of the garrison’s rooms feature crucifixes and fresh scalps side by side (*Oregon Trail* 97); Parkman also notes the “numerous squaws” living with many of the employees (*Oregon Trail* 97). The trading post is most notably a place of economic and personal interaction, but, in an interesting and somewhat involuntary way, a space that also protects Native American customs and traditions. Parkman’s description of the surrounding of the fort notes the presence of several ceremonial sites, including “buffalo skulls, arranged in the mystic circle commonly seen at Indian places of sepulture upon the prairie” (*Oregon Trail* 99). Parkman explains that the memorial alongside a number of funeral scaffolds belong to a traditional burial site for deceased Dacotah chiefs that were erected “in the vicinity of the fort, in the hope that they may thus be protected from violation at the hands of their enemies” (*Oregon Trail* 99). Thus Fort Laramie, because of its military and economic power, helps to halt the destruction of Native American culture threatened by rivaling tribes. In the end, however, the hopes of the Dacotahs to save their deceased ancestors from the wrath of a Crow war party are left unfulfilled. Hostile Crows regularly attacked the site despite the close vicinity to the fort and “thrown the bodies from the scaffolds, and broken them to pieces” (*Oregon Trail* 99).

The depictions of Fort Leavenworth and Fort Laramie are powerful testimonies to the hybrid spaces that emerged along the Oregon Trail. Both chapters exemplify the ontological challenge, if not chaos, exposure to this volatile environment posed for the traveler. Parkman is no

exception here. Further, the forts show how an untamed and uncontrolled space like the Oregon Trail facilitates culture crossing and cultural interaction, while even producing new forms of human relationships that were unthinkable in the old East. Above all else, Parkman's reports on life at frontier outposts testify the most to the rapid extinction of Native American culture and the equally swift economic expansion of American capitalism exemplified by the all-powerful presence of the trading companies. While *The Oregon Trail* chronicles these rapid transformations and thereby alters the concept of space for the reader, it also uses the descriptions of economic encounters to solidify the larger utopian space Parkman is constructing. Each of the garrisons Parkman and his company visit functions as a utopian counter space in which radical social experiments are conducted and potential futures for American society are negotiated. The frontier fortresses are consequently conceived as uniquely American spaces although they are not technically part of the United States yet. Similar to the wilderness garrisons of New France, the forts of the Oregon Trail harbor an "Americanness" that, for Parkman, transcends the boundaries of modern nation states, but and emerges from the natural environment itself.

Finally, the week-long stay at Fort Laramie marks a decisive step in Parkman's personal goal of experiencing Native American life and culture. Unpleasantly disturbed by the arrival of a "crowd of broad-brimmed hats, thin visages, and staring eyes" (*Oregon Trail* 103), Parkman and Shaw seek refuge from a large outfit of emigrants in a nearby Ogillallah village. For the remainder of their stay at the outpost, they spend each evening in the company of chief Old Smoke and other high ranking members of the community and are exposed to a number of Dacotah customs, including the celebratory consumption of a dog, and in return introduce the villagers to homeopathic medicine. While the passage, on a narratological level, foreshadows

Parkman's later stay at an Ogillallah village, it also underscores the text's investigation of intercultural exchange. Unlike earlier chapters in which Parkman mainly observed and recorded the process of cultural hybridity, he now begins to actively participate in it. Thereby, not only Parkman the traveler, but also the readers become active participants, in the experience of Western culture and the formation of a new American self. In addition, exposure to and experience of authentic Native American rituals enable Parkman to conclude his journey into a primordial America and thus allow the reader a glimpse into an American culture long since disappeared: a process that finds its most complete representation later in Parkman's stay at the Ogillallah village.



Figure 3.3: A watercolor painting of Fort Laramie by Alfred Jacob Miller (1858-60). Miller visited the fort as a member of a western expedition led by Captain William Drummond Stewart in 1837. On the journey, Miller prepared a number of sketches that he later used as the basis for more elaborate depictions of the West. This painting is one example of these works and depicts the activity surrounding the Fort Laramie.



Figure 3.4: Karl Bodmer's *Offering of the Mandan Indians*. The painting depicts a ritual site similar to what Parkman describes in *The Oregon Trail*. Like Miller, Bodmer used his impressionistic sketches that he drew as a member of the Wied expedition in 1833 as the foundation for detailed depictions of western life.

3.2.3 Pastime Paradise and Primordial Prison: The Ogillallah Camp

“Having been domesticated for several weeks among one of the wildest of the wild hordes that roam over the remote prairies, I had extraordinary opportunities of observing them, and I flatter myself that a faithful picture of the scenes that passed daily before my eyes may not be devoid of interest and value. These men were thorough savages. Neither their manners nor their ideas were in the slightest degree modified by contact with civilization.”

Francis Parkman *The Oregon Trail*

Parkman’s notion of Native American environs as a place of true savagery and primitivism, a space which had successfully repelled the civilizing attempts of missionaries and was still governed by the primeval forces of nature, developed out of the privileged position of a man who is independently wealthy and blessed with the time and resources to embrace the vogue of “primitivism.” What ultimately destroyed Parkman’s utopian fantasy of life on the plains was not solely the internal depravity that he believed to exist in the Indian soul, but was as much the unstoppable lindworm of progress that was mercilessly destroying the Native American way of life. Traders, trappers, and tourists; they all helped to relegate the Shawanoes, Delawares, Dakotas, Sioux, and Pawnees into an existence of economic dependency and thereby contributed to the extermination of “authentic” pre-American culture Parkman was so desperately searching for. It is thus no surprise that the most extensive account of Native American life and culture in *The Oregon Trail*, the report on Parkman’s stay at the Ogillallah village, is not the exuberant romantic description of a more primitive, simpler American existence, but a disenchantment of the American past and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of resurrecting, or even knowing, its redeeming virtues. After all, the Native American ideal Parkman was hoping to discover never existed in the first place. His romantic conceptualization of “authentic life” on the American plains was already a product of a distinctly European gaze and disregarded the fact that the initial contact between Europeans and indigenous tribes more than three hundred years earlier and the subsequent Columbian exchange had irretrievably destroyed any original state. In

actuality, indigenous Native American culture had long before disappeared in the annals of history without ever being recorded.

After reading the introductory paragraph to Parkman's fourteenth chapter one can hardly believe that he travelled the Oregon Trail to actually experience Native American life. While the opening lines promise "a faithful picture of the scenes that passed before my eyes," the author is also quick to announce that his subject matter was the depiction of "thorough savages" (*Oregon Trail* 176). The initial narrative frame is thus marked by a sense of superiority that will continue to structure his account of the visit and is not limited to Native Americans but also includes the offspring of interracial marriages.²⁷ This strategy has become unavoidable for Parkman at this point in the text as he is now entering the realm of the alien other by himself. Probably the most tell tale detail about this three week immersion into Ogillallah life is the fact that neither his cousin Quincy Shaw nor Henry Chatillon accompanies Parkman on this part of the trip. As a result, Parkman now finds himself with "no other companions than two brutish white men and five hundred savages" (*Oregon Trail* 188) and eager to assert his authority from the very beginning of the chapter.

Then again, the textual subjugation of his Ogillallah hosts not only helps to assure both author and reader of their civilizational superiority, it also fulfills a crucial function in Parkman's strategy. By stressing the allegedly inferior and primitive aspects of Native American life, Parkman finalizes the temporal descent into an ancient American past that he had begun at the beginning of the trip. In Parkman's estimation, Native Americans are not only intellectual infants as "their religions, their superstitions and their prejudices were the same that had been handed

²⁷ Parkman, for instance, textually exiles the Ogillallah tribesman Shienne, by giving Reynal difficulty to recall his name: "Well, said Reynal, 'there's Red-Water, and the Eagle-Feather, and the Big Crow, and the Mad Wolf and the Panther, and the White-Shield, and—what's his name?—the half-breed Shienne'" (*Oregon Trail* 177).

down to them from immemorial time” (*Oregon Trail* 176), but they are also, as Howard Doughty explains, remnants of the “world’s childhood” (136). Just as Parkman is quick to articulate Indian barbarism, he does lament the inevitable disappearance of their life-world. Native Americans, he explains, are defined by a certain mysterious “charm” (*Oregon Trail* 177). The “charm” Parkman here detects refers to the trans-historical fascination Native American culture exerts on Euro-American society. The lure of the “primitive” here becomes the marker of Parkman’s heterotopian population; they are conceived of as a people whose existence defies conventions of space and temporality.

Indeed, already the title that Parkman chose for chapter fourteen is misleading. Based on the title “The Ogillallah Village” the reader might expect a description of a geographically fixed locale and its inhabitants, complete with its specific design and identifiable landmarks. “The Ogillallah Village” is none of that. In fact, the chapter describes an unstable population and their sparse belongings on the move, caught up in the never-ending struggle of evading threatening rivals and following the buffalo herds. The chapter thus explores an existence in closest proximity to its environment and a life defined not by adaption to a singular space but marked by the constant adjustment to the challenges of nomadism. The account should thus be understood as a description of a transient existence whose laws challenge the assumptions of the geographically stable reader. For Parkman, who has been embracing a life in motion since the beginning of his journey, it is the final stage of his Western experiment. In the end, he has to realize that he is not quite cut out for a life on the frontier as he is plagued by recurring sickness while he desperately “hopes that Shaw and Henry Chatillon were coming to join us” (*Oregon Trail* 188).

As a space in flux, the Ogillallah camp serves as a counter point to the geographically stable forts introduced earlier in the text. Fort Laramie and Fort Leavenworth exert their control over the surrounding territory precisely because of their specific locations. They are strategic points and thus dominate major communication and transportation ways. As economic centers they serve as destinations for migratory people rather than points of departure. In that function they dominate the movement of people, both emigrants and native tribes, redirect their flow and ultimately control their relationship to their geographic environment, even causing the surrounding Dacotah tribes to erect their burial sites in close proximity to the white man's trading posts.

3.3 Trapper, Tourists, and Indian Temptations: People and Place

“I do not exaggerate when I say, that only on the prairie and in the Vatican have I seen such faultless models of the human figure.”
Francis Parkman *The Oregon Trail*

The Oregon Trail is a text that investigates the mechanisms of spatial conquest and the simultaneous ideological appropriation of the West. It details the challenges the untamed West presented for the American consciousness in the nineteenth century and outlines the strategies of spatial control and interaction that were meant to subdue the hostile world beyond the frontier. By familiarizing the reader with the varying heterotopias on the trail to California, Parkman’s narrative plays a crucial role in inaugurating the mythologized American West and forming a space of primordial history that was designed to instruct the contemporary reader about the follies of the past and the virtues of the present. Above all, however, the *Oregon Trail* is a text that is concerned with the experience of space by an individual observer in an effort to understand unfamiliar peoples who live in an unfamiliar land. Therefore, Parkman’s account is inherently concerned with the relationship between people and place on a physical as well as textual level.

The space of literary representation that is *The Oregon Trail* establishes a specific relationship between the three groups that inherit this textual locale: the author, the reader, and the various characters. The spatial relationships of each of these groups are defined by a temporal frame and a geographical frame. The reader, for instance, is framed by the age he inhabits whenever reading the text. Similarly, the reader’s geographical horizon is constructed by his geographical location and his geographical knowledge (that is his familiarity with other locales, places, countries etc.). These factors might, of course, greatly vary between a reader who examined the *Oregon Trail* when it was first serialized in *The Knickerbocker* in 1847 and a

postmodern reader who studied the book in 2011 as a digital download. The second category, the characters of the text, are invariably defined by their textual representation; their specific relationship towards their environment is thus fixed, even dictated, by the authority of the narrator, their experience of space relayed by another space— that of the book itself. It is quite obvious then that it is the author himself, in this case Parkman, who occupies the most complex, and most distinguished, position in this triad of spatial experience within a literary work. He not only relates his own experience of the West, but is also responsible for translating all other characters' spatial consciousness in a fashion that is both accessible and entertaining to the reader. The travel narrative was a suitable genre for Parkman to experiment with this particular narrative configuration as it generally joins the principal character and the narrator. In later examples of his works such as *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman would, however, adjust his narratological method and foreground the viewpoints of other historically authoritative individuals, such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, and only indirectly use his personal observations and experiences to elevate the verisimilitude of his histories.²⁸

²⁸ Parkman was in many issues an elitist, including women's suffrage and national education. For him, education of the general public had produced "many readers, but did not produce many thinkers" (Mullin 294). He felt that contemporary education failed in providing adequate training, and therefore also understood his books as a means to fill in the gaps of his readership. The narrative structure of *The Oregon Trail* as well as *Montcalm and Wolfe* mirrors this distrust into his own audience. Both texts advance a form of storytelling that empowers the authorial position. By doing so, Parkman wanted to ensure that the didactical lesson of his histories was properly understood and showing them to what catastrophic events blind faith, unquestioned obedience, and mysticism could lead. In the case of New France they caused the demise of the French colony, a fate that he wanted to avoid at all cost for the young American nation.

3.3.1 Soulless Savages and Noble Fighters: Native Americans

“His Soul is dormant; and no exertions of the missionaries, Jesuit or Puritan, of the old world or the new, have as yet availed to rouse it.”
Francis Parkman *The Oregon Trail*

In 1832, the German nobleman and naturalist Prince Maximilian of Wied left his family's castle at Neuwied to explore the interior of the North American continent. Inspired by the successful explorations of Alexander von Humboldt, Prince Maximilian had already completed a two year journey into the rainforest of Brazil fifteen years prior, and was now itching to explore the largely unknown interior of the Indian Territory in the northern part of the American continent. In the eighteen-twenties, another German nobleman, Paul Wilhelm von Württemberg, had already successfully travelled up the Missouri River from New Orleans, and Wied was planning to follow a similar route. Like Humboldt, Wied was an enlightenment thinker and avid naturalist interested in scientifically recording the wonders of the New World for European eyes. In the hopes of discovering formerly unknown species and returning them to his native Germany for more careful study, Wied planned to meticulously record geographical and thermostatic data, and collect biological and zoological specimen. But first and foremost, the prince was thrilled by the prospect of studying a human wonder of the New World that had aroused a good deal of interest on the European continent: the Native American Indian. Thus, “it was his avowed intention to document the life-world of the North American Indian population in good time, before their unique culture was lost forever— as had already happened in the eastern states of America” (Wied 17). For this philanthropic purpose, Wied brought along the young Swiss artist Karl Bodmer who was to document the discovery of new animals and plants on the expedition and sketch portraits of the indigenous population. Indeed, Bodmer was able to sketch members of numerous Indian tribes along the Missouri, including the Mandans who were wiped out by a

small pox epidemic shortly thereafter, and was thereby able to preserve a glimpse of the marvelous civilizations that soon would be destroyed or forced into assimilation. With similar effect like George Catlin, the “excellent artist Bodmer,” Parkman judged, (*A Half Century* 564) brought the West into the homes of eastern urbanites and European noblemen, thereby defining the image of the American West all around the globe. In *A Half Century of Conflict*, Parkman praises Bodmer’s importance for the preservation of authentic Native American life and his dedication to representational accuracy by saying:

Prince Maximilian spent the winter of 1832-1833 near the Mandan villages. His artist [Karl Bodmer], with the instinct of genius, seized the characteristics of the wild life before him, and rendered them with admirable vigor and truth [...] and his pictures are invaluable as faithful reflections of aspects of Indian life which are gone forever. (*France and England* Vol. 2: 591)

Wied’s expedition kept him in North America for almost two years. Under the pseudonym Baron von Braunsberg Wied travelled up the Missouri River to present day North Dakota where he spent the winter at Fort McKenzie. On his journey, Wied certainly got a first-hand look at the volatility of frontier life as his party got caught up in violent conflict between the American Fur Company and a group of Crow Indians. He witnessed, like Parkman, the almighty power of the American Fur Company in the unorganized territories and experienced a glimpse of Native American culture and customs while collecting many priceless indigenous artifacts and zoological specimen. Nonetheless, when Wied returned to Boston to board a ship back to Germany, he had failed to achieve one thing: Like Parkman sixteen years later, he was unable to witness the “American Indian in his pristine state” (Wied 25).

Parkman, unlike other American writers of the nineteenth century who participated in the literary invention of the West, had not only firsthand experience with the indigenous tribes of the territories beyond the frontier, but also researched his literary subjects methodically. Like Wied,

the historian was inspired by the Humboldtian expeditions at the beginning of the century and believed in the methodical collection and evaluation of Indian artifacts. Among Parkman's reasons for going westward was therefore also the scientific curiosity to study Native American life and to lay an anthropological foundation for his historiographic methodology. Although the study of anthropology in the first half of the nineteenth century had not yet developed into a scientific discipline, there were, however early anthropological pioneers who promoted a rigorous and precise study of Native American culture. One of those early American anthropologists was Ephraim George Squier. It was Squier, acquainted with Parkman through their days at Harvard, who provided Parkman with invaluable source material on the plains tribes he encountered on the Oregon Trail, Indian anthropology, and archaeology in general.²⁹ Squier, who later published a book on native religious practices entitled *The Serpent Symbol and the Worship of the Reciprocal Principles of Nature in America* (1851), was then considered an expert on Indian customs and his advice helped to increase the narrative's verisimilitude as well as Parkman's reputation as a serious researcher. Throughout his career Parkman would continue to seek expert assistance on Native American traditions from more experienced scholars of Native American life, such as Lewis Henry Morgan and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Mullin 294).

Despite his efforts to enhance the scholarly accuracy of the book, Parkman was criticized, even in his own time, for the depiction of Native Americans. Melville, for example, famously scolded Parkman for his sense of racial superiority in the *Literary World* (1849). Upon publication, Parkman's trail account was also immediately criticized for voyeurism and his failure to appreciate Native American culture and its practices, a verdict that, of course, has been

²⁹ Howard Doughty points out that Squier was one of the two people (the other being Charles Eliot Norton, also an amateur ethnologist and later the editor of the book version of *The Oregon Trail*) Parkman exchanged letters with most frequently during the time he prepared his trail journal for publication in *The Knickerbocker* (Doughty 145, 150).

echoed many times since and has become the standard assessment of his portrayal of Native Americans. However, it should be considered that Parkman's stay in the Ogillallah camp made him "the first American man of letters to possess any real firsthand understanding of the Indian" (Wade *Parkman Journal* Volume 2 394). For whatever it was worth, Parkman, unlike other influential figure in the process of creating a literary stereotype of indigenous culture, such as Irving and Cooper, had actually seen a Native American village with his own eyes. Further, it seems noteworthy that Parkman certainly understood the centrality of Native Americans for the fate of the continent. Although *The Oregon Trail* depicts Native American life in the final stage of their existence and doomed for extinction, Parkman's later writings on early American history highlight the centrality of Native Americans for American freedom. The French colonial presence in Canada, for example, is doomed Parkman explains, because the Jesuit bishops attempted to conspire with the Iroquois and failed to achieve lasting conversion of the Native tribes. Accordingly, the French's inability to "civilize" the Iroquois and subsequently press them into permanent alliances directly resulted in their defeat by the British.

Parkman's acknowledgment that Native American tribes played a crucial role in American history has scholarship, both literary and historical in scope, not prevented from criticizing Parkman's account of the Oregon Trail. It has, in fact, become a standard scholarly position to attest Parkman an inherent inability to respect, even comprehend, the cultural other he encountered. Some critics, such as L. Hugh Moore, in his article "Francis Parkman on the Oregon Trail: A Study in Cultural Prejudice," even went so far as to ascribe to Parkman an utter unwillingness to grasp Indian culture because he was hopelessly and unchangeably trapped in his New England elitism. As a result, Moore, for example, argues that Parkman's Oregon Trail narrative, in fact, reveals more about the prejudices of New England society than about westward

expansion and Indian life and that the trip left him “amazingly unchanged” (197). Although this criticism is in certain arenas underwritten by Parkman’s text and there is no doubt about the historian’s belief in the inevitable destruction of Native American life and his wrongful mythologization of prehistoric Amerindian societies, we need to be cautious to attest a methodological malaise that permeates his entire, and especially his later work: for the *Oregon Trail* is a text that stands at the beginning of the author’s work.

While Parkman’s portrayal of Native Americans has almost unanimously been identified as an example of Anglo-American imperialist thought infused with a heavy dosage of racial typecasting, relegating Indian culture and customs to a primordial, primitive form of existence doomed to extinction, some scholars, such as Sally A. Hawthorne, see Parkman also as a staunch defender of a static caste system. For Hawthorne, Parkman’s paternalistic portrayal of the plains tribes in *The Oregon Trail* is therefore also an attempt to assert “the superiority of Parkman’s own class” (326). The New England establishment of Protestant patricians Parkman belonged to understood themselves, and their literary exploits, as both vanguards and defendants of progressive American values.

Along similar lines other scholars, such as Lynda Salamon, see Parkman’s description of Native Americans directly linked to his Puritan heritage. Although Parkman was neither practicing nor endorsing Puritanism, and in fact had a rather ambiguous relationship to the faith of his ancestors, he nonetheless recognized the powerful impetus of Puritan values on American culture and was fascinated with the seemingly unbreakable will of the early colonists. For him, the Puritan character was undoubtedly an ideal literary framework for his historical subjects. While the virtues of the Massachusetts Bay Colony survived in his books, so did the Puritan conception of Native American life. Salamon even contests that while Parkman’s view of

indigenous cultures “derived in part from the social theories nurtured by his patrician upbringing, from Teutonic theories of racial superiority, from nineteenth century Darwinism, and from current literary stereotypes,” he was “deeply indebted to his Puritan ancestors” (67). Puritans and Calvinists alike saw in the Indians evidence of satanic possession and perceived in their culture signs of devil worship. New England Puritans and Calvinists of the seventeenth century condemned the Indians as satanic brutes who engaged in a complicit alliance with Lucifer (supposedly evidenced by their barbarous practices and cannibalism) to claim the New World for the devil himself. Parkman was surely influenced by the historical and contemporary discourses on Native American culture, to attest him blind obedience to existing literary stereotypes seems, however, unwarranted. Especially because Parkman’s entire oeuvre reflects a life-long interest in the relationship between religious missionaries and indigenous populations of North America. Particularly *The Jesuits in North America* here serves as a powerful example of Parkman’s sometimes unusual interpretation of the relationship between the European colonizers and their Native American victims. In the text, as well as in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman rereads the history of Indian cruelties as the outgrowth of excessive missionary zeal and religious fanaticism. For him, it was as much the Jesuits’ ruthless policies in New France that had to be blamed for rampant scalping and border raids during the French and Indian War, as they had directly encouraged Iroquois war parties to prey on frontier settlers.

It is true that there are examples of stereotyping in Parkman’s writing, especially when it comes to understanding and respecting indigenous culture instead of dismissing it as a primitive lifestyle destined for destruction. Yet other critics deemed his representation of Native American life and culture truly revolutionary. James Barnes in his article “Bancroft, Motley, Parkman and Prescott: A Study of their Success as Historians” exclaims that “Parkman was extraordinary in

his determination to break down the stereotypes surrounding the study of Native Americans. He was far ahead of his time in the meticulous ways he depicted the confrontation between civilization and barbarism. Probably more than any other contemporary historian he personally observed the sites and remains of the scenes he portrayed” (Barnes 65). Although Barnes judgment of Parkman’s depiction of Native Americans was written more than forty years ago, it does reflect that Parkman’s text evoked contradictory responses throughout the years. Not surprisingly, some of Parkman’s contemporary reviewers considered the depiction of Amerindian life and culture truly exceptional, hailed their authentic realism and praised his verisimilitude. George W. Curtis, while reviewing *The Discovery of the Great West* even deemed Parkman’s portrayal of Indian tribes more valuable than those of James Fenimore Cooper. Curtis explains:

It is to the pages of Mr. Parkman that we must go for the American Indian. Cooper so bewitches our fancy with Uncas and the red heroes that it is very difficult to divest our estimate of the Indian of a false and foolish glamour. (qtd. in Frothingham 37)

Similarly, Theodore Parker was quite pleased with Parkman’s depiction of Native American life. In a letter from December 22, 1851 that criticized Parkman’s recently published *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, Parker, besides commenting on a “list of faults” (377) that he had detected in the organization and “substance” (374) of the work, also praised Parkman’s treatment of Native Americans. He writes:

You evidently have a fondness for the Indian— not a romantic fondness, but one that has been tempered by sight of the fact. Yet I do not think you do the Indian quite justice; you side rather too strongly with the white man and against the red. I think you bring out the vices of the Indians into more prominence than those of the European— which were yet less excusable (374).

Parker goes on, while ascribing to Parkman a progressive view of indigenous history, to disapprove of Parkman's description in four ways: "in the matter of rum, women, treachery, and cruelty" (375).

Parkman's biggest accomplishment in *The Oregon Trail* is his description of the crucial relationship between Native American people and the space that surrounds them. For Parkman, Native Americans have preserved, at least partially, an existence that because of its dependence on the natural environment is characterized by several admirable skills that were lost in the process of continued industrialization and the resulting alienation of man from nature. Native Americans, for Parkman, represent a visceral strength, maintained by the constant threat of warfare and the continuous search for hunting grounds, that renders them physically superior and causes Parkman again and again to admire their "superb, naked figures" (*Oregon Trail* 178). Specifically the symbiotic existence that the Ogillallah have formed with the buffalo impresses Parkman. While he recognizes in the Dacotahs' exclusive dependency on the buffalo a definite threat to their survival, he also admires the autonomy it provides for the tribe. While certainly dependent on successful buffalo hunts, they are freed from the geographical and temporal restraints of wage labor that are increasingly dominating American life, especially in the urban centers. Among the Ogillallah, Parkman experiences the freedom of a geographically unbound existence. As a result of geographical freedom, the Ogillallah are also able to abolish temporal restraints. Initially surprised by their disregard of western means of compartmentalization, Parkman sees in them a people that live entirely in the moment, what Howard Doughty called "the moment of total engagement" (132). This alternative notion of temporality is governed by an economic aspect, the hunting season, and a religious frame provided by various rituals and ceremonies. Time and space are here represented as sensed categories defined by cultural

practices instead of arbitrary demarcation lines such as border and man-made territorial markers. Although Parkman fails to provide a sustained discussion of the Native American concept of temporality, he was certainly impressed by the Ogillallah's customs. The experience, indeed, would influence Parkman's conceptualization of historiography in future text such as *The Jesuits in North America* and *Montcalm and Wolfe* in which Parkman presents the depiction of Native American life, for him marked by a "natural existence" defined by trans-historical patterns, as an alternative to Western notions of historical progress.



Figure 3.5: Karl Bodmer's *Mato-Tope*. Bodmer's paintings capture details of indigenous cultural practice that would soon be lost forever. This illustration of a Mandan chief highlights the meticulously applied war paint that signifies the warrior's social status.



Figure 3.6: Karl Bodmer's *The Interior of the Hut of a Mandan Chief* allows a glimpse into the interior of a spacious Mandan hut. Similar to Parkman, Wied and Bodmer were able to experience Native American life first hand as they spent several weeks among the western tribes.

3.3.2 The New American Adam: Guides and Trappers

“Yet there is a mysterious, resistless charm in the basilisk eye of danger, and few men perhaps remain long in that wild region without learning to love peril for its own sake, and to laugh carelessly in the face of danger.”
Francis Parkman *The Oregon Trail*

The true master of the far West for Parkman is the frontiersman, in all his manifestations. It is the trapper, explorer, guide, and trailblazer who represent for him the new American citizen of the far West and the subjugator of the Indian territories. The trapper, like his environment, is a hybrid character, a perfected fusion of eastern ideals and western actions; a multiethnic individual that exists beyond traditional social categories and embodies trans-historical American virtues. He is an individual that lives at the fringes of both civilized society and colonized territories; his voluntary geographical exile is thus reflected by his geographical remove from the cities.

While Parkman's mountain men, on first glance, evoke their literary predecessor Natty Bumppo and Pierre Beattie, his conceptualization of frontier heroes departs from earlier examples in the extent to which they are immersed in and defined by the space they rule. The most perfected example of these ideals of western manhood is, of course, Parkman's guide Henry Chatillon. Similar to other protagonists of frontier adventure, Chatillon is perfectly adapted to the harsh environment of his life-world. As a master hunter, trapper, and trailblazer, he is versed in the native languages of the region and even married to an Indian wife with whom he has several children. Then again, unlike other characters with interracial relationships, Chatillon symbolizes a genuine concern for his Native American family members. Parkman notes that they “had been connected for years by the strongest ties” (*Oregon Trail* 112). Further, when he hears the news of his wife's terminal disease, Chatillon insists on travelling to the Village of the Whirlwind to “provide for the safety and support of his children of whom he was

extremely fond” (*Oregon Trail* 112). Unlike Raymond, Reynal, and Delorier, Chatillon is therefore not only described as a conqueror of the prairie, but also as a moral individual, a “representative man” (Levin *History* 50). Similar to later examples of perfected manhood in Parkman’s work, most notably *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Chatillon then resembles an ideal type of American that symbolizes the spatial synthesis of East and West. Whereas Chatillon possesses the physical skills and bravery of a true explorer of the West in the tradition of Lewis and Clarke, he resembles also the moral integrity and intellectual virtues of the founding fathers. He is, to use David Levin’s fitting description, a “cultivated hero” (*History* 53). Chatillon, in this regard becomes a perfected American citizen molded from the lessons of the past and infused with the adventurous spirit of the future. Parkman’s conceptualization of Chatillon here marks the beginning of a career-long investigation of American character that would culminate in the theorization of American heroism in *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Clearly, Chatillon made a lasting impression on Parkman and, in a sense, became the real-life blueprint for Parkman’s literary characters. Still it is noteworthy that Parkman’s ideal hero is a thoroughly transnational individual that defies nineteenth-century conventions of national identity construction. Chatillon, like all of Parkman’s frontiersmen, is a product of the ever-shifting border spaces of the West. In addition, Chatillon is not an American hero by birth or blood. Chatillon’s Franco-Canadian heritage clearly testifies to the fact that Parkman is less concerned with issues of Anglo-American superiority as some of his contemporaries such as Prescott but clearly embraces a multinational ideal of literary heroism and points towards the importance of Canada and the conflict between France and England, for the emergence of American independence.

Parkman’s investigation of this new American citizen who is shaped by the exposure to unknown tribes and territories, does, however, also include less cultivated examples of frontier

heroism. In actuality, the majority of trappers and woodsmen Parkman portrays in *The Oregon Trail* lack the cultured sophistication of Henri Chatillon and their characters are instead defined by a “natural simplicity” (Levin *History* 60). The similarities between Chatillon and the rest of the profession are, indeed, so marginal that Parkman not only declares the common western trapper to be its own race of “bold adventurers” (*Oregon Trail* 215), but also deems him more closely related to the native inhabitants of the far West than the white colonizers and settlers. Parkman’s woodsmen live in a two-tiered society with their perfected embodiment, Henri Chatillon, as their unquestionable emperor.³⁰

Chapter sixteen of the narrative, “The Trappers,” consequently resembles Parkman’s attempt at a universal characterization of the western trapper and his place in American history. The placement of the chapter within the text already reveals something important about Parkman’s view of characters such as Reynal, Raymond, Rouleau and Saraphin: for Parkman introduces the woodsmen as an afterthought to the description of Native American culture and customs and even admits that he had “almost forgotten” (*Oregon Trail* 215) to dedicate a chapter to them at all. Accordingly, Parkman, although regarding the frontier trapper as a fundamental, probably even the most essential, part in the winning of the West, views this unique group of men as already vanishing into extinction. Similar to the Native American tribes, the western woodsmen have no place in a “civilized West” that presupposes the destruction of his habitat and terminates the very purpose of his existence.

³⁰ Russell Brown even sees Parkman’s depiction of Canadian trappers, such as Deslauriers, governed by racial stereotypes. Brown argues that the Canadian frontiersmen in *The Oregon Trail* are marked by a “contentedness” that is juxtaposed with American “restlessness” (29). For Parkman, Brown explains, Chatillon is despite his French-Canadian heritage “superior to Canadians such as Deslauriers,” possibly because “he is not a native northerner but born on the American frontier” (29).

Parkman thus is quick to compare the life of a trapper to that of an Indian warrior, blessed with the same admirable virtues but also cursed with the same crippling weaknesses.³¹ Saraphin, for instance, appears to the reader as “a tall, powerful fellow” with a “figure remarkably square and strong” (Parkman *Oregon Trail* 217). His natural strength and ability to withstand the physical demands of frontier life are so exceptional that although “the first joints of both of his feet were frozen off, and his horse had lately thrown and trampled upon him [...] nothing could check his inveterate propensity for laughter and gayety” (Parkman *Oregon Trail* 217). While these impressive physical qualities equip Saraphin for the harsh life on the prairie and clearly make an impression on Parkman, they are balanced out by a number of vices that are unacceptable for a cultured Bostonian: irresponsibility, alcoholism, gluttony, laziness, and sexual promiscuity.³²

While Parkman’s characterization of trappers remains ambiguous throughout the narrative and often oscillates from admiration to antipathy, he undoubtedly recognized their importance for American history. For Parkman, the frontier woodsmen not only resembled an original species of the West, a colorful component of that fascinating life- world bound for unpreventable destruction, but also a force of history that had shaped, and continued to shape American life. As the vanguard of progress the trapper had opened the American wilderness for organized

³¹ These early portraits of trappers and frontiersmen reflect Parkman’s lack of experience with frontier life. His later depictions of fur traders and rangers, such as Rob Rogers in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, are not only much more complex, but also evidence a more profound research of the topic.

³² Parkman describes how Rouleau and Saraphin frequently disregarded informed advice to stop trapping in certain areas and how especially Rouleau “had an unlucky partiality for squaws” (*Oregon Trail* 217). He further explains that both woodsmen were “by no means remarkable for providence or self-restraint” (*Oregon Trail* 217/218) and outside of trapping season could often be found “lounging about the fort, or encamped with his friends in its vicinity, lazily hunting or enjoying all the luxury of inaction” (*Oregon Trail* 218).

colonization since the founding of the first colonies and would continue to do so until the closing of the frontier. Ironically, by securing the bridgeheads of western civilization, the trappers also planted their own destruction as the crowds of settlers who travelled in their paths would eventually master the wild spaces that had produced the trapper's unique life style. As a text concerned with the writing of history, Parkman's narrative also chronicles the rich tradition of American frontiersmen from Daniel Boone to Jim Beckwith. Along the trail Parkman is even lucky enough to meet three grandsons of Daniel Boone himself, whom he attests have the same "adventurous character of that prince of pioneers" (*Oregon Trail* 121).

The modern trapper has nonetheless, despite his mythological ties to his heroic ancestors, come a very long way from his colonial origins. The pioneer of the West is through and through a hybrid character who, in that regard, reflects the diversity of the space he inhabits. Modern day trappers are no longer white genteel New Englanders of Parkman's idealized romantic imagination that earned their place in the vestibule of American heroism in the French and Indian and the Revolutionary War. Instead, they are individuals like Jim Beckwith, "a mongrel of French, American, and negro blood" (*Oregon Trail* 119). They are "bloody and treacherous, without honor or honesty" (*Oregon Trail* 119) immersed in a cut throat world of fur trading and scalp hunting.

Parkman thus uses his portraits of frontier heroes to contrast the idealized historic hero of frontier mythology and expansionist ideology with the grim realities of real human individual nature. By doing so, he not only comments on the process of Western mythmaking prevalent in

works of history and literature alike, but also underscores his own image of the West as a space of hybridity.³³

³³ Many of Parkman's trappers are hybrid characters by ancestry. But even their equipment reflects their status as the perfect inhabitants of this cross-cultural environment. For instance, in chapter sixteen Parkman describes Rouleau and Saraphin's horses and lists the various objects attached to their saddles. Thereby he reveals an impressive array of cultural influences that have found their way into the trappers belongings: "Their strong, gaunt horses were equipped with rusty Spanish bits, and rude Mexican saddles, to which wooden stirrups were attached, while a buffalo robe was rolled up behind them, and a bundle of beaver traps slung at the pommel" (*Parkman Oregon Trail* 218).

CHAPTER 3: AN ATLAS OF FORTS AND FORESTS: FRANCIS PARKMAN'S *MONTCALM AND WOLFE*

“No ordered rank and measured tramp,
No restless flash of steel;
Nor the long line of dancing plumes,
And ringing trumpet-peal!
The soldiers of the wilderness,
A rough and hardy band,
In woodland garb, with woodland arms,
We guard this forest land.”

First stanza from *The New Hampshire Ranger*, a poem published by Parkman under the pseudonym Captain Jonathan Carver Jr. in the August issue of the *Knickerbocker* in 1845.

4.1 Prologue: Absolutism Abroad

In 1657, two years after the daredevil author's untimely death at the age of 36, Cyrano de Bergerac's fantastic travel narrative *A Voyage to the Moon* was published. Similar to other utopian writings of the genre, such as Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627), Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (1516), Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), and Bergerac's own *A Voyage to the Sun*, the text explores matters of enlightenment philosophy and science, identifies social and political ills while launching a satirical critique of religious doctrine. In concordance with the tradition of utopian writing, Bergerac chronicles the physical displacement of his protagonist (in the case of this fantastic eyewitness report himself) to an imaginative space (the moon) that subsequently serves as a literary counter space to the problem ridden geography of seventeenth-century France. Before Bergerac arrives on the moon, however, a failed launch attempt lands the hero in another alien environment. Bergerac crash lands his primitive space suit, which is devised from nothing more than a number of empty bottles, in the French colony of New France on the seemingly equally distant and mysterious shores of North America. Upon his arrival, Bergerac is immediately surrounded by the native inhabitants, who lived in “some kind of cottage” (Bergerac 17), and were “stark naked”

(Bergerac 17). Perplexed by the fact that recently “men had gone naked in France” (Bergerac 18), the failed cosmonaut attempts to question one of the natives about his whereabouts, but soon realizes that the two don’t share the same language. Further bewildered by the fact that the Indian apparently mistakes him for a divine being just descended from the heavens, Bergerac concludes that the Native American’s language must be “the muffling noise of a Dumb-man” (19).

While the above cited episode from Bergerac’s is a premier example of colonial stereotyping at the hands of an Old World subject that in real life never actually set foot on the American continent, the inclusion of New France in his utopian journey speaks volumes about the European fascination with the New World. For the average French citizen, the colonial antipodes on the far side of the world might as well have been on the moon; both “other worlds” were equally unreachable and similarly inscribed with tales of awe and wonder. In Bergerac’s case, New France is foremost conceived as a representational space of exotic encounters and intellectual liberation. On the plain of physical reality the literary geography resembles a primitive Eden populated by naïve inhabitants who dwell in a primordial forest. This allusion to biblical accounts of the lost Paradise would surely reverberate with contemporary European readers of the seventeenth century who, as Peter Moogk confirms, “yearned to return to that happy era of their imagined past” (19). As a spatial metaphor, the colony also represents a realm of intellectual liberation outside the official royal doctrine.³⁴ Geographical “other worlds” here unmistakably translate to uncharted territories of the mind.

A good hundred years prior to the publication of Bergerac’s fantastic tale, it was less the desire for freedom of thought that caused Francis I to unleash the maritime explorer Jacques

³⁴ It is in New France that Bergerac has a lively discussion on the Copernican theses causing the narrator to praise the Vice-Roy of Canada as a “Man capable of lofty Opinions” (21).

Cartier on the American shorelines in the spring of 1534. The French crown was driven by a much more pragmatic desire to “discover the elusive trade route to the east or, at the very least, to acquire mineral riches such as the Spanish crown was extracting from its possessions in Peru and Mexico” (Nicholls 25). Both objectives ultimately failed as the new colony itself posed an insurmountable land barrier halting French westward expansion in its tracks while the shores and forests of Canada produced plenty of fish and furs but very little gold and silver. Nonetheless, Cartier’s explorations proved effective to threaten Spanish and Portuguese naval dominance in the western Atlantic and to stake France’s claims in the quickly intensifying global colonial race. After an Atlantic crossing that saw tragedy narrowly averted, Cartier’s expedition successfully circumnavigated Newfoundland and entered the Gulf of the St. Lawrence. On July 24, two weeks after landing at the Gaspé Peninsula, Cartier and his men symbolically took possession of La Nouvelle France in the name of King Francis I by lodging a thirty foot cross into the virgin soil, especially constructed for the occasion, that bore the fleur-de-lis and the inscription “long live the king of France” (Greene 40).

The ritual of annexation performed by Cartier and his men in 1534 underscored French ambitions in America and must predominantly be understood as a public inauguration of French colonial power. As such, the message of the performance was clearly directed to the French competitors in the North American hemisphere: the crowns of Spain, England, and Portugal. While the royal propaganda of Francis I and his explorer forcefully announced the French ambitions in America, it said very little about their actual achievements as colonizers of America. Possibly, if Cartier and his men would have known that it would take over seventy years until the royal colonists succeeded in establishing a permanent settlement (the founding of Quebec in 1608 by Samuel de Champlain) in Canada, they might have chosen a smaller cross to

signal their arrival. Yet, the French captain could not have possibly foreseen how long it would take his successors to break the long spell of unsuccessful colonization that had defined New France since the establishment of Cartier's own winter camp Charlesbourg-Royal (renamed Cap Rouge by Jean-Francois de La Rocque de Roberval) in 1541.

Throughout the history of New France, populating the vast territory would remain the premier challenge of French colonial officials and by 1680 the number of colonists in La Nouvelle France had grown to a meager ten thousand. At the same time, the British seaboard colonies to the south had already grown to over one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. The reasons for the comparative failure of French settlement policy are often explained by the hard physical conditions in the seemingly untamable wilderness of Canada, an environment perceived as so hostile that even Cartier himself wondered if his recent discovery was "the land God gave to Cain" (10). Besides the suspected divine curse, there are a number of pragmatic factors that sealed the fate of the French adventure in America and prepared the colony for British takeover in the middle of the eighteenth century. French emigrants, Peter Moogk points out, frequently failed to identify themselves as permanent settlers, but rather thought of themselves as migrant workers on a temporary job assignment (119). This identification problem, partially due to negative or insufficient propaganda for the colony, paired with the absence of convincing economic incentives and tales of Indian savagery, prevented colonial officials from recruiting a steady supply of settlers for the North American colony (Moogk 119).

New France thus paled in comparison to the economic and social prosperity of the English colonies in America. Nonetheless, its very existence created a potent conflict potential that, if ignited, was guaranteed to unsettle the balance of power in the New World in the near future. As the two colonial empires headed for inevitable confrontation in North America, the inhabitants of

both colonies began to develop their very own independent identities and soon questioned the frame of colonial dependency they were pressed into. It is exactly this understanding of New France as the catalyst for global conflict and revolutionary reorganization that caused Francis Parkman to elect the settlement of New France and the ensuing clash between France and England as the topic for his book *Montcalm and Wolfe*.



Figure 4.1: Cartier and his men take possession of New France by raising a wooden cross bearing the royal insignias. Image from John Frost's *Pictorial History of America*.

4.2 *Montcalm and Wolfe: The Spaces of History*

Although often labeled as the historian's most accomplished piece of writing, *Montcalm and Wolfe* represents an anomaly in Parkman's literary canon. The book departs, both in terms of narrative structure and content, not only from the youthful travel narrative that is *The Oregon Trail*, but also from Parkman's earlier volumes of North American history.³⁵ As antagonistic histories, *Pioneers of New France*, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West*, *The Old Regime in Canada*, even *Count Frontenac and New France* captured the dutiful attention of the audience through the focus on the existential struggle of an exceptional, even representative, individual with the brute forces of nature (including indigenous populations). At his best, as in the case of *The Jesuits in North America*, Parkman elected a handful of brave souls that confronted the hostile American wilderness in an admirable but ultimately tragic struggle thereby highlighting the missionaries' immense capacity for hardship and their unbendable will to survive. In contrast, *Montcalm and Wolfe*, while certainly continuing Parkman's proven strategy of heroic confrontation, traces the final stages of the fight of two global empires in the American theater. While Parkman offers many instances of individual achievement, the ultimate object of his analysis is undoubtedly the systematic disparities between French and British colonialism as manifestations of their respective governmental structure.

Parkman's conflict of choice, the Seven Years' War, would ultimately restructure the balance of power in the Old World, confirm the emergence of Prussia as a major European power, and

³⁵ Prior to publishing *Montcalm and Wolfe* (1884), Parkman had written the independently published *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* (1851), as well as 5 volumes of his *France and England in North America* series (1865-1877). The two-volume *Montcalm and Wolfe* would ultimately be succeeded by the last installment of the project, *A Half Century of Conflict* (also two volumes) in 1892.

reorganize the system of inter-monarchical alliances on the continent. In addition, this first truly global war would also alter the colonial status quo in the New World and propel the British to a strengthened position of predominance in North America. By shifting his attention to the larger forces at play, Parkman alludes to the complex geopolitical diplomacy that impacted the formation of the United States and thus debunks the fable of American isolationism. For Parkman, the United States is very much a transatlantic entity. In consequence, the center of *Montcalm and Wolfe* is not so much the dialectic between man and nature, but a triage that poses man against man and system against system within a hostile environment. Richard Vitzthum aptly summarizes this departure from earlier methodologies in *Montcalm and Wolfe* by saying: “Whereas *LaSalle* deals with the relatively simple struggle of a handful of men against the wilderness, *Montcalm and Wolfe* narrates a complex war between France and England for control of a continent and a population of hundreds of thousands” (*American Compromise* 131).

As a system analysis, *Montcalm and Wolfe* must aptly be understood as a transnational history of global networks: a text that both depicts and deconstructs the process of empire building at the height of European colonialism. In the process, the book also recounts—and this should be regarded as the true objective of the narrative—the slow but steady emergence of a third force in North America, namely the colonists themselves. On the surface *Montcalm and Wolfe* might be preoccupied with its title-giving generals and their respective empires, but in actuality the story of achieved British colonial dominance is already the tale of its destruction. It is while fighting for the Redcoat armies of Abercromby, Braddock, and Wolfe that the rangers of New Hampshire and New England gather the military experience that will allow them in to defeat their former allies. Parkman’s history of European colonial greed is therefore also the narrative of American independence.

As an American history, Parkman's work achieves more than simply chronicling an ongoing antagonism between America and the Old World characteristic for a nineteenth-century writer. Although he is surely interested in asserting American exceptionalism, Parkman's unique historiographic concern is to trace the changing importance of America, both as a geographical and political entity, for global politics. *Montcalm and Wolfe*, as it chronicles the resolution of a world conflict on American soil, mirrors the shifting relationship between the two continents exceptionally well. Suddenly, the former site of colonial exploitation emerges as realm of global decision-making that will decide the fate of European empires. Parkman's text thus mirrors the process of literary American emancipation while simultaneously identifying the French and Indian War as a moment of political self-realization among the colonists.

Consequently, *Montcalm and Wolfe* represents not simply a historical narrative of the far northern frontier and the continuous battle between French and British forces; it is further a text about rivaling spaces (Europe and America, New France and the British colonies, frontier settlements and the wilderness) that are marked by the desire for expansion and by a threat of annihilation. The fight for America in Parkman's estimation is a story of physical expansion and spatial transgressions (such as border raids, military and economic occupations, and even geographical explorations), a tale of shifting borders and changing rulers. In this sense, the book chronicles the attempts to restrict and contain space (as for example the French attempts to prevent British westward expansion with the help of wilderness forts) while vividly summarizing the often disastrous results for the local population. By doing so, Parkman not only portrays a unique time of spatial uncertainty in American history, but also describes the formation of a distinctly American understanding of territoriality and identity. This experience of spatial uncertainty, even anxiety if we recall the text's gruesome descriptions of French and Indian

border raids and the fear they sparked among the settlers, eventually created the sustained desire to control the western territories and accounts for the significance of the frontier in American popular consciousness.

4.2.1 Charting Connections: Parkman's Europe

Uncharacteristically for a work of American historiography, *Montcalm and Wolfe* begins on the other side of the Atlantic: in Europe. In an effort to contextualize the French-British conflict in America for a contemporary readership, this strategy not only provides helpful background information on the Seven Years' War, but also detects a sense of dependency that marks the relationship between America and Europe. The very first chapter with its scolding assessment of the "vicious conditions" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 854) that French absolutism inflicted on its citizens and the vigorous acknowledgment of the World's "best engine of war" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 857) that prepared for battle in Prussia thus establishes a historical departure point that will soon be relegated to a faint memory on both sides of the Atlantic. Besides their function as contextual references, the opening pages of *Montcalm and Wolfe*, as much as the later European chapters, are designed as literary counter spaces that serve to set apart not only the American past but also the American present from their Old World ancestry. Parkman achieves this spatial liberation of America by highlighting the geographical differences between the two continents. The empires of Europe, especially France and the Holy Roman Empire, appear as an "aggregate of disjointed parts, held together by a meshwork of arbitrary power" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 855) stagnantly managing their old customs. America, on the contrary, is introduced as a colonial conglomerate equally disjointed yet "full of prolific vitality" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 869).

In addition to assuring the contemporary readership of the successful departure from corrupt European (in this case French) customs, blinding religious dogmas and the resulting moral

depravity, Parkman also makes a powerful geopolitical claim in tune with the imperial ambitions of late nineteenth-century American politics.³⁶ For Parkman, the French and Indian War in America was a decisive component of the changing realities in global politics in the middle of the eighteenth century and signaled not only the end of French dominion over vast parts of America, the emergence of Prussia as a potent land empire in continental Europe, the reversal of long-established political and military alliances between European rulers, and the rise of Britain as the supreme colonial world power, but also the induction of America into the theater of global politics.³⁷ *Montcalm and Wolfe* thus establishes a moment of imperial origin that allows Parkman to legitimize the imperial claims of nineteenth-century America with the help of colonial history.

4.2.2 “Et in Arcadia Ego:” New France

“The Canadian [...] had, it is true, a spirit of insubordination born of the freedom of the forest; but if his instincts rebelled, his mind and soul were passively submissive.”
Francis Parkman *Montcalm and Wolfe*

A decade before Jacques Cartier annexed the North American territory soon to be known as La Nouvelle France in the name of the French Crown: Giovanni de Verrazzano sailed along the vast American shoreline. King Francis I had hired the Italian-born sailor Verrazzano to explore

³⁶ *Montcalm and Wolfe* was published in 1882. In the preceding decade or so, the United States annexed the Midway Islands (1867), launched a military expedition to Korea that involved the bombardment and subsequent capture of Korean forts on Ganghwa (1871), established a naval base in Samoa, and pronounced their claims to the Hawaiian Islands under the Monroe Doctrine (1881).

³⁷ Throughout the entire text Parkman employs the theme of transformation as his narrative engine. The America chapters focus on the transformation of the environment at the hand of settlers and armies alike, the constant exchange of governmental personnel, as well as the looming political reorganization in Canada and the seaboard colonies. The European chapters focus similarly on the shifting balance of power on the continent, probably most clearly exemplified by the fall of France and the rise of Prussia to “the rank of a first-class Power” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1222).

the uncharted shores of the vast American landmass recently discovered on the far side of the Atlantic and instructed him to survey potential trading routes for the expanding French merchant marine. Verrazzano's journey to the New World was brief and largely unsuccessful. Already on the passage over the Atlantic two of his ships sank and Verrazzano was lucky to see the American shore alive. Maybe it was under the fresh impression of having tragedy narrowly averted that Verrazzano, as he sighted the lush wooded shores of North America, was reminded of the eternal Edenic paradise of Greek mythology and named the country Arcadia.

Although Parkman's New France is a far cry from a peaceful garden, he begins his illustration of the royal colony with the analysis of Acadia.³⁸ Acadia here, surely, alludes not to the mythic pastoral paradise "in which the occupants seem to be unaware of suffering and death" (Neset 31), but the peninsula of Nova Scotia: a place filled with plenty of both suffering and death. While Parkman's Acadia is not a utopian paradise of shepherds and swineherds, it does play a crucial role in his analysis of representational spaces and their function in American consciousness. As a sensed space, Parkman highlights that Acadia undergoes constant shifts of geographical extension. Whereas it refers in the beginning of French colonial presence to the entire peninsula and, as Parkman point out, was "extending over New Brunswick and a part of Maine" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 929), it becomes later reduced considerably in size by the same colonial authority. Parkman here nicely explains the subjection of space to political and military interest and the resulting geographical instability. For we learn that Acadia's geography is shrank as a result of the growing British presence in the region and would soon undergo numerous other changes of ownership. This process of constant spatial reorganization of Acadia was set in motion, Parkman clarifies, when the British took control of large portions of the peninsula in the

³⁸ Over the years the spelling of the colony was changed from "Arcadia" to "Acadia."

early 1750s. The French colonial authorities reduced the colony's official size to ensure "winter communication between Quebec and Cape Breton, which was possible only with the eastern portion in French hands" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 929).

In Parkman's spatial conceptualization of the colony Acadia occupies an especially important part as it resembles a site of constant social interaction, geographical fluctuation, and political instability. Parkman's reading of Acadia as a colonial contact zone is supported by historical facts, since Acadia was, indeed, the site of early interaction between British and French soldiers, colonists, and government officials, as it became a proper British possession in 1713 in the treaty of Utrecht. For Parkman, Acadia is further a microcosm of French-British conflict that dramatizes in the early sections of the text the war yet to come: thus functioning as a textual vision of the future. Here, both powers wrestle for the settlers' allegiance and struggle with the enforcement of royal authority over a region that increasingly defines itself as an independent entity. It is therefore no surprise that the minions of Francis I mainly scare the Acadian settlers into submission with tales of British savagery, or worse Indian raids, whereas the British try to win control over the area by means of geographical and economic investment. They erect additional forts and trading outposts, found settlements (such as Halifax) and grant the populace "an appearance of liberty so excessive that they have not intervened in their disputes or even punished their crimes" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 911). In return, the British crown asks from the Acadians merely an oath of allegiance. While Parkman interprets the British ventures in Acadia as productive economic investments and admirable models of cultural empire building, he scorns the French tactics as destructive examples of misguided patronage. Much to Parkman's distress, the strategy of employing royal diplomats equipped with a seemingly endless supply of bribes, though morally questionable, proves successful with the settlers. Under the added fear of eternal

damnation instilled into them by fiery Jesuit missionaries, the Acadians remain loyal to the French crown.

Portrayed early on in the text (chapter four), Acadia is thus conceived not only as a contested contact zone between the two colonial systems, but also as a place of deceit and betrayal, a literary inversion of the biblical motif of untainted blissfulness where, despite the formal peace between the two powers, the war for North America has already begun. Instead of outright confrontation, however, both parties employ covert political, economic and religious maneuvers in an effort to gain control over the general population and weaken their opponent's stranglehold on the region. As *Montcalm and Wolfe* chronicles the intensifying tensions between France and England, Parkman further highlights the notion of developing colonial identities throughout the North American hemisphere. In an effort to trace the formation of a uniquely American consciousness, Parkman makes it a point to showcase the Acadians' stubborn independence and growing alienation from their colonial masters in a similar fashion as he describes the emergence of autonomous ideas of government and identity in the English colonies to the south.

The fallen paradise of Acadia in many ways writes the historiographic counter-narrative to official American mythology and popular settlement history. Parkman's Acadia mirrors the vile motives and methods employed by the Europeans to control the continent: for example, the French strategy to halt British expansion in Canada by employing guerilla tactics and Indian war parties. Interestingly, the by-product of this undignified and at this stage illegitimate conflict, is a space of Euro-Indian interaction in which the indigenous tribes come to occupy a rare position of power as they are the French colonial authorities' only tool to fight this illegitimate war during a time of official armistice between the two nations. This military dependency on the Native American combatants even leads to grotesque instances of Acadian carnivals. Parkman relates

that French officials suggested, in an effort to ensure the success of Indian raids, that “a few Acadians, dressed and painted in their way, could join them to strike the English” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 916). In these instances of reversed acculturation, white settlers and soldiers mimic the appearance and behavior of indigenous warriors to control their unreliable allies but also to mask their own participation in acts of cruelty that in the European imagination were only reserved for savages: as if the masquerade would cleanse the perpetrators from their bad deeds. In Parkman’s Acadia, there is no distinction between civilizer and civilized. Here the ability to un-civilize the combatants is, in essence, the recipe for successful military conduct. In the portrayal of these scatological excesses the text consequently creates a carnivalesque hybrid space that erases the otherwise strict boundaries of “savage Indian” and European settler/soldier. When French and Indian fighters join in a war party, equally masqueraded in war paint and buckskin pants, they form, as Mikhail Bakhtin would say, a collective ancestral Franco-Canadian-Indian body that temporarily suspends all hierarchies and liberates the participants from established social orders, privileges, norms and prohibitions (291).³⁹

Parkman’s descriptions of the “savage” transformations of the French and English combatants represent fascinating chronicles of physical transgressions and inter-cultural border crossings. Yet, these passages of Indian masquerading indirectly also reveal Parkman’s conceptualization of the “savage.” For Parkman, as for the majority of nineteenth-century authors, the boundary between the civilized, cultured colonizer and the savage colonized was permeable in one direction only. Whereas the English or French soldiers could temporarily descend into “savagery” for the purpose of effective covert military operations, their Iroquois

³⁹ As I will discuss later, Thomas King’s novel *Truth and Bright Water* features a similar incident of Bakhtinian masquerades. In King’s novel, however, the tourists who visit the Indian Days Festival dressed in “authentic” Native American apparel remain intruders eager to validate their preconceived notions of indigenous life and culture.

comrades were immovably fixed in their position of irrevocable barbarism. This rigid model of cross-cultural interaction certainly helped Parkman to maintain the distinction between the epistemologically threatening colonial other and the royal authorities in his depiction of eighteenth-century colonialism and to reassure readers in the nineteenth century of Anglo-American imperial ambitions. Parkman's conceptualization of the "savage" is clearly influenced by the rigid British model of Anglo-Indian relations which, remarkably, also manifested itself in their appropriation of North American space and the ensuing settlement policy. British seaboard colonies were defined by the proximity to the coast thus always concerned with maintaining a distinctive demarcation line between the space of the already colonized and the realm of the wild. In contrast, French notions of savagery allowed for a more permeable boundary between the two opposing sides. Not only did the French approach to territorial conquest in New France, defined by settlements and outposts that deeply penetrated the Canadian wilderness extending all the way to the western part of the continent, reflect a more active engagement with the indigenous population. In addition does the inauguration of frontiersmen of mixed heritage and equipped with decisively Indian skills—such as the famed *coureurs de bois*, or forest runners, and *voyageurs*, the legendary canoeists, explorers and fur traders—into the vestibules of Franco-Canadian mythical heroism attest to the more complex approach toward Indian "savagery." Whereas the Anglo-American literary tradition of the nineteenth century tends to univocally demonize the Native American tribes as a "savage" antagonist thereby establishing a firm boundary between colonizer and colonized, Franco-Canadian depictions of frontier interaction, while certainly participating in the demonization of the indigenous population, also foreground the positive lessons learned from the native inhabitants in their effort to master the unruly wilderness of New France.

As Parkman investigates the sources of the racial discourse that governed the relationship between French and English authorities and their Indian counterparts, he soon discovers a chief culprit responsible for the questionable methods of colonial control in New France. For Parkman, in line with the prevalent antagonism towards Catholicism in nineteenth-century America, and especially New England, the Catholic Church must be made responsible for a majority of the atrocities committed in Acadia. It is thus no surprise that the clergy emerges as the chief source of cruel intrigues, and the vicar-general of Acadia, Louis Joseph Le Loutre, was “more than any other man answerable for the miseries that overwhelmed it” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 922). Le Loutre’s determination to keep Acadia French even went so far, Parkman reports, that “his own hands set fire to the parish church, while his white and red adherents burned the houses of the inhabitants” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 924). The astonishing act of arson that is said to have occurred during the British attack on Beaubassin in 1750 was meant to incite Acadian anger against the alleged perpetrators and drive the furious settlers back into French jurisdiction. Parkman’s detailed description of the missionary’s trickery here serves as a condensed metaphor of royal colonial policy throughout New France. For Parkman, New France, undoubtedly, was a site of utter moral devastation, ruled by immoral tyrants with the help of violence, intimidation, and deceit. In contrast to British liberty enjoyed by the colonists in Virginia, New England, and Pennsylvania, the Canadians in general and the Acadians in particular suffered from the manifestations of stifling absolutism abroad. Agonized by the unscrupulous tactics of their own religious leadership, Parkman’s Acadians emerge as an abused people, robbed of their homes and tortured by their own crown, pressed into forced labor and forcefully prevented from seeking refuge under British protection.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Quite obviously, the people of Acadia are represented as the victims of their colonial

The Acadian chapter of *Montcalm and Wolfe* announces the progressive dissolution of the French colony while chronicling the growing British impact on the region. As the text describes the desperate attempts of the royal authorities to keep their increasingly dissident population in check and catalogs the atrocities committed, it also underscores the changing role of the Jesuit missionaries in the region. For Parkman, especially in earlier volumes such as *The Jesuits in North America* and *The Old Regime in Canada*, Jesuit missionaries generally represent an unrelenting determinism and display a “splendid heroism” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1295).⁴¹ According to Otis Pease, Jesuit characters further resemble the embodied perfection of “adapting themselves to wilderness and Indian life (28). As a prime example of Jesuit martyrdom, Isaac Jogues, for instance, is hailed by Parkman for his incredible ability to endure inexplicable sufferings at the hands of the Hurons and Mowhaks. Similarly, Bishop Laval, the central character in *The Old Regime*, impersonates the role of the Jesuits in New France as the engine of colonization. Richard Vitzthum rightfully notes that for Parkman the Jesuits’ proceedings in New France represented the *esprit de corps*, the union of individual and state that allowed for

oppressors. Mainly, for Parkman, those unjust royal minions are loyal only to the King of France and characterized by a complete disregard for their own population. However, Parkman’s description also highlights the fact that British colonialism does not always represent a morally superior alternative. After the initial focus on French atrocities, Parkman also cites instances of English injustices and thereby draws the connection to the American colonies and the Revolutionary War. As *Montcalm and Wolfe* is certainly concerned with the emergence of a distinctly American self (or better selves), he employs Acadia as an example of colonial injustice all over the continent.

⁴¹ Although Parkman saw certain Jesuit missionaries and priests as heroic characters, for him, the religious order also represents a restrictive force in New France that curtailed individual freedom and intellectual development among the colonists. Some scholars, such as John B. McGloin, contest that Parkman “was quite definitely anti-clerical all his long life” (57) and that his personal attitude towards clerical organizations influenced the portrayal of the Jesuit order in his histories.

exceptional duty and devotion comparable to the patriotism of the Spartans and the early Roman Republic (*American Compromise* 103).

Yet already in his earlier volumes on North American history, Parkman saw the Jesuits as an ambiguous force in American colonialism. While he respected the individual virtues and achievements of figures like Laval and Jogues, he remained suspicious of and at times outright opposed to the organization's political ambitions and their attempts to "scour heresy out of France" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 855). In New France, Parkman argues, the unchallenged dominance of the church prohibits enlightenment ideas and scientific innovations to benefit the colony and instead covers New France in a veil of mystery and superstition ultimately responsible for its failure.⁴² As an anti-progressive presence, the Jesuits represent an order of the past that has no place in modern America and is as much doomed for extinction as the Native American population. For Parkman, the future of the continent was instead decided by men of rational and men of action: men like Montcalm and Wolfe. In *Montcalm and Wolfe*, the Jesuits thus only play a minor role as we witness the final act of the destruction of the colony. Yet Parkman's distaste for Catholic orders is nonetheless visible in the way he describes their missionary effort as a covert scheme to incite Indian violence against the Protestant neighbors and to impel the newly missionized converts "to use their tomahawk against the enemies of the Church" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1295). Here, as in the case of Le Loutre described above, the

⁴² Parkman was in many issues an elitist, including women's suffrage and national education. For him, education of the general public had produced "many readers, but did not produce many thinkers" (Mullin 294). He felt that contemporary American education of the nineteenth century failed in providing adequate training, and therefore also understood his books as a means to fill in the gaps of his readership, showing them to what catastrophic events blind faith, unquestioned obedience, and mysticism could lead. In the description of New France's "intellectual vacuum" (Pease 47) and the resulting demise of the French colony he certainly saw a warning the young American nation and an important lesson for educational policy.

former representative men of religious devotion have become reduced to mere political henchmen of the crown.⁴³

⁴³ Interestingly, however, the Jesuits and their doubtful practices are contrasted with another religious entity: the missionaries of the Moravian brotherhood, and especially the deeds of Christian Frederic Post. Post was himself a splendid example of the heterogeneous society developing in the border regions (as he was married to a Native American wife, knew the Delaware language and even lived some time among the tribe of his wife), was an instrumental character in convincing the Western tribes to support the British cause. Unlike his portrayal of the Jesuits, Parkman's use of the Post story lays out the future for Native American tribes and to explain the aura of distrust that marked the relationship between the Five Nations and the colonies. The passage is further an example of Parkman's technique of mosaic inclusion as he successfully incorporates the captivity narrative of Post (as he had done earlier in the text with the example of James Smith) to fuse historical events, public records, and literary texts.



Figure 4.2: Nicolas Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego* (*The Arcadian Shepherds*) (1637-1638). The discovery of mortality marks the end of Arcadian bliss.



Figure 4.3: Thomas Cole's *Evening in Arcadia* (1843). Cole's painting, as well as his better known *Dream of Arcadia* (1838) reflect the importance of the myth of Arcadia in American popular consciousness; especially in conjunction with what Henry Nash Smith called the "myth of the garden" (195) and Richard Hofstadter described as the "agrarian myth" (23) in nineteenth-century literature and culture.

4.2.3 Castles in the Forest: Canadian Forts

“The most difficult part of fortifying, that which truly requires talents and experience is applying fortification to the terrain.”
Louis Le Bègue du Portail

In the previous chapter I have described how Parkman’s account of the trading posts and military forts along the Oregon Trail revealed a system of hybrid counter spaces that dissect the otherwise entropic wilderness of the barren Great Plains. Along those intercultural contact zones Euro-American and Indian cultures mingle to create new and unique forms of American identity, epitomized by the trappers and traders, as well as novel forms of social organization. The forts in *The Oregon Trail* served as harbingers of economic transformation and cultural destruction, and they were the catalysts that turned the primordial desert into a site of perceived civilization, often at the expense of the irretrievable loss of Native American customs. Forts, as representational spaces, in *Montcalm and Wolfe* serve very different functions. In New France they first and foremost provide the lifeline for military communication and guarantee French control over the vast expanses of uninhabited wilderness. If these bastions of contact and interaction were destroyed, so would the Bourbon monarchy’s dominance over their American possessions. Thus, fortifications in *Montcalm and Wolfe* primarily resemble the major royal line of defense against British expansionism that was threatening Louisiana from the East and Canada from the South; but of course Parkman is also aware of the social meaning of these spaces. In a seemingly endless ocean of woods these primitive fortifications represents a physical safe zone and a romantic reminder of civilized living. As metaphorical geographies, they thus occupy a number of spatial planes within the text: including that of a physical space of military defense and economic exchange, symbol of royal control and governance, and manifestation of beginning supremacy over the unruly wilderness. Moreover, forts here signify the representational space of

an imagined community. Although nothing more than a conglomerate of log houses enclosed by a palisade fence, Fort Chartres, for instance, is defined by Parkman as the “the only vestige of civilization through all this region” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 873).

The more elaborate, stone-walled fortifications erected by both French and British military strategists in America, such as Fort Duquesne which was “the strongest, the most advanced and by far the largest of the French forts” (Duffy 268), were designed as representations of colonial might and safeguards of military dominance in the region.⁴⁴ As such, they nicely mirror the European desire to transplant Old World traditions of warfare as well as European concepts of social and spatial organization to the New World. Moreover, the architects who designed the wilderness forts of New France “brought across the ocean the bastioned system of fortification that had been developed in Europe” (Robinson 46). Consequently, the Canadian wilderness forts depicted in *Montcalm and Wolfe* are symbols of the European attempt to subjugate the alien American environment and its inhabitants, but also should be understood as a reflection of the French and British effort to transplant familiar systems, social hierarchies, and power structures to the colonies. Instead of attempting to adapt to the particular environment of the American geography and develop effective models of both wilderness warfare and social organization, colonial powers were initially content with forcefully instituting established models familiar to them from their respective homelands. The results of this strategy were questionable at best.

⁴⁴ Native Americans had, of course, built fortifications long before the first Europeans set foot on the continent. Kaufmann and Kaufmann note in *Fortress America: The Forts that Defended America, 1600-Present* that the Iroquois, for instances, erected round palisade defenses to protect themselves from rival tribes, and that “the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest lived in fortified communities” (7). For a more detailed discussion of the architecture and function of forts in New France see: Leslie F. Hannon. *Forts of Canada: The Conflicts, Sieges, and Battles that forged a great Nation*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969 and William B. Robinson. *American Forts: Architectural Form and Function*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

As military installations, the initial royal fortifications in New France, designed to control the waterways of the colony, proved largely ineffective in the American wilderness as the vast undeveloped colonial geography proved uncontrollable by European means of spatial ordering. As defensive strongholds, especially in the French and Indian War, the intricate bulwarks of European design proved equally useless as opposing armies or Indian bands would simply bypass the structures instead of laying siege to the defenders inside. Fort Chambly, for instance, as René Chartrand explains in his book *The Forts of New France in North East America 1600-1763*, “assumed the appearance of a somewhat medieval stone fort with high stone walls and massive corner turrets” (5), a design utterly unfit for a war defined by small-scale skirmishes and surprise attacks. The fortifications of North America must thus be considered remnants of a quickly changing understanding of military combat in which large field battles and long siege operations gave way to surprise border raids conducted by small, but highly effective units. It is therefore not surprising that many of the fortifications meant to guarantee imperial control were often abandoned by the occupants, remodeled to better fit the specific requirements of the American theater, or even entirely abandoned after a decade or two because their existence had been rendered obsolete by the changing geo-political situation.

The European forts in North America constructed in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century were not only military installations but further served as reflections of European ideas of spatial organization and expressions of social hierarchies. Similar to the roles that castles and cathedrals played for centuries in the kingdoms of Europe, the forts of America symbolized the power of the colonial government to the indigenous population, common settlers, and everybody else who dared to question the authority of the royal legions on the American continent. Especially in New France, the royal fortifications embodied the centralization and

stratification of power that characterized the colony's political and economic make-up. It is therefore no surprise that the very French monarch most closely associated with the centralization of power, the sun king Louis XIV, was also a great admirer and advocate of fortress warfare and personally presided over more than twenty sieges in person (Langins 80, 122-124). Then again, fortifications in New France were more than manifestations of the centralized form of government instituted by the absolute monarchs of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

At the same time, fortifications were also symbols of the increasing rationalization and mechanization of warfare in the age of enlightenment. Beyond controlling trade and ensuring social order in the surrounding territory, fortresses were also meant to rationalize space. Space, as Janis Langins explains, needed to be controlled because "for European armies space was not isotropic and lines of operations were conditioned by man-made logistical nodes" (206). The large European armies thus depended on a well-organized geography (achieved by large-scale cartography projects such as the topographical survey of France conducted by the Cassinis from the 1670s to the 1780s) and steady supply lines guarded by the watchful eyes of nearby fortifications. In addition, enlightenment conflicts such as the Seven Years' War and its North American offshoot the French and Indian War were also marked by a growing desire of military historians and philosophers to civilize the turmoil of war and describe it in terms of engineering grids and mathematic equations. The continued popularity of fortress warfare in Europe throughout the eighteenth century as well as the employment of forts of European design in North America therefore mirrors the attempt to develop a scientific theory of warfare while foreshadowing the growing industrialization of armed conflict in the following decades. For Langins, French military engineers of the period must even be considered "men of the

enlightenment with a faith in science and its positive effects on society” who “saw their work as a slow and steady construction of a civilized society in which even warfare would be civilized by their art” (4).

Yet, similar to the futile attempt to introduce European military conventions to the American theater, the fort was an equally unfit symbol of social organization and enlightenment-inspired sense-making. The unsteady and unstable populations of New France and the American colonies had little in common with the rigidly structured feudal societies of early modern Europe and therefore easily resisted attempts of absolutist centralization. Further, the sheer geographical dimensions of the continent prevented scientifically reliable topographical surveys thereby upholding the geographical mythology of an untamable continent. Finally, the demographic makeup of New World settlers paired with the powerful presence of Jesuit missionaries and other anti-enlightenment forces successfully delayed the circulation of progressive ideas.

Regardless of their success as military defense works or symbols of enlightenment rationality, the fact remains that Canadian fortifications appear frequently in the text. Parkman’s description meticulously announces their differences in size and organization but also insists that all of them were viable sites of intercultural exchange and economic contact. More importantly, Parkman employs these symbolic spaces of national myth-making as literary heterotopias that help to form a new image of historical events and the geography in which they took place. Parkman’s analysis of French fortifications generally follows a set pattern. First, the author evaluates the structures’ architectural layout as well as their defenses. Often, the historian will combine his initial description of the site with a qualitative evaluation of the bastion for military purposes, frequently lamenting the makeshift nature of many of the posts and their limited

effectiveness against an enemy attack. For instance, Parkman describes Fort Cumberland by saying:

Fort Cumberland was an enclosure of logs set upright into the ground, pierced with loopholes, and armed with ten small cannons. It stood on a rising ground near the point where Wills Creek joined the Potomac, and the forest girded it like a mighty hedge, or rather like a paling of gaunt brown stems upholding a canopy of green [...] The spot was an oasis in a desert of leaves, —if the name oasis can be given to anything so rude and harsh. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 983)

Small makeshift fortifications such as forts Cumberland, Lyman, Williams and George dominate the early part of the narrative. These sites signify the difficulty for both colonial powers to establish proper military installations in the impracticable conditions as well as their failure to assert a grip on the Canadian wilderness. On the French site, the failure to better fortify their colonial possessions against British invasion forces then, of course, also reflects the poor organization of the colony overall, as well as the pervading corruption among its officials. On the English site, the erection of badly designed forts such as Fort Cumberland represents the British inability to understand and adapt to the environment of the forest.

In contrast to the basic encampments described above, Parkman, as the narrative unfolds, also portrays major forest fortresses such as Fort Ticonderoga. These ingeniously placed structures show a much more refined understanding of the natural environment and a resulting ability to use the natural terrain to defend the site against a far superior enemy. Unlike earlier accounts of minor forts, Parkman here highlights the intricate relationship between people and place, historical event and geographical location. The episode of the text that most profoundly illustrates this technique chronicles Abercromby's attack on Fort Ticonderoga in July of 1758. The fortress was then defended by Montcalm whose troops dealt a crushing defeat to the British attackers. An official French account of the battle was published in Rouen on December 23rd 1758:

Would any one believe, Sir, that twenty thousand English have been obliged to fly before three thousand two hundred and fifty Frenchmen? This is exactly what has just happened to the King of England's troops commanded by Major General Abercromby (741).

At Ticonderoga, Parkman saw a mechanism at work that united military technology and the primordial forces of an ancient forest. The result is a description of the fort that highlights the symbioses of man and nature and, in turn, creates a perfect defense position. Consequently, the French victory is related less in terms of soldierly expertise, superior technology, and individual bravery; instead the text locates the sources of Abercromby's defeat at the battle of Ticonderoga in Montcalm's appropriation and employment of space. More specifically, Parkman here hails Montcalm for actively resisting European conventions of military combat and alternatively embracing the natural environment as the essential element in his defensive strategy. As a result Montcalm created a fortress that "might be called impregnable" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1266):

From the central part of the line the ground sloped away like a natural glacis; while at the sides, and especially on the left, it was undulating and broken. Over this whole space, to the distance of a musket-shot from the works, the forest was cut down, and the trees left lying where they fell among the stumps, with tops turned outwards, forming one vast abattis, which, as a Massachusetts officer says, looks like a forest laid flat by a hurricane. But the most formidable obstruction was immediately along the front of the breastwork, where the ground was covered with heavy boughs, overlapping and interlaced, with sharpened points bristling into the face of the assailant like the quills of a porcupine. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1266)

As complex spatial signifiers, forts in *Montcalm and Wolfe* feature in Parkman's narrative as symbiotic sites that unite man and nature, but they also fulfill important narratological functions. It is at the various fortifications that the story of French and English conflict in New France climaxes. As the text follows an ensuing quarrel over territorial control and colonial possessions, the guardians of spatial dominance repeatedly become the site of military decision making. The role forts play in this connection is not limited to a defensive standpoint. Parkman describes the French and English encampments in enemy territory also as initial land claims, advanced

operation bases, and even border extension tools. Fort Duquesne, for instance, is initially established by a Virginian regiment commanded by George Washington. The men were building a stronghold along the Ohio River in the hope of halting French advances into Virginian territory. After its destruction by the French, the new occupants preceded to create a much larger fortification which soon became the location of the first major battle in the French and Indian War and the site of Braddock's bitter defeat.

Braddock's loss, although certainly crucial on the level of content, is more significant in terms of Parkman's establishment of a trans-historical heterotopia. In a precise application of his method to extend past events into the present of the readership and thereby erase the temporal divide between the two, Parkman sets up the description of the battle as a past-present contrast with the effect that the image of the site becomes linked to its contemporary geographical manifestation. In so doing, the text creates a geographical frame of reference for the reader that even contains a fast forward sequence that captures the transformation of the untamed wilderness into an industrial pit. Parkman writes:

Fort Duquesne stood on the point of land where the Alleghany and the Monongahela joint to form the Ohio, and where now Pittsburg, with its swarming population, its restless industries, the clang of its forges, and its chimneys vomiting foul smoke into the face of heaven. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 987)

The above cited passage is by no means an anomaly in Parkman's textual methodology. In fact, *Montcalm and Wolfe* features numerous examples of this technique such as the introduction of Lake Champlain and Lake George in the "Dieskau" chapter, or his description of Fort William Henry.⁴⁵ In describing the fort, Parkman inserts an interesting footnote about the modern

⁴⁵ The description of the siege of Fort William Henry and the defeat of Monro at the hands of Montcalm is easily one of the finest examples of Parkman's battle scene descriptions. The passage not only serves to display the French superiority in bush fighting at the beginning of the conflict, but also to underscore the unreliability of Indian allies. After the British surrender,

condition of the former bastion at the brink of Lake George. In the paratext, Parkman laments the destructive forces of modern civilization that threaten to destroy the last remnants of the old fort:

The remnants of Fort William Henry are now—1882— crowded between a hotel and the wharf and station of a railway. While I write, a scheme is on foot to level the whole for other railway structures. When I first knew the place the ground was in much the same state as in the time of Montcalm. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1180)

Consequently, as laid out in the introduction to this work, Parkman's historiographic technique creates a sense of temporal simultaneity and merges spaces of the past and the present. In some instances, this conflation of historical time, authorial time, and the time frame of the reader is almost completely achieved, such as when Parkman announces that the description of the landscape of Louisbourg rests on what he observed ten days prior to writing the passage (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1232). The conceptualization of wilderness forts as multi-leveled spatial metaphors thus effectively helps to fuse the horizon of the author with that of both the reader and the historical situation described. Thereby, Parkman achieves not only representational verisimilitude but also bridges the historiographic gap that allows him to address trans-historical issues and develop a connection between past and present. As we also established earlier, part of this technique involves the incorporation of his personal experience especially in relation to the geographical theater the historical events are played out in. By doing so, Parkman "was able to re-create the psychological experience of civilized men performing heroic feasts in the wilderness by adding his own experience to theirs and by revising their narratives for great emotional impact" (Vitzthum *American Compromise* 143). Besides creating modern reference points for his readers, this technique allowed Parkman to incorporate his own observations and

Montcalm's indigenous fighters massacred the English prisoners of war in an often referenced incident of "homicidal rage" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1189). The episode, even in Parkman's time, was already firmly anchored in the American popular consciousness due to Cooper's portrayal of the massacre in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and thus was certain to solidify the racial stereotypes of contemporary readers.

expeditions in the area into his historical narrative, a fusion of personal and public writing characteristic of nineteenth-century literary practice.

Parkman's depiction of the American wilderness, especially in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, also advances an environmental undertone. For Parkman, American history is framed by two noble bookends: the primitive wild of the first settlers and the accomplishments of the modern American nation. In between is a bloody, often ugly and almost always unethical business to progress from one to the other. It is probably an exaggeration to diagnose Parkman's writings with an anti-industrialist sub-current, but his texts certainly mirror reservations against the unchecked exploitation of the land. The above referenced portrayal of Pittsburgh for example, clearly mirrors his discontent with the nineteenth-century manifestations of urban sprawl and rapid industrialization. Ironically, it is nature itself, according to Parkman, that instills in man the potential of its own destruction and the unchecked impulses of primitive man, again and again, appear as the engine of violence against people and place. Parkman's environmental message thus remains a conundrum. On the one hand his volumes promote the preservation of ancient forests and advocate an existence in unison with nature; on the other hand this coexistence also involves the mastery and subsequent employment of nature for the goals of man. This principle is excellently exhibited in the construction of Fort Ticonderoga and other forest bastions, as there the natural environment is put to use for the military interest of "man."

Despite the apparent differences, fortifications, similar to their function in *The Oregon Trail*, are also economically lucrative sites. In *Montcalm and Wolfe*, however, they are tangled up in the network of illicit corruption that, in Parkman's estimation, pervaded in all of New France. In New France, Parkman explains that to "command a fort brought such opportunities of making money that, according to Bougainville, the mere prospect of appointment to it for the usual term

of three years was thought enough for a young man to marry upon” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1214). The profit from the trading posts was thus not so much a means to support a larger economic system as it was on the Oregon Trail (and as it was supposed to in New France), but primarily filled the pockets of private representatives of the crown. Fur trading and other legitimate businesses could have supported the French war effort and additionally bolstered the ailing economy of the province, but the systemic corruption sanctioned, even encouraged, by the colonial bureaucrats prohibited any form of productive economy. The French forts are thus mainly defined as places of fraudulent endeavors and undue requisitions “made for supplies as gifts to the Indians in order to keep them friendly or on the war-path” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1214). They are far cries from the trading posts along the Oregon Trail that would attract heterogeneous groups of population all driven by the prospect of lucrative exchange. In contrast, the French forts drew mainly the attention of warrior bands desperate for liquor and other gifts they would receive for their doubtful allegiance.

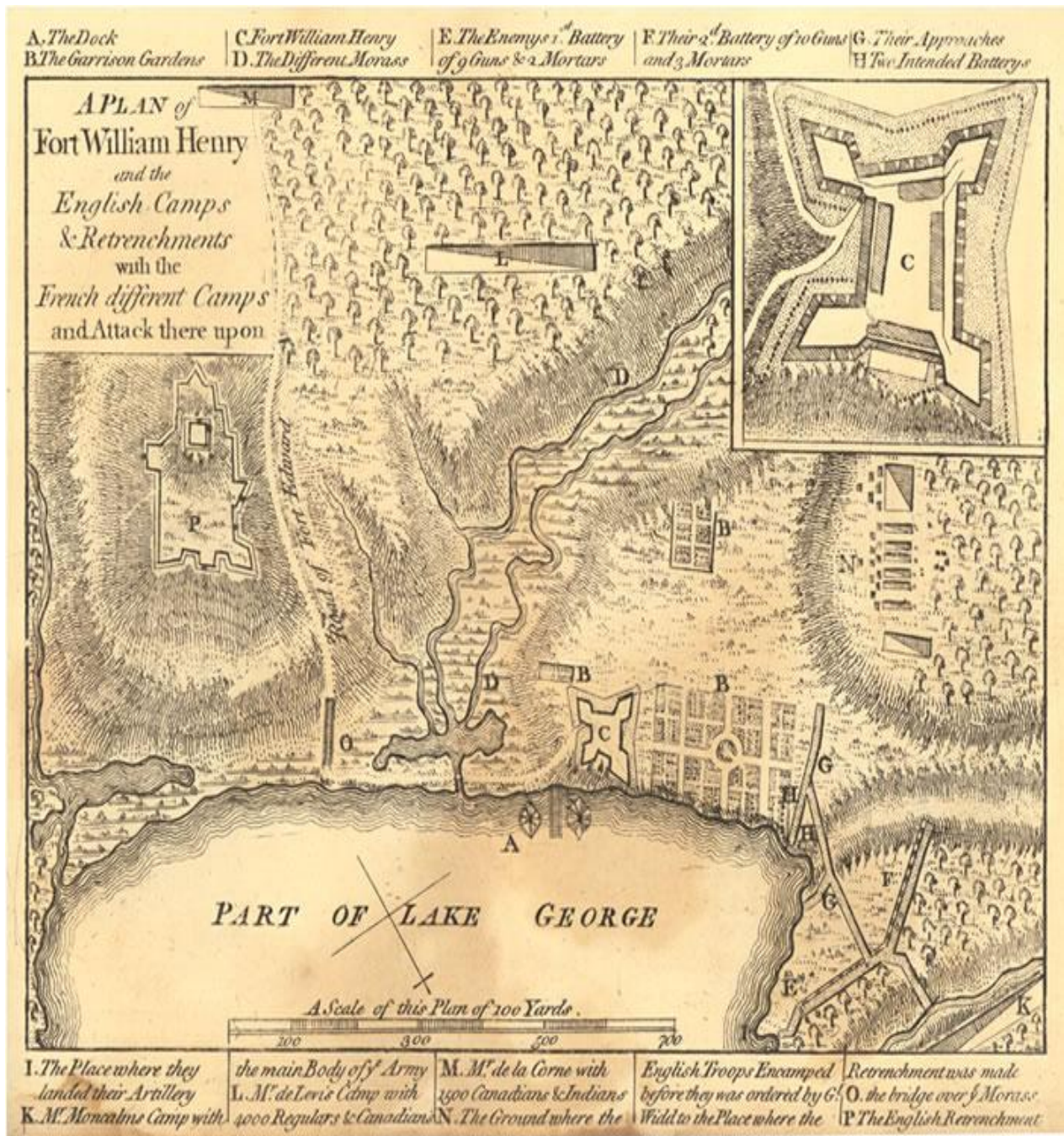


Figure 4.4: Illustration from Mary Ann Rocque's *A Set of Plans and Forts in America*; the sketch depicts Fort William Henry as well as the French encampments and British battle positions.

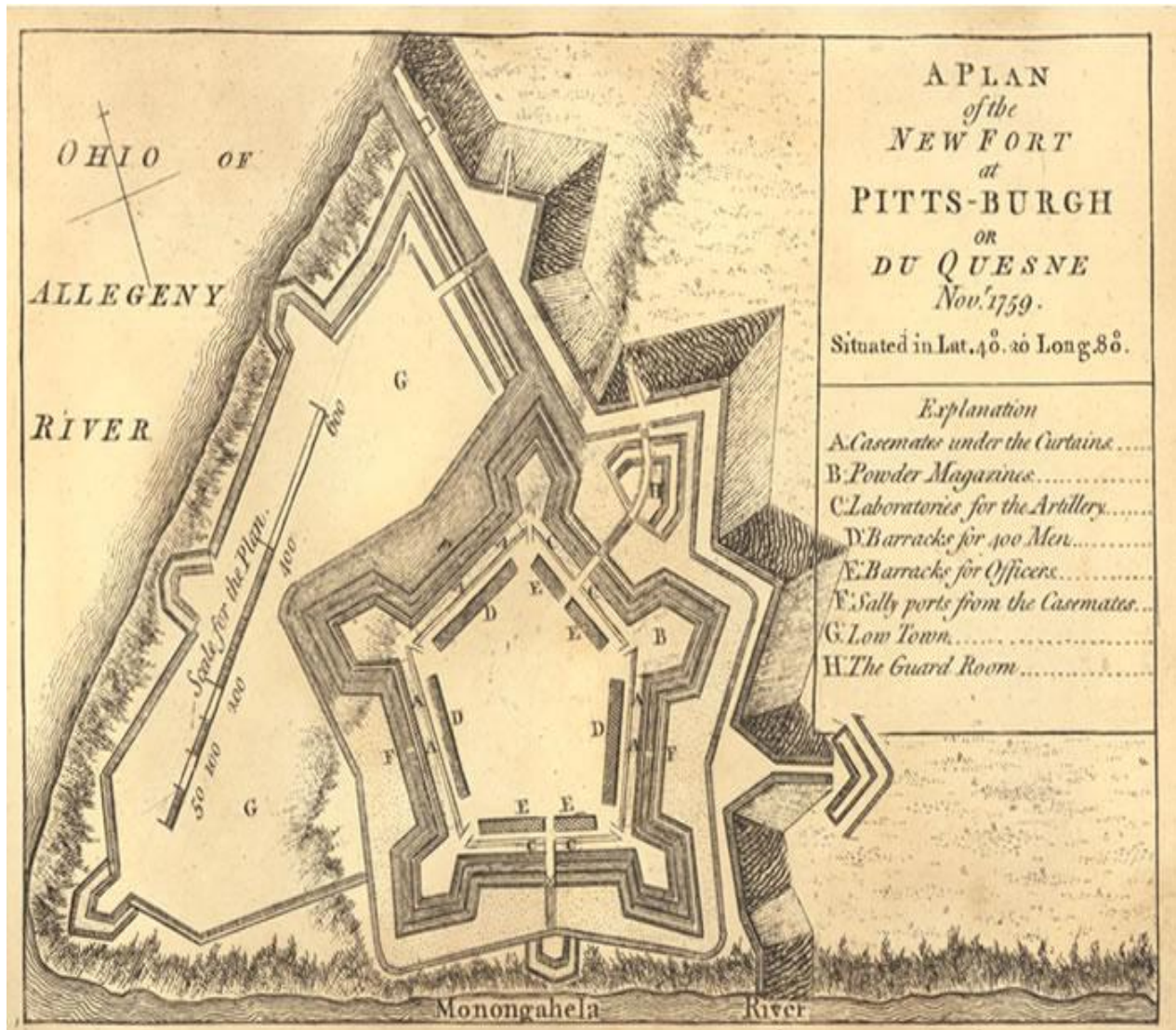


Figure 4.5: This sketch of Fort Duquesne nicely illustrates practically unchanged European conventions of military architecture in the Canadian theater. Rocque's anthology of American fortifications featured more than thirty double-paged engravings by her late husband and cartographer John Rocque. The detailed plans of the forts were modeled after topographical surveys and already existing maps and were supposed to visualize the sites of the French and Indian War for a prosperous and historically inclined readership at home while celebrating the victorious British war effort. Parkman used plans from the volume to illustrate his own texts and to study the layout of those fortifications that featured prominently in the conflict.

4.3. Dystopian Kill Zones: Spaces of War

“This war was the strife of a united and concentrated few against a divided and discordant many. It was the strife, too, of the past against the future; of the old against the new; of moral and intellectual torpor against moral and intellectual life; of barren absolutism against a liberty, crude, incoherent, and chaotic, yet full of prolific vitality.”

Francis Parkman *Montcalm and Wolfe*

R.W.B Lewis has called Parkman’s multi-volume series *France and England in North America* “the story of the constant assault upon the forest and its inhabitants” (170). Indeed, all of his volumes highlight the unstoppable destruction of the American wilderness as well as the gradual subjugation of the native population: be it by brute force of soldiers or the benevolent prayers of priests. In Parkman’s tragic history of the American forest, the transformation and eventual overcoming of the primeval geography and its inhabitants, though lamented at times, undoubtedly signals a necessary step in the emergence of American modernity and American power. *Montcalm and Wolfe* is no exception to this theme. Parkman describes the transition from untouched virgin forest to farming frontier by saying:

It was the repulsive transition from savagery to civilization, from the forest to the farm. The victims of his axe lay strewn about the dismal “clearing” in a chaos of prostrate trunks, tangled boughs, and withered leaves, waiting for the fire that was to be the next agent in the process of improvement; while around, voiceless and grim, stood the living forest, gazing on the desolation, and biding its own day of doom. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1074)

Physically transforming the savage woods of Canada into a space of progressive civilization is an untidy business. The passage above illustrates how the process of “clearing” the forest, the supposed removal of unnecessary and unwanted timber obstructing the establishment of settlements, does hardly yield the desired effect. Instead of a landscape ready for agricultural reordering the axes of the settlers only leave a “chaos of prostrate trunks” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1074). The act of “clearing,” here hardly results in the desired result of spatial order, the creation of a new virgin soil, but only creates more chaos. In order to finalize the process of geographical

transformation a second step is required, the application of fire; and only after the scene has been thoroughly burned can the next phase of human settlement begin. While the scene nicely mirrors the act of physical transformation of and subsequent alienation from nature described by Hegel and Marx as the foundation of modern society, the passage also describes the formation of frontier identity as the product of the continued destruction and overcoming of the natural environment. Parkman here considers the act of “clearing” as an event that not only affirms the identity of the frontier settler but simultaneously ushers him onto the next plateau of his historical development: that of the farmer. In Parkman’s estimation, this process is by no means a simple act but difficult and dangerous work that involves the struggle with a treacherous opponent; the forest. Although the natural environment is in this example described as a passive recipient of its own destruction, the forest is nonetheless portrayed as a living organism, a character in and of itself that, as we will see, is capable of dealing deadly blows to its assailants.⁴⁶

Parkman’s dedication to the forest as the premier American environment and the only true testing ground for individual strength and communal ethics has been exhaustively explained by generations of scholars, including Otis Pease, David Levin, Richard Vitzthum, Howard Doughty, and Mason Wade.⁴⁷ I will therefore not needlessly repeat their points but rather focus on more

⁴⁶ As a site of identity formation, the “clearing” here also becomes a metaphor for the revelation of historical truth. The “clearing” of the forest unveils for the settler his historical destiny (transforming the wilderness into a site of agricultural production and eventually a genuine settlement). Importantly, the act of unearthing historical truth here is connected to the overcoming of a primal phenomenon (the forest). It is thus a remarkable conflation of individual existence, geographical environment, and historical process, as the act of “clearing” represents a situation in which, similar to the revelation of truth Heidegger described in “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” “Being and thinking and their belonging together exist” (445-446).

⁴⁷ It is interesting, however, that some contemporaries, such as Theodore Parker, criticized Parkman’s description of geography, which the former, in the example of *The Conspiracy of*

innovative ways Parkman enlisted the forest as a literary counter space and a theater of war. As a text concerned with the future of the American continent, Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, unlike earlier installments of his series, depicts the forests of New France as temporal and spatial heterotopias; an already mythologized literary backdrop for a fight between modern forces. Although the dense Canadian woods still reference a romantic longing for a primordial Arcadia, the wilderness in *Montcalm and Wolfe* has lost parts of its wildness and is increasingly curtailed by urban settlements. Accordingly, Parkman's American wilderness is a space of transition: portrayed in between its seemingly eternal existence prior to European arrival and its large scale destruction in Parkman's own time. The forest, as literary metaphor, thus links the various historical plains of Parkman's text while efficiently exposing the process of national becoming as an act of environmental destruction and geographical remodeling. It is then no surprise that the deciding battle of the French and Indian War is fought not in the thicket of the Acadian woods but around an urban center (Quebec) and settled with the aid of modern military technology as if to announce the final "clearing" of the American wild.

4.3.1 Forest Fighting or Fighting the Forest

"Canada was fortified with vast outworks of defence in the savage forests, marshes, and mountains that encompassed her, where the thoroughfares were streams choked with fallen trees and obstructed by cataracts."

Francis Parkman *Montcalm and Wolfe*

As a complex literary counter space, the forest in *Montcalm and Wolfe* performs a number of narratological functions. The Canadian woodlands are, of course, the premier testing ground for individual and communal virtues and the site of devilish temptations. It further symbolizes the desire for and Edenic unison with nature characteristic for Romantic historiographies as well as,

Pontiac, found to be marked by a "lack of what is characteristic" (377). Parker further explains his point by saying: "You (Parkman) do not tell us what kind of trees, etc., there were, only trees— leaving us to guess whether they were pines or palms, bushes or tall trees" (377).

in the specific case of New France, the intellectual darkness and rampant superstitions that characterized the colony in Parkman's estimation. As a space of war, the forest signifies an actual locale of combat, the place of enemy encounters, thus a site of intercultural interaction and exchange, and a site of social transgressions governed by its very own set of laws and regulations.⁴⁸ But in Parkman's conceptualization of the forest as military geography the Canadian woods transcend their status as mere physical environments and become active participants in the battles of the French and Indian War. The forest in Parkman's work denotes more than a simple literary motif and, in fact, becomes an agent in its own right, a frightening one at that. Parkman's conceptualization of the forest as a literary device is nicely exemplified by the following passage:

If the country had been an open one, like the plains beyond the Mississippi, the situation would have been less frightful; but the forest was everywhere, rolled over hill and valley in billows of interminable green,—a leafy maze, a mystery of shade, a universal hiding place where murder might lurk unseen at its victim's side, and Nature seemed formed to nurse the mind with wild and dark imaginings. The detail of blood is set down in the untutored words of those who saw and felt it. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1074)

The key task for both combatants, the English and the French, then is to master the force of the forest and employ its deadly element to their own advantage. In the beginning of the text, the French display a much greater understanding of this particular combat zone and accordingly deal

⁴⁸ As a distinctive spatial manifestation of human interaction, warfare, battles, in short any form of armed conflict must be considered as its very own space. During war, existing spatial relations are often abandoned and almost always violated. Invading armies purposefully negate the existing spatial order between nation states with the goal of territorial expansion. Clashing armies then, in turn, form a completely novel space which might be restricted to a battlefield as in a classical field battle of the seventeenth century, or include other sub-spaces such as civilian quarters, front lines, bridgeheads, command stands, field hospitals etc. But war always challenges existing spatial relations and redefines territorial claims. In more modern manifestations of warfare, the space of war might be ever shifting, transnational, and even include cyberspaces. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between space and war consult: Colin Flint (ed.). *The Geography of War and Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 and Rachel Woodward. *Military Geographies*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

crushing defeats to the British forces. Fitting examples of the early French superiority in forest fighting are the battles of Ticonderoga and Fort Duquesne. Parkman's first in depth analysis of the military adaption of both European powers to the unique environment occurs during Braddock's advance on Fort Duquesne. After citing a number of tactical mistakes that show a clear misapprehension of the surrounding, Parkman chronicles the ambush of the French and Indian troops after Braddock's forces have crossed the Monongahela.⁴⁹ The attack of Beaujeu and his raiding party, featuring all of the participants (French regulars, Canadian militia, and Huron, Abenaki, and Caughnawaga warriors) dressed in war paint and indigenous apparel was, Parkman insists, not even a well executed ambush as the attackers had missed the ideal opportunity to engage the British when they were crossing the river. Regardless, the inexperienced British stood no chance, "broke their ranks and huddled together in a bewildered mass, shrinking from the bullets that cut them down by the score" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 993).⁵⁰ Parkman's account of Braddock's defeat at Fort Duquesne naturally stresses the inexperience of the soldiers, the inability of the commander, and the superiority of the opponent, thereby focusing on the relationship between military victory and mastery of the environment. In contrast, the depiction of the battle of Ticonderoga unleashes the forest as a self-directed war machine. Here, the surrounding becomes the enemy itself; not only concealing enemy sentinels and ambushes, the dense forests of Canada literally destroy the European armies:

⁴⁹ Parkman is, in fact, so disappointed with Braddock as a commander that he references Washington's journal, who called Braddock "ever so incompatible with reason or common sense" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 983), to support his own verdict that the British general's "executive capacity seems to have been moderate" (983).

⁵⁰ The only ones in the British outfit who, according to Parkman, "were equal to the emergency" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 994) were the Virginia Rangers under Washington and Waggoner. Here Parkman begins to differentiate between the British and American capability to understand the spatial environment, thereby connecting the events to the Revolutionary War to come.

The forest was extremely dense and heavy, and so obstructed with undergrowth that it was impossible to see more than a few yards in any direction, while the ground was encumbered with fallen trees in every stage of decay. The ranks were broken, and the men struggled on as they could in dampness and shade, under a canopy of boughs that the sun could scarcely pierce. The difficulty increased when, after advancing about a mile, they came upon undulating and broken ground. They were now not far from the upper rapids of the outlet. The guides became bewildered in the maze of the trunks and boughs; the marching columns were confused, and fell in one upon the other. They were in the strange situation of an army lost in the woods. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1262)

Howard Doughty rightfully remarks that the initial British losses resemble a necessary education process before they can eventually master the “forest war” (*Francis Parkman* 373).

The British failure to understand their surrounding and develop a symbiotic relationship with the theater of war as the Indian fighters and native militiamen exhibit is rooted in their attempt to apply European battlefield tactics to a conflict that is everything but European. Similar to the construction of European-style fortifications discussed earlier in this chapter, this futile attempt of Europeanizing the American theater of the Seven Years’ War, for Parkman, also serves as a notable historical epiphany that is meant to validate American cultural identity as well as the success of the American Revolution. In a sense the French and Canadian forces are in these early chapters of the book conceived as the defenders of that very forest that harbors the core of American culture and identity. The British attempt to flatten out and destroy the American wilderness thus represents the desire for military victory and colonial gain, but also the attempt to push the Anglo-European model of progress and civilization on the American continent. Their past failure in the Seven Years’ War, the text then seemingly suggests, should have taught them to refrain from further attempts to enforce the Europeanization of the continent and saved them from similar mistakes in the Revolutionary War.

The special geography of the forest has its unique laws of war. Although both the French and the British officers are striving to uphold European rules of engagement, scalping and other

atrocities increasingly characterize the fighting. In addition, destroying civilian targets and massacring unarmed settlers quickly become common practices on both sides. All in all the conflict indicates a truly transgressive event, only imaginable in the specifically unrestrained geography of New France that unsettles the boundaries of traditional warfare as it defies military traditions on a number of levels. By no means is the conflict limited to a specific geography or even country, as border raids in neighboring colonies spread the violence all over the North American continent. Combatants are recruited from a host of varying cultures and professions, including trained soldiers, forcefully recruited settlers, patriotic militiamen, and skilled Indian warriors. The loyalty of these troops, especially the colonial settlers pressed into fighting and the Indian war parties hired for a barrel of rum, was rarely lasting. Frequently the allegiance of indigenous mercenaries was only ensured by excessive gifts and the promise of war spoils. The French and Indian War as depicted by Parkman can thus be best described as a guerilla or partisan war.

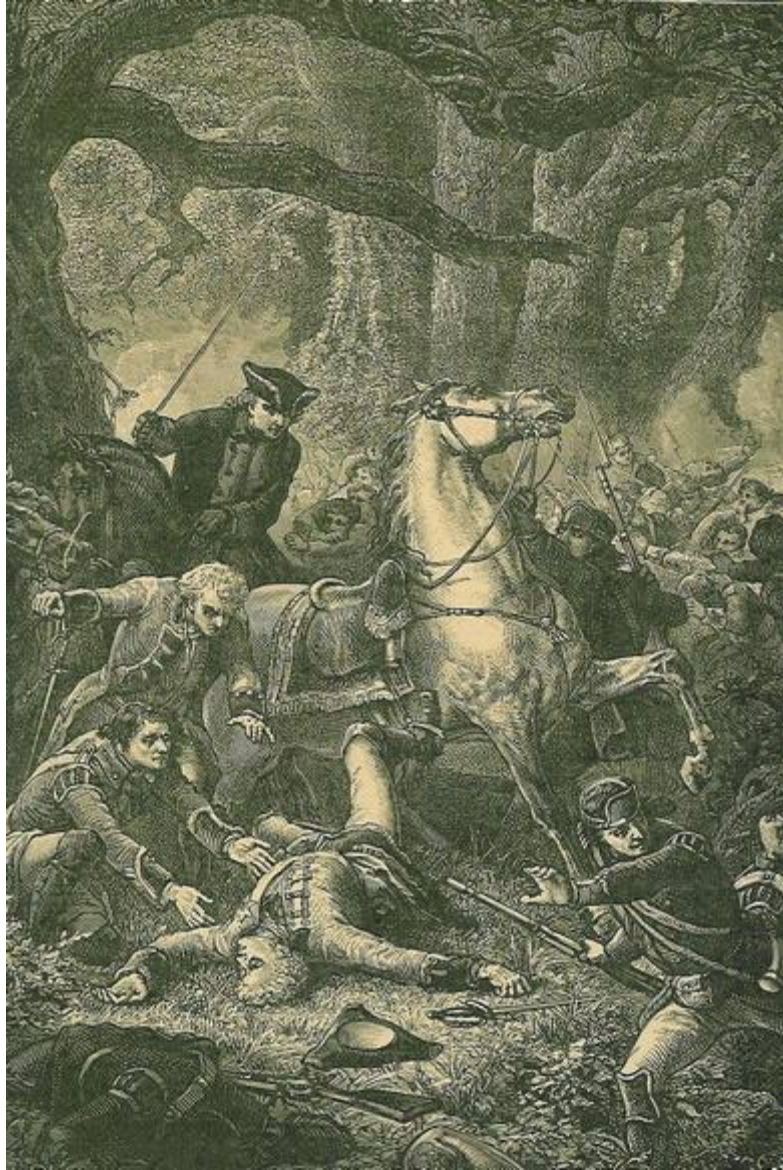


Figure 4.6: This nineteenth-century engraving depicts Braddock's death in the Battle of Monongahela on July 9th 1755 and accurately captures the romantic view of the French and Indian War. While the sketch conveys the battle's tumultuous nature quite effectively, the engraving also highlights the landscape. In fact, it appears as if the forest itself is surrounding and eventually crushing the British forces.

4.3.2 “In the Shadow of the Season:” Guerilla War

“The Guerilla Fighter is the Jesuit of Warfare.”
Ernesto Guevara *Guerilla Warfare*

The guerilla warfare of the Canadians and Indians spread terror among the English troops and New England militiamen in the beginning of the conflict not just because of their unorthodox tactics involving ambushes, covert missions, and border raids, giving the British regulars the impression that they were actually fighting the wilderness surrounding them rather than an enemy out of flesh and blood. Another key reason for the devastating results of the unusual tactics lies in the employment of psychological warfare meant to further dishearten the enemy. Paired with the destruction of non-military targets, such as the killing of animals and civilians, the deliberate employment of indigenous battle conventions of the Bourbon troops that involved scalping, war paint, and traditional war chants made for a truly intimidating affair. In Parkman’s estimation these tactics were questionable at best, but his description of the capture of Fort Ontario leaves no doubt that the psychological warfare of Montcalm’s troops was effective. The unfortunate defenders, fearing that a “pandemonium of pillage and murder” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1125) was about to descend upon them quickly capitulated to the French and Indian besiegers:

The garrison was already disheartened. Colonel Mercer, the soul of the defence, had just been cut in two by a cannonshot while directing the gunners. Up to this time the defenders had behaved with spirit; but despair now seized them, increased by the screams and entreaties of the women, of whom there were more than a hundred in the place [...] ‘The cries, threats, and hideous howlings of our Canadians and Indians,’ says Vaudreuil, ‘made them quickly decide.’ (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1125)

Unlike the regular British outfits that remain committed to traditional combat tactics, American colonists and militia forces adapt, impressed by the success of the unconventional French methods, to partisan warfare. The first clear example of this important shift in the text occurs in

the attack of Pennsylvania settlers under the command of Colonel John Armstrong on a Delaware village much in the same fashion as French and Indian fighters had previously attacked frontier villages on the British side. For Parkman, this American emancipation from British military tactics is one of the first steps to political and cultural independence as it not only lays the foundation for the military triumph over the mother country in the Revolutionary War, but also because the partisan warriors of the French and Indian War represent the inaugural class of truly American heroes. Through their legendary missions at the shores of Lake George and its surrounding mountains, the New England Rangers and other bands of colonist militia emerge as the center piece in Parkman's theorization of the American hero and the historical ideal protagonist. Similar to the refined mountain men à la Henry Chatillon in *The Oregon Trail*, the true heroes of this war are American woodsmen like Rob Rogers whose grandeur of spirit, restraint of passion, and wilderness aptitude represent the cornerstones of Parkman's American virtues. Over the course of *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman then employs these figures to develop, in contradistinction to French, British, and Indian protagonists, a distinctly American character that is marked by an unsurpassable "adventurous hardihood" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1138). Versed in both Indian and French dialects, perfectly adapted to the harsh surrounding, the Rangers indeed develop into the most effective of all the British forces in the conflict.⁵¹

At times, however, Parkman alludes to the dangers of a life in the wilderness. As the war lingers on and Rogers and his Rangers spend month after month in the isolated wilderness hunting French and Indian raiding parties, they become so immersed in their bush fighting ways

⁵¹ According to Parkman the Rangers' ability to communicate with their enemies was so perfect, that they frequently trick enemy soldiers into a trap (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1140). Their flawless adjustment to the conditions in New France is exemplified by their ability to travel even during the winter time, using skates, skis, and snow shoes (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1139).

that the men, driven by the desire for revenge, scalp an Indian war party in the battle of Quebec and massacre an Abenaki village. Although Parkman first attempts to legitimize the incidents by hinting on the motif of revenge, he soon recognizes the ethical injustice of the gruesome acts and emphasizes the divine punishment that awaited Rogers and his men after annihilating the Indian village. Parkman's account clarifies that the episode turned into a deadly disaster for the Rangers as they missed their rendezvous supply party at the mouth of the Amonoosuc. Before Rogers and two others could return with provisions and a rescue party some of his men had already died as a result of exhaustion and famine. They might have, Parkman speculates, become "victims of the fury of the Indian women" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1374).

4.3.3 "My Land is your Land:" Border War

"In this country we must learn the art of war from enemy Indians, or anybody else who has
seen it carried on here."
Brigadier John Forbes

The New England Rangers, as well as their French and Canadian counterparts, are transnational subjects that traverse the vast territory of New France and the adjoining British colonies at their leisure. Borders and other markers of territorial entitlement have no meaning, no authority, for them. *Montcalm and Wolfe* is thus set in a supra-territorial space in which borders de facto exist but lack real significance and are impossible to enforce effectively. Nonetheless, as a spatial concept marking the limits of empire and resulting land disputes, borders are extremely important for the formation of national identity as well as local diversity within the text. It is therefore no surprise—as Parkman's volume chronicles the formation of American national identity—that borders play a much more prominent role in *Montcalm and Wolfe* compared to *The Oregon Trail*.

The specific geography of the border and its vital centrality for the conflict bred a unique form of armed engagement, border warfare. In contrast to established rules of engagement in the eighteenth century that required open field battle in strictly organized formations, border war defies these laws of conventional European fighting.⁵² In contrast, it is, like the tactics employed by the French and Indians in Braddock's defeat described earlier, a form of guerilla warfare that abandons the rationale and traditions of the Old World and instead embraces the chaos of purposefully disorganized combat while using the unique characteristics of the surrounding terrain as an element of both surprise and support. The chief characteristic of border warfare, however, is the destruction of civilian lives and properties as a legitimate action to defeat the enemy. Often incited by the French commanders, such as Dumas at Duquesne, and carried out by their Indian minions, these border raids spread horror among the settler population and even urged many of them to leave their homesteads for a safe retreat in the Virginian interior. At the same time, the harbingers of border violence, small bands of bush fighters often with Indian support, are presented by Parkman as an uncontrollable force once unleashed, and the French officers repeatedly struggle to control the horrific and senseless violence that accompanied their questionable deeds. For Parkman the border raids present a conundrum. At the one hand they signal the combatants' successful adaption to the wilderness surrounding them and a mastery of the laws of the wild, but on the other hand they signal a descent into pre-enlightened existence marked by the savagery he so often condemns in his Native American characters. The moral depravity the French display with their employment of unchecked border raids and the beginning

⁵² While Parkman clearly aligns the development of border warfare as a special military tactic with the American theater of the Seven Years' War, the fighting in Europe also featured partisan fighters who operated in heavily contested border regions. Croatian, Serbian, and Hungarian fighters, for instance, supported the Austrian army against the Prussia's superior military in contested areas such as Bohemia and Moravia.

regress into barbarism is further enhanced by a physical transformation. As the French raiders dress like their Indian comrades they attempt to absolve themselves from the responsibility of their actions as they are not wearing the uniforms of a European nation but the coat of the savages.

Even though border warfare connotes a moral dilemma, *Montcalm and Wolfe* establishes this specific form of combat as a defining characteristic of American history. In Parkman's estimation, the history of America is not just a history of conflict but the history of border conflict. As the text exemplifies, this specific form of violent encounter is characteristic to all early American geographies, but specifically the frontier. Life on the western and northern frontier during the middle of the eighteenth century mainly meant to live a life defined by the constant fear of Indian raids and an ever-present possibility of violent death. This assessment of frontier life de facto redefines the representation of the frontier in American letters of the nineteenth century and debunks the myth of the frontier established by American novelists such as Cooper at the beginning of the century. Moreover, Parkman's reversal of frontier mythology distinguishes between the different frontiers settings (he separates, for instance, the plains frontier from the forest frontier) and insists that the peculiarities of the environment greatly contributed to the disastrous situation and psychological peril of the pioneers. For a settler on the plains, Parkman clarifies, "the situation would have been less frightful, but the forest was everywhere, rolled over hill and valley in billows of interminable green, — a leafy maze, a mystery of shade, a universal hiding place, where murder might lurk unseen at its victim's side,

and Nature seemed formed to nurse the mind with wild and dark imaginings” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1074).⁵³

The struggle over the extent of British and/or French empire claims and the ruthless ways with which it was fought is of course the dominant border issue in the text, but certainly not the only border dispute at stake. The text further chronicles the formation of the United States as we know it today. For Parkman the French and Indian War was necessary not only for the realization of British dominion over the continent, but also for the colonies in order to free themselves from geographical restrictions which would have been imposed upon them by a French controlled western frontier (thus claiming the far western territories for their crown and thereby effectively pinching the colonies into a small strip along the coast without hopes for future expansion). In Parkman’s estimation, this geographical restriction would have undoubtedly led to an unending dependency of the colonies on the British Crown. A British success in the war against France was in point of fact a requisite for an independent America and the successful colonization of the West in the not so distant future. Consequently, *Montcalm and Wolfe* establishes the French-English conflict as the historical nexus of all American history and thereby inaugurates what Otis Pease termed “a modified frontier thesis for colonial history” (13). While the clash of the two European empires produced the necessary preconditions for American emancipation in the future, it forced the colonists to pose questions of political and cultural unity.

⁵³ The text nicely pinpoints the differences between life at the farming frontier and the living conditions for a family who settled isolated in the dense forest. Parkman describes a typical northern frontier’s cabin by saying:

Along the skirts of the southern and middle colonies ran for six or seven hundred miles a loose, thin, dishevelled fringe of population, the half-barbarous pioneers of advancing civilization. Their rude dwellings were often miles apart. Buried in woods, the settler lived in an appalling loneliness [...]; an unkempt matron, lean with hard work, and a brood of children with bare heads and tattered garments eked out by deerskin,— such was the home of the pioneer in the remoter and wilder districts. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1073-1074)

These very questions regarding the communal action (or inaction) of a union of states in response to a conflict of equally foreign empires mark the beginning of a process of political self-definition that will culminate in the Continental Congresses. Parkman clearly draws a line of continuity from the early days of the French and Indian War and the ensuing negotiations among the colonies to the creation of American democracy. The representative figure of this process, for him, is Benjamin Franklin who appears throughout the text as a model of civil servitude and political reason. For Parkman, Franklin was a “sagacious personage,—the sublime of common sense [...] and gifted with a versatile power of brain rarely matched on earth” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 981). Franklin is here conceived as an archetypal American and the incarnation of exemplary virtues. In this function he appears as a catalyst of political change and a trans-historical moral compass for the contemporary reader.

The process of American geo-national becoming, Parkman’s narrative explains, involved first the violent struggle against a rival empire, then the defeat of the British colonizer, and finally depended on the overcoming of inner-American rivalries. Representative for the conflicting spatial interests of the inaugural colonies is the dispute between Pennsylvania and Virginia over the Ohio Valley that threatens to halt the entire British war effort. Only because of Benjamin Franklin’s miraculous intervention does Braddock’s army ultimately receive the required “hundred and fifty wagons, with a large number of horses” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 982) and can march into battle.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ On the border conflict between Pennsylvania and Virginia Parkman explains: The question of disputed boundaries had much to do with this most impolitic nation. A large part of the valley of the Ohio, including the site of the proposed establishment, was claimed by both Pennsylvania and Virginia; and each feared that whatever money it might spend there would turn to the profit of the other” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 886).

Finally, the text echoes the ambivalent role the northern border played, and still plays, in the American consciousness. Very much like today, to some states it was vitally important as a symbol of economic exchange and a marker of local identity, while to others its mere existence might have come as a surprise. Consequently, not all American colonies were involved or even interested in participating in the ensuing conflict to the north in the middle of the 18th century:

While to these northern provinces Canada was an old and pestilent enemy, those towards the south scarcely knew her by name; and the idea of French aggression on their borders was so novel and strange that they admitted it with difficulty” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 960).

4.3.4 “What went down on the Plains of Abraham:” The Battle of Quebec

“The war was over and the spirit was broken
The hills were smokin' as the men withdrew
We stood on the cliffs
Oh, and watched the ships
Slowly sinking to their rendezvous.”
Robbie Robertson *Acadian Driftwood*

It might come as a surprise to some readers of *Montcalm and Wolfe* that the grand conclusion of Parkman’s history of the American wilderness culminates in an urban environment. The finale of this “tragedy in five acts” (Levin *History* 211), in fact, takes place not at a remote wilderness fort, but on an open field at the gates of Quebec, the most urban space in all of New France at the time. To further complicate the matter, British victory, in the end, comes via mastery of the sea and reliance on European battle tactics and not as a result of their perfection of guerilla tactics and bush fighting ways that proved so devastatingly effective throughout the French and Indian War. The battle of Quebec thus resembles a clear counterpoint to the formerly established geography of warfare in the text. While the final chapters of the text seemingly negate the established order of combat it certainly highlights the intricate relationship between war and space. Parkman’s description of the “natural fortress” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1341) of Quebec is,

in fact, a great example of the historians “acute sense of place” (Levin *History* 223). Parkman writes:

Here he [Mackellar] could see, in part, the desperate nature of the task he had undertaken. Before him, three or four miles away, Quebec sat perched upon her rock, a congregation of stone houses, churches, palaces, convents, and hospitals; the green trees of the Seminary garden and the spires of the Cathedral, the Ursulines, the Recollets, and the Jesuits. Beyond rose the loftier height of Cape Diamond, edged with palisades and capped with redoubt and parapet. Batteries frowned everywhere. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1341)

In this passage Parkman views Quebec predominantly as a religious site. More precisely, Quebec, similar to Montreal, symbolizes the stifling Jesuit rule over the colony that breeds, as W.J. Eccles, remarks a climate of “superstition and ignorance” (167). Yet at the same time, Quebec also stands for the unchecked corruption and extravagance of the French-Canadian ruling class and governmental officials. On an organizational level, Quebec shows the increasing stratification of space in the late eighteenth century. Space now is comprehended in terms of power and the accumulation of both commercial and political representation. Previously space, as Parkman’s conceptualization of New France nicely mirrored, was perceived in relation to geographical extent and land mass. This physical grounding of the understanding of space was, however, challenged and ultimately uprooted by the social and technological innovations of the industrial revolution. With the establishment of rapidly growing communication and transportation networks, vast territorial entities could now be controlled from urban centers where the life lines of the colony run together. As such, Quebec’s fall symbolizes the downfall of the entire colony while exposing the flaws of excessively centralized governments and overly stratified geographies. In the end, the British forces remain victorious because they understand the changing realities of spatial domination. Whereas Vaudreuil’s forces are still focusing on

defending their wilderness outposts, Wolfe's capability to storm the urban center deals the deciding blow to the crumbling French empire in America.

As a space of war, Quebec represents the clash of the European system of organized field battle to which the British forces have resorted with a French army that has for all points and purposes disintegrated. Whereas the British are able to impose order on the field of war (something they have not been able to do previously), the French are attempting to transplant the guerilla tactics of forest fighting onto a conventional field battle. The results are catastrophic. In the same fashion as Braddock and Abercromby were unable to adjust to the transgressive laws of guerilla warfare in the beginning of the conflict, Montcalm and his men are now unable to return to classic battle formations appropriate for the situation at hand. The picture Parkman describes as the French troops exit the city to meet their enemy depicts a chaotic mob rather than an organized army:

Troops of Indians in scalplocks and war-paint, a savage glitter in their deep-set eyes; bands of Canadians whose all was at stake,—faith, country, and home; the colony regulars; the battalions of Old France, a torrent of white uniforms and gleaming bayonets, La Sarre, Languedoc, Roussillon, Béarn,—victors of Oswego, William Henry, Tioconderoga. So they swept on, poured out upon the plain, some by the gate of St. Louis, and some by that of St. John, and hurried, breathless, to where the banners of Guinne still fluttered on the ridge. (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1396)

In Parkman's account, the French army has transformed into a heterogeneous war machine that seemingly self-directed, void of any apparent leadership, washes out of the city. As this last scene epitomizes the French inability to create a coherent, unified colony, the rhizomatically disseminating soldiers have become a spatial manifestation of the war itself. Over the course of its seven years (not including the years of unofficial combat prior to the official declarations of war) the French and Indian War transgressed the boundaries of colonies, nations, and even continents (if we remember that it was, in reality a global conflict). As the British are finally able

to master the chaos of this anomalous conflict, the French forces are quite literally swept away by its riveting chaos.

The unlikely transformation of the royal army into a barbaric tribe is presented by Parkman as the result of a number of factors. First, he cites the total breakdown of authority and communication as the premier explanation behind the disastrous defeat. Specifically Montcalm is presented as utterly deserted by his colleagues and disconnected from his men. Neither does the general receive support from the garrison nor does Vaudreuil come to his aid in the moment of decision. Consequently, the climax of the battle mirrors a complete and total communication breakdown in which the centralized system of New France is suffocated under its own weight. Suddenly, Montcalm's authority is undermined by particular interests of other generals who expose the fragility of the absolutist government structure.

Finally, it seems noteworthy that the British triumph in the battle of Quebec rests solely on the ability to successfully reach Quebec with their fleet. In a daring move the British master mariner Killick traverses the dangerous, in French estimation unsurpassable, rapids protecting the city. The sailors' ability to sense space instead of merely seeing it enables the British to occupy the upper St. Lawrence and thereby effectively trap the French forces both on the ground and at sea.⁵⁵

Here, control over the sea signifies dominion over cities and control over trading routes and other emerging modern networks of transportation and communication. The capture of Quebec, the economic and political nerve center of New France, therefore symbolizes the British superior

⁵⁵ The first successful British sea operation occurs at the battle of Louisbourg. The battle is also the first major victory for Wolfe, who distinguishes himself in the battle as he storms the French batteries side by side with his soldiers "armed with nothing but a cane" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1237).

social and economic blueprint for colonial rule. Instead of a rigid and impeding feudal hierarchy and a morose and corrupt economy that has characterized New France in the past, the British system promises modern capitalism and upward mobility unbeknownst to the region.⁵⁶

Parkman's conceptualization of the battle of Quebec thus also references the growing supremacy of the city in the late eighteenth century and the omnipotence of capitalization and modern commerce that supplanted the trading/fur economy that the French had practiced in New France and would become the foundation for American world power.

⁵⁶ For more information on Parkman's views on the economic legacy of New France see W.J. Eccles' essay "The History of New France according to Francis Parkman."

4.4 Scholar-Soldiers and Man-eating Savages: The Protagonists of Place

“Here was gathered a martial population of eight thousand men, including the brightest civilization and the darkest barbarism: from the scholar-soldier Montcalm and his no less accomplished aide-de-camp; from Lévis, conspicuous for graces of person; from a throng or courtly young officers, who would have seemed out of place in that wilderness had they not done their work so well in it; from these to the foulest man-eating savage of the uttermost northwest.”

Francis Parkman *Montcalm and Wolfe*

4.4.1 Sons of the Forest and Friends of the Devil: Native Americans

“The Indians were drunk already with homicidal rage, and the glitter of their vicious eyes told of the devil within.”

Francis Parkman *Montcalm and Wolfe*

Parkman’s treatment of Native Americans in *Montcalm and Wolf* differs from his portrayal of Indian tribes in *The Oregon Trail*. The apparent discrepancies between the two works are logically the result of Parkman’s relative inexperience with Native American culture prior to his journey westward. As a result of his unfamiliarity with the subject, the records of Indian encounters on the trail are testimonies of the author’s amazed impressions rather than sustained ethnological character sketches. After his return, Parkman remained intrigued by the disappearing culture he had encountered on the prairie and studied the history and culture of the northeastern tribes until his death. This sustained scholarly interest in the topic undoubtedly shaped Parkman’s subsequent depiction of Native American characters and, especially in the later volumes of *France and England in North America*, shows evidence of a scholarly approach towards the topic.

While it is true that his portrayal of Native Americans was somewhat static, in the sense that Parkman did not perceive Indians as agents, or even recipients of social progress and individual development, but rather locked into a form of primitive barbarism that existed virtually unchanged for hundreds if not thousands of years, he did show a keen interest in indigenous cultures and their traditional forms of social organization. The *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, for

instance, begins with an extended account of the pre-Columbian history of northeastern woodland tribes and minutely chronicles Native American customs prior to European contact. Based mainly on Jesuit missionary records (*The Jesuit Relations*) and accounts of French explorers, traders, and colonial authorities, the text creates a remarkable history of Native American life in the region. Among the tribes of the Northeast, the Iroquois were Parkman's foremost representatives of Indian civilization, partially because they had been the subject of European, better French, missionary assaults more than any other tribes, but especially because of their seminal role in the French and Indian War. Wilbur Jacobs points out that Parkman's depiction of the Iroquois eventually even developed into an "anthropological archetype" (63). This seems no surprise as Parkman's scholarly engagement with the woodland tribes of Northeast America was certainly the most detailed and sustained. Yet it is noteworthy to add that his treatment of Native American traditions was also subjected to a spatial divide. His work clearly distinguishes two factions of Indians and with it two ways of responding to white encroachment. In Parkman's Native American universe, the plains Indians, as I discussed in the previous chapter, had lost their innate freedom and cultural independence in the sustained exposure and interaction with American settlers, traders, and missionaries along the Oregon Trail. In contrast, the Iroquois, despite their alliances with the Europeans remained for Parkman fearless warriors who had stayed untamed despite their exposure to Jesuit missionaries. Compared to plains Indians, the warriors of New France appear nobler, notwithstanding their capacity for atrocious violence, because they are still living in their own environment and thus display a more authentic vision of indigenous culture.

As a noble, yet savage, representative of early American culture, Parkman's Indian characters in *Montcalm and Wolfe* are conceptualized in a two-fold fashion. As David Levin

explains, the Iroquois and Huron tribes reflect “natural virtues” when opposing the encroaching European colonizers, but “when [they] clash with the natural man, [they are] an opponent of progress, often a merciless butcher of the defenseless mothers, maidens, and babes (*History* 129). Equipped with a savage charm quite representative of the Romantic depiction of Indian life, Parkman’s indigenous protagonists are, of course, like Cooper’s Indians, already vanishing, that is doomed by the higher laws of inevitable progress.⁵⁷ In fact, Parkman’s Indians, while always courageous, “appear noblest when he recognizes his doom in the actions of the two European powers between whom his tribes have been squeezed” (Levin *History* 139). It is thus no surprise that one of the most prominent Indian figures in the text, the Mohawk chief Hendrick, foretells the eventual destruction of the Five Nations at the hand of both French and English settlers to the assembled representatives of the colonies at the Albany council: “The Governor of Virginia and the Governor of Canada are quarreling about lands which belong to us, and their quarrel may end in our destruction” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 963). For Parkman, an indigenous character reflected his primitive nobility most eloquently when he was aware of the sword of Damocles hanging over Native American culture.

Besides proliferating the myth of the vanishing Indian in American popular consciousness, Parkman was certainly also responsible for circulating tales of cannibalism and related Indian savagery among his readership. In *Montcalm and Wolfe*, for instance, Parkman relates an episode in which the French missionary Roubaud was forced by a group of Ottawa Indians to partake in their consumption of a British prisoner (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1173-1174). Although the descriptions of actual cannibalism are few and far between and mostly the result of Parkman’s

⁵⁷ But Parkman’s description of Native Americans is also deconstructing the romantic, sentimentalist picture of Indian life by focusing on the harsh realities of Indian life and the often unnerving details of daily survival and warfare that reflect a sense of grotesque (Levin *History* 137).

inclusion of doubtful sources and hearsay, there is certainly an element of extreme, uncontrollable violence associated with Native American warriors throughout the text. It is, however, exactly this capacity for the unquestioned distribution of violence that makes the Amerindian war parties welcomed allies on both sides of the conflict, even though more often than not neither side proves capable, despite excessive bribery, to curtail the Indian warriors permanently. Seemingly irresistibly overcome by their blood thirst, the Indians are, despite all previous promises of civilized behavior, responsible for mutilations, decapitations, and other unnecessary acts of violence. Parkman, for example, highlights the ensuing massacre after the fall of Fort William Henry, where, after the defeated English troops marched out of the fortification, “all the sick men unable to leave their beds were instantly butchered” and the French soldiers witnessed “one of these barbarians coming out of the casemates with a human head in his hand, from which the blood ran in streams, and which he paraded as if he had got the finest prize in the world” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1188). As if the level of cruelty would not be already sufficient, Parkman then goes on to relate in detail how the enraged warriors preceded to tomahawk an entire group of British prisoners of war (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1191).

Now, there is little doubt that Parkman’s depiction of Native Americans aimed to demonize the Northeastern tribes, especially if they fought on the side of the French army. Parkman looked to the Iroquois and Huron (the main perpetrators of these kind of atrocities in *Pontiac* and *The Jesuits in North America*) as inferior races, noble and brave in their attitude towards nature and war but ultimately doomed because of their incapacity to overcome their primitive existence and unable to control their “homicidal rage” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1189). For him, Amerindians were generally unfit to develop the higher faculties of social organization as well as individual reason and therefore remained unredeemable relics of archaic times. But similar to his

conceptualization of plains Indians in *The Oregon Trail* described earlier, the Indian ideal Parkman was creating never had been and never would be an authentic representation of a pre-European American reality. Yet Parkman consciously employed the motif of the primitive Indian as a narratological tool; he only highlights the indigenous savagery when it served the progression of his narratives, in order to incite suspense and emotional responses from his readership. He clearly knew that savagery would sell. It is thus not entirely just to reduce Parkman's depiction of Indian atrocities to a latent ideology of racial superiority. But possibly we should also conceive it as a stylistic device that simply helped to spice up his narrative, especially because there are ample passages in the text that mirror Parkman's fascination with and respect for the Native American way of life and point toward a more complex theorization of Native American life.

Parkman, for instance, acknowledges that the Iroquois "had been a power of high importance in American international politics" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 888). As a powerful ally of the weak French colonial presence, the Iroquois guaranteed the very existence of New France as they kept advancing British frontier settlers in check. Unfortunately, Parkman attests, the various tribes of French America failed to formulate a unified agenda and therefore missed the opportunity to capitalize on the empire's dependency on their services. Too easily recruited by the colonial officers and Jesuit missionaries, the Indian tribes become perfect mercenaries of war that can be swayed for a cheap guerdon. In the Washington chapter, for instance, Contrecoeur secures the service of the surrounding tribes in his raid against Washington's Virginians for a hatchet and two barrels of wine. "Both the hatchet and wine," Parkman ensures us, "were cheerfully

accepted” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 949).⁵⁸ Overall, Native American characters in *Montcalm and Wolfe* are certainly constructed in tune with the conventions of nineteenth-century discourses of racial superiority and progressive annihilation. For Parkman, as for other influential writers and artists of the period such as Cooper, Irving, and Catlin, Indians resembled a colorful relic from pre-Columbian times that necessarily had to accept the inevitable destruction of their way of life or die with it. Nevertheless, Parkman, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, saw Native American culture despite its ultimate primitivism as a natural way of life that was unrivaled in its proximity to the environment and its physical vigor. Contrary to other historians of his period, Parkman realized the importance of Native Americans for the history of the American continent and envied their understanding of the laws of nature as well as their capacity to adapt to it. In the end, the destruction of the American forest and its inhabitants, to Parkman, was not only lamentable but also dishonorable as it was the result of European trickery and deception. For Parkman, the French deceit of their Indian allies was as morally reprehensible as it was the source of their demise, and to him the true villains of New France were the Jesuit priests who sanctioned it.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ To an extent Parkman’s description of French-Indian relations places the blame of Indian atrocities on the conduct of the French bureaucrats and missionaries, who encouraged Indian violence by paying them in liquor. The French colonial authorities, and especially the Jesuits, are in Parkman’s estimation not only responsible for the conduct of the Indians but essentially alienated the entire colony. The iron fist of the Jesuit rule, Parkman speculates, is also responsible for other disgruntled citizens, such as the *coureurs de bois*, the Canadian forest runners, who rather dwell in the primitivism of the forest than aiding the prosperity and progress of the colony. According to Parkman, the French colonial system triggered its own collapse by curtailing individual freedom and self-reliance among its citizens. Interestingly, these trapper outlaws occupy the space in-between the diametrically opposed Indian and European cultures. For Parkman their existence is both a splendid manifestation of free will and individual strength within a corrupt system.

⁵⁹ Parkman cites numerous instances in which French missionaries raise war parties and authorize attacks on frontier settlements, including the portrayal of Father Piquet the head of the

4.4.2 La colonie c'est moi: Villainous Governors and Soldier-Scholars

“What a country! Here all the knaves grow rich, and the honest men are ruined.”
Marquis de Montcalm on life in New France

Although Parkman considered the fall of New France an inevitable and necessary step in the development of American democracy, his volumes on the French discovery and subjugation of the continent are filled with reports of heroic deeds and remarkable individuals. While his central historiographic hypothesis identifies the strict hierarchy and feudal orientation of the French colonial system as the root cause for its ultimate failure, it generated more examples of representative men than the British colonies and their more equal yet also more common inhabitants. For Parkman, the social and governmental structure of New France represented a fascinating contradiction as its apparent injustice and futility produced individuals of exceptional character equipped with trans-historical virtues. His admiration was certainly strongest, as I discussed earlier, for the early explorers and missionaries of the North American wild whose endurance of torture and captivity he saw as manifestations of their unbendable integrity of belief and inextinguishable will to survive. Even as the determination of individuals like Jean de Brébeuf, the founder of the Huron mission, and Robert Cavelier de LaSalle, the great seventeenth-century explorer, occasionally bordered on the brink of madness, Parkman insisted on their importance as American heroes. About LaSalle Parkman, for example, wrote with apparent gleaming admiration:

Never, under the impenetrable mail of paladin or crusader, beat the heart of more intrepid mettle than within the stoic panoply that armed the breast of LaSalle. To estimate aright the marvels of his patient fortitude, one must follow on his track through the vast scene of his interminable journeying, those thousands of weary miles of forest, marsh, and river, where, again and again, in the bitterness of baffled striving, the untiring pilgrim pushed onward towards the goal which he was never to attain. America owes him an enduring

mission of La Presentation who hoped “to set a host of savages to butchering English settlers in time of peace” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 891).

memory; for, in this masculine figure, she sees the pioneer who guided her to the possessions of her richest heritage. (*La Salle and the Great West* 1013)

Undoubtedly, Parkman saw a direct connection between the mythologized American heroes of his own time, such as Washington, Rogers, and Franklin, and their French predecessors. To connect American heroism to the French colonial past seems the more noteworthy as Parkman in regards to questions of economic and political heritage, in unison with the historical consensus of nineteenth-century historians, identified the English, rather than the French, Spanish, or Dutch, as the most influential in shaping American traditions.

Obviously, not everyone in New France was material for becoming a model of American heroism. In reality, Parkman, assures us, the majority of royal officials in the colony were as corrupt as the court they represented. Characters such as governor Vaudreuil and his trade minister Bigot are constructed as personifications of inappropriate excess and unpunished fraud. In order to thoroughly vilify these colonial criminals, Parkman juxtaposed their gluttonous intemperance with the austerities that the regular population and the troops in the field had to endure.⁶⁰ Francois Bigot, for instance, is introduced as the head of an intricate supply monopoly that produced immense profits for himself and his partners while the inattentive French crown paid exorbitant amounts to keep their soldiers supplied. In his lucrative scheme Bigot, Parkman explains, was so audacious that he built his own warehouse in direct proximity to his palace where his men would collect and distribute the pricey goods. Among the people of Quebec the place was famous as “La Friponne, or The Cheat” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1212). Significantly, the

⁶⁰ Probably the vilest character in the text, and Parkman’s villain supreme, is governor Vaudreuil. Vaudreuil is not only engaged in the squander of resources and bribery explained earlier, but he is directly responsible, according to Parkman, for the loss of the war in that he curtailed Montcalm’s military authority, refused to come to his aid in the Battle of Quebec, and thereby abandoned the city to its fate (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1407). Parkman clearly conceived Vaudreuil as an overdrawn opponent of General Montcalm, thereby establishing, according to Ellen Donovan, “the familiar contrast between noble hero and evil superior” (287).

sins of the colonial elites are played out in the urban nerve centers of the colony. Thereby, the text illuminates how at the same time as industrious trade ministers embezzled millions from the government they were meant to represent, the French-Canadian nobility indulged in endless dinner parties at the expenses of royal accounts. Both Quebec and Montreal are conceived as spaces of wrongful transgression. For Parkman, they are “sparkling fragment[s] of the reign of Louis XV dropped into the American wilderness” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1153). Whereas the wilderness of the forest and the geography of war breed their very own forms of transgressive behavior (mostly violent in nature), the city in Parkman’s estimation represents corruption of the mind. While a soldier’s temporary loss of moral conduct and subsequent butchering of an enemy prisoner of war is a redeemable by-product of armed conflict, purposeful deception and treason is not forgivable in Parkman’s cosmos. As much as the Dantean desert symbolized the moral corruption and social primitivism of Native Americans in *The Oregon Trail*, Quebec here is the center of political incompetence and personal indecency and the city’s fall represents its overdue punishment.

Through the analysis of the impudent corruption among the colonial elites, Parkman not only pinpoints the socio-economic reasons for the French military defeat, but also highlights the necessity for American culture to continue a process of cultural emancipation from the Old World. For Parkman, the corruption of the political leaders of New France is a direct result of the malaise of European traditions outlined in the beginning of the book. Inhabitants of the New World cannot simply aim to continue Old World traditions unquestioned, but must strive to equip their novel space with an equally novel culture.

Parkman, however, does more here than simply employ a *pars pro toto* analogy in which the leaders of New France mirror the historian’s verdict on the French colony as such. The text also

creates a clear division between the New France of the royal officials and their henchmen and the common settlers of the colony. The squander of the Parisian bureaucrats who are only in America for a brief term appears the more hideous in relation to the description of the suffering of the Acadians and thereby establishes a twofold image of New France. In that twofold conceptualization the permanent inhabitants of New France have much more in common with their English counterparts to the south as they have with their own crown.

Even though *Montcalm and Wolfe* by and large expounds a spirited critique of French colonial practices, the text also locates a model of trans-historical greatness among the French ranks: the Marquis de Montcalm. Parkman's introductory chapter on Montcalm opens with the official declarations of war between the two empires in the early summer of 1756 (the British declaration of war was announced on May 18th 1756, while the French was signed on June 9th of the same year). By turning his eyes on Europe, Parkman again reminds the reader of the transatlantic nature of the conflict. The events quite plainly represent the proper starting point for military engagement. In the case of the French and Indian War this step appears like nothing more than a retrospective sanctioning of a war that had begun a long time before and since then been secretly conducted by means of border raids and other guerilla tactics. More importantly, the declarations of war, for Parkman, signal the need for a proper military commander. Now that New France has turned from a site of covert operations to a proper locale of war, the corresponding military hierarchies need to be in place also. We thus witness in the beginning of the "Montcalm" chapter the qualitative transformation of the conflict and with it the changing status of New France from contested colony to theater of war.

Similar to his conceptualization of other military figures in the text, such as Abercromby, Dieskau, and Braddock, Parkman begins by sketching Montcalm's military training and

validating his noble ancestry, followed by a detailed account of the general's multiple wounds received in the line of duty. Finally, Parkman assesses the troops that Montcalm is destined to lead into battle. Here, Parkman is eager to distinguish between the different troops, their morale, and their relationship to the colony. We learn, for example, that among the French soldiers the troops de la marine had the closest relationship to the colony and were therefore the most spirited combatants, as many of them had become settlers in New France after initially being deployed there from Europe (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1096). Parkman's analysis of the French esprit de corps points to the underlying theme of spatial relationships employed throughout the text, only that here the relationship between people and place become a primary motivation for military service.

Montcalm himself is no different in that regard. As I pointed out earlier in the analysis of his successful defense of Fort Ticonderoga, his merit as a heroic character rests predominantly on his ability to employ the intricate geography of New France for the benefit of his armies. In addition to his spatial awareness, Montcalm is esteemed by Parkman as a brave and honorable individual who respects the laws of conduct and highlighted as the most complete military strategist in the conflict. Extremely skilled in tactical operations, Montcalm is free of the pompous extravagance that characterizes other royal emissaries and even able to control the Indian troops. In contrast to Wolfe he is also an experienced soldier whose ultimate defeat stems from the inexperience of his supporting cast and the utter depravity of the colonial bureaucrats who are described as abandoning him in the decisive moment of the battle. Bernier's account of the events in Quebec (*Campaign in Canada from 1st of June to the 15th September, 1759*) swiftly summarizes the tragic apex of the battle:

It was at that spot that the enemy landed at four o'clock in the morning of the 13th, surprised the guard asleep, gained the heights to the number of more than four thousand and there formed in order of battle before eight o'clock. The entire camp Beauport arrived there at the same hour. The Marquis de Montcalm formed three columns,

attacked, and the fate of Quebec was decided by nine o'clock. On the side of the enemy, the General was killed, his second dangerously wounded; on ours, the second General killed on the field and the Marquis de Montcalm mortally wounded so that he survived only 12 hours. This misfortune precipitated a general flight and desertion; no one was willing to recognize any longer either authority or commander. (1003)

While Montcalm's merits as a spatial soldier and his ability to adapt to the geographical challenges of the North American forests have been discussed previously, Parkman's grandest moment of the fusion of individual and place in the case of Montcalm deserves further attention. After receiving his mortal wound on the battlefield Montcalm dies after twelve hours at the age of forty-eight. According to Parkman, the confusion in the besieged city was so profound that "no workman could be found to make a coffin" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1409) and a servant had to construct a makeshift coffin for the fallen general. As there was neither time nor a place for a proper burial, Montcalm was subsequently buried in the chapel of the Ursuline convent of Quebec, where "a shell bursting under the floor, had made a cavity which had been hollowed into a grave" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1409).⁶¹ Montcalm is thus not only laid to rest in an authentic space of war, as his grave was literally dug by a British mortar shell, but also in a Catholic cathedral like a true saint. More importantly, however, his funeral here also represents the death of a potentially prosperous colony and a successful war effort that was impeded by the unrestricted power of the Jesuits. It is thus no surprise that for Parkman "the funeral of Montcalm was the funeral of New France" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1409).

⁶¹ Although Parkman described the burial of Montcalm true to the historiographical legend, reverberating that Montcalm was laid to rest in a mortar crater, he seemed to be not convinced of the tale. In a journal entry from November 1878 he noted that "Montcalm died in Chateau St. Louis, 14 Sept. Buried same evening by torch light, not in a hole made by a bomb, but in a grave" (Wade Journal Volume 2 572). Clearly, Parkman here selected the more entertaining version for his description of the event.

4.4.3 Redcoats: Braddock and Wolfe

“Braddock is a very Iroquois in disposition.”

Horace Walpole

Before the text arrives at the second of its title giving protagonists, Parkman focuses on those British officers unworthy of heroic glorification. Similar to his treatment of prominent members of the French colonial elite, Parkman here always also scrutinizes these historical characters from a distinctly American perspective. The first of these failed American heroes is Braddock. The reader's initial impression of Braddock is generated through the trustworthy opinion of none other than Benjamin Franklin who, as I mentioned above, functions in the text as a kind of trans-historical surveyor of individual greatness and communal validity. Parkman uses Franklin's description of Braddock to label him as “a brave man” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 972), but unfit for service in the Canadian wilderness. According to Franklin, Braddock was too self-confident and too snobbish, lacking a fundamental respect for American settlers and the indigenous population. Unlike Parkman's portrayal of Washington, which was marked by the description of Washington's interaction with the people and his surrounding, Braddock is constructed through a number of anecdotes from varying authors (including reports on the general's gambling habits, the suicide of his sister, a past duel, and even his unhappy love relationships). While Parkman's mosaic approach serves well to establish background information on the general's past life, we do not see Braddock interact with his new surrounding and the people in it. Yet as a result of this technique Parkman is able to foreshadow the general's inability to adapt to the forest warfare in America and establish him as an alien character in a hostile environment. It is thus no surprise

that Braddock, as I discussed earlier, dies from his refusal to modify European conventions of war and his unwillingness to listen to his native advisors.⁶²

In contrast to Braddock's second-hand introduction, Wolfe is immediately introduced by his actions and not by an account of his lineage. Before we get a detailed account of his upbringing and education, we learn about his dedication to fight. He is a soldier that, unlike some of his colleagues and counterparts does not dread serving in the American theater but, on the contrary, "would seek all occasion to serve; and therefore [has] thrown [himself] in the way of the American war" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1235).

Importantly his presence and conduct signals the arrival of order in New France. Specifically, Wolfe's outstanding commanding at Louisbourg shows his capacity to master difficult military situations and signals that Wolfe, unlike his predecessors Braddock and Abercromby, is capable of dealing with the unique terrain of New France. In the surrender of Louisbourg Wolfe is further able to prevent looting, massacres and other unfortunate by-products of war that seemed unpreventable in the earlier chapters. Here, Wolfe then emerges as a true master of the American continent as he signifies "perfect order" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1247). Wolfe then, from the moment of his arrival represents the beginning transformation of the Canadian wilderness into an orderly realm.

Only after Parkman establishes Wolfe's military cunning does he return to a more personal description of the general. The main chapter on Wolfe opens with an unflattering physical description in which he reveals Wolfe's handicap and the fact that he carries a cane, thus

⁶² Abercromby falls into the same category as Braddock. Parkman similarly casts him as a brave and accomplished military tactician but ultimately unable to master the challenges of American geography.

establishing a dichotomy between physical body and character.⁶³ Then Parkman provides a detailed account of Wolfe's biography, his ascendancy in the military, as well as a brief assessment of character in which he attests Wolfe a character that "was a compound of tenderness and fire" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1323).⁶⁴ In tune with Romantic conventions of character development, Parkman emphasizes not only the psychological state of his protagonist, but also highlights Wolfe's sensual, even poetic, side. Similar to Montcalm, he is also a scholar-soldier versed in poetry and dutifully writing letters to both his mother and his wife, of whom he carries a picture at all times. The most remarkable quality of Wolfe, however, is his heroic defiance of death and the prophetic anticipation of his doom prior to the Battle of Quebec; for Wolfe "expected to die in the battle of the next day" and therefore gave his friend, the future Earl St. Vincent, "from his bosom the miniature of Miss Lowther, his betrothed" with a "request that he would return it to her if the presentiment should prove true" (Parkman *Montcalm and Wolfe* 1391). In this scene, Wolfe emerges as a true romantic hero, willingly accepting his personal destruction in the name of his soldierly duty while displaying the compassionate courtly love of a loyal husband.

⁶³ Some biographers see here a reason for Parkman's embrace of Wolfe as he suffered from similarly debilitating physical conditions as the historian himself.

⁶⁴ Interestingly, William Pitt, Wolfe's political patron, is the only recipient of an individual chapter (chapter eighteen) who did not participate in the events in America directly. Nonetheless, Parkman regards Pitt as a decisive, in fact the most important, element in the British war effort. For Parkman, Pitt represents nothing less than the very individual that caused the tides to turn in favor of the British. The chapter praises his passion, intellectual power, and domineering patriotism. Parkman even goes so far as to call Pitt a "British Roman" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1226). Moreover, Pitt's return to political office in the coalition with Newcastle in 1757 signifies for Parkman the long awaited change in military leadership and tactical orientation, as Pitt employs specialized forces like the Scottish Highlanders to the American theater and, more importantly, is praised by Parkman as the discoverer of Wolfe.

4.4.4 Rangers, Revolutionaries, and Renaissance Men: American Heroes

“Like Dürer’s knight, a ghastly death stalked ever at his side.”
Francis Parkman on Rob Rogers *Montcalm and Wolfe*

Parkman’s conceptualization of historical character certainly embraces the notion of exceptional individuality. Yet it differs from other nineteenth century theories of the relationship between history and the heroic (such as Carlyle’s and Prescott’s) by locating historical virtue at the intersection of individual character, historical situation, and geographical location. As a result, Parkman’s characters are not complete and total masters of the historical process, but instead individuals whose actions, including their mistakes, reveal important lessons for future generations. Although their actions might result in communal tragedy and personal defeat, characters like Montcalm transmit a set of ideal traits to the readership that include but are certainly not limited to self-control, bravery, reason, self-reliance, self-motivation, and moral credibility. Parkman’s strategy in fashioning a trans-historical hero might then be best described as the attempt to fuse the ethical and moral beliefs of author, writer, and character in an attempt to create a shared horizon of historical relevance. For Richard Vitzthum, this process rests on the fact that “the person who tells the story shares the moral attitudes and literary expectations with the person who is assumed to be listening to the story, and both are likewise fully in tune with the kind of person the story is about” (“Francis Parkman” 210).

The ethical integrity and heroic bravery of both Montcalm and Wolfe would surely reverberate with a nineteenth-century reader. But even better than learning a lesson of American character from a French and English general is to receive it straight from the American hero par excellence: George Washington. Parkman’s introduction of Washington to the text is remarkable; from the very beginning the future president appears as a character in tune with his surroundings. He is introduced as an expert woodsman, skilled soldier, and daring adventurer.

Most importantly, however, Washington is defined by his moral conduct. When his guide Gist, for instance, is ready to execute a French Indian they captured, Washington “interpose[s], and they let him go” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 937).

In addition to his role as a study in the formation of the distinctly American hero and ideal for American identity, Washington also functions as a trans-historical narrative voice. In *Montcalm and Wolfe* he resembles the American perspective within a conflict of foreign powers. In addition, he is also a sarcastic commentator on the inability of the British, especially Braddock, to adapt to the geography of the Canadian wilderness and a voice of unheard military reason. When he heard about Braddock’s approach to level every tree in his way and cut a proper street through the wilderness, Washington wrote to his brother: “my hopes [were] brought very low indeed when I found that, instead of pushing on with vigor without regarding a little rough road, they were halting to level every mole-hill, and to erect bridges over every brook, but which means we were four days in getting twelve miles” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 987). Washington, in his function as authorial commentator, exposes the English mistakes but further alludes to their looming defeat in the Revolutionary War.⁶⁵

In his function as trans-historical commentator Washington is only equaled by Benjamin Franklin who occupies a similar function in Parkman’s narratological strategy. Similar to his employment of Washington’s journal accounts, Parkman enlists, as Ellen Donovan notes in her article “Narrative Voices in Francis Parkman’s *Montcalm and Wolfe*,” Franklin’s “authority and

⁶⁵ For a more detailed account of Parkman’s use of sources, including his controversial appropriation of both primary and secondary material consult Richard C. Vitzthum’s essay “The Historian as Editor: Francis Parkman’s Reconstruction of Sources in *Montcalm and Wolfe*” or his book *The American Compromise: Theme and Method in the Histories of Bancroft, Parkman, and Adams*. Vitzthum explains that Parkman, in fact, in some instances relied on Jared Sparks’ descriptions of Washington’s actions and opinions but did not clarify this in his text, thus leaving the reader under the impression that the quote was from Washington himself (“Historian as Editor” 472-473).

perspective” to validate his historical assessment (279). Franklin, although not directly involved in the fighting, thus serves as Parkman’s main commentator on the condition within the American colonies. Thereby he is described as a political visionary who early on recognized the vital importance of forming a unified American position on the war, ultimately foreshadowing the formation of a “United” States. By highlighting Franklin’s strife for a unified stance of the colonies, he appears as the source of political enlightenment and as a visionary of the new political order to come. For Parkman, surely, discussing the political quarrels of the past is also a means to comment on the political present of his own time. For instance, when Parkman criticizes the “feudal proprietorship of the Penn family” in Pennsylvania in 1755 and condemns the colony’s internal political bickering as so severe that “the Assembly forgot the French and the Indians” (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1076), he also scolds the politicians of his own time for continued quarrels over the Civil Service Reform or for continued political sectionalism.

Montcalm and Wolfe presents, of course, a number of other influential future American heroes. Probably the most noteworthy among them are Rob Rogers and his Rangers. As I explained before, Rogers is certainly the most interesting “American” in relation to space as he embodies the perfect symbiosis of man and surrounding and is surely the most involved in the actual fighting (although Washington also sees his share of battle fields). In essence, Parkman’s Rogers is a continuation of the inquiry into American identity and character the historian had begun with his conceptualization of Henry Chatillon in *The Oregon Trail*. The description of Rogers in *Montcalm and Wolfe* represents nothing less than a literary celebration of the very moment that Parkman perceived as the birth of American identity. While previous examples of Parkman’s heroic explorers, missionaries, and soldiers that populated the pages of *France and England in North America* exemplified similar characteristics and virtues they lacked one

distinguishing feature compared to Rogers; they were either French or British, but not American. For Parkman, Rogers thus symbolizes the forefather of all subsequent generations of frontier heroes and the ideal American character.

Rogers might be the ideal early American citizen in Parkman's panorama of war and wilderness, but Rogers like Rouleau and Saraphin in *The Oregon Trail* is difficult to imagine in a Senate hearing.⁶⁶ Naturally, Parkman was aware of the impracticality of extreme frontier individualism as the foundation of a modern, and increasingly urban, society. Accordingly, he framed his embrace of woodsmanship with two other conceptualizations of American heroism. Unlike the radical individuals that roam the wild forest of North America, Franklin here represents the political-philosophical opposite to Rogers' brash physicality. While Franklin and Rogers are the two extreme bookends of American character, one the epitome of radical individualism and bravery, the other a cunning politician and social visionary, both of them contributed, in their own way, to the realization of American independence and are equally essential to Parkman's understanding of American character. The true perfection of the American citizen arrives, nonetheless, in the figure of George Washington, as he is able to master both, the unforgiving topography of the American forest as well as the deceptive chimera of international diplomacy.

⁶⁶ In his description of Rogers past life and character, Parkman notes that Rogers "character leaves much to be desired" and that the Captain "had been charged with forgery, or complicity in it" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1137). Further, Parkman notes that Rogers' excellent knowledge of the French language as well as Indian dialects were the source of some undisclosed "mysterious employment; but there can be little doubt that it was a smuggling trade with Canada" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1137).



Figure 4.7: Albrecht Dürer's *Ritter, Tod, und Teufel* (*Der Rheuter*) (1513).

Parkman saw Rob Rogers as a modern version of Dürer's famous knight. Resembling the Renaissance warrior, Parkman's impression of Rogers describes a man who is surrounded by "ghastly death" (*Montcalm and Wolfe* 1139) and clearly evokes the violent facet of life in the Canadian wilderness. Yet, like his iron-clad predecessor, Rogers is presented as a moral soldier who is able to avert both the physical dangers and moral temptations of his hellish surroundings.

4.5 Epilogue: Border History

Throughout *The Oregon Trail* and *Montcalm and Wolfe*, Parkman carefully constructed literary border spaces that chronicled the clash of the various cultures of North America. The forts and trading posts of the Oregon Trail temporarily united Old World adventure tourists, Franco-Canadian mountain men, eastern emigrants, and plains Indians and thereby created unique sites of cross-cultural interaction. For Parkman, these sites of cultural amalgamation provided the breeding ground for a uniquely American sense of self. Similarly, the rough forests of New France depicted in *Montcalm and Wolfe* with its wilderness fortresses and isolated frontier settlements, established a transnational border region traversed by Indian scalping parties, French voyageurs, and English settlers. During the French and Indian War, as Parkman vividly showed, this contested woodland frontier produced a distinct form of border warfare which defined the French and British conflict in America while producing an inaugural class of truly American heroes including George Washington and Rob Rogers. For Parkman, the border struggles of the French and Indian War became, in fact, the first step to American independence. While some aspects of Parkman's historical narratives, such as his treatment of Native Americans, are rightfully considered outdated for a productive postcolonial discourse of American history, some elements of his historiographic methodology continue to influence contemporary authors. Among Parkman's most important postmodern legacies was his insistence on the importance of border spaces in American history. Parkman, as I have stressed throughout the discussion of his work, saw border regions as spaces of cultural interaction, economic exchange, and military innovation. At the same time, texts like *Montcalm and Wolfe*, of course, also understand natural geographical dividers and man-made border fortifications as places "where territorialization becomes real, where physical markers and barriers are erected, and

agents of the state regulate the movement of people, goods, and information” (Truett and Young 2). Parkman thus was aware that the border raids of the French and Indian War that he depicted in *Montcalm and Wolfe* were attempts to transform the contested and geographically unstable borders of the colonial period into permanent and definite demarcation lines between imperial powers. The emphasis Parkman places on these transnational geographies in both *The Oregon Trail* and *Montcalm and Wolfe* reflects the importance of borders spaces for Parkman’s larger historiographic project: the investigation of the political and geographical formation of American independence. As the geographical theaters of historical change, border zones, for Parkman, naturally also complicated, and even contradicted, the established spatial and historical narratives of a nation. The literary heterotopias Parkman depicts throughout his work, from the lively frontier trading posts along the Oregon Trail to the lonesome backwoods mission stations in *Montcalm and Wolfe*, are precisely so valuable for an analysis of American political development because of their heterogeneous cultural make-up. In fact, the very nature of a border region, its multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural composition, defies the premise of national uniformity. Studying American border regions, their diverse populations and their eventful history, therefore enabled Parkman to unearth the story of American national becoming.

CHAPTER 4: PARKMAN'S POSTMODERN LEGACY: THOMAS KINGS'S *TRUTH AND BRIGHT WATER*

“The historical novel is, in the first place, a novel; in the second place, it isn't history.”
Alfred Döblin

5.1 Prologue: Crossing the Border Before it's too late: The U.S.-Canadian Border and Postmodern Literatures

Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyage to the Moon* introduced the colonial backlands of New France to a European audience and established the North American wilderness as a motif and theme in the fictional discourse of the seventeenth century. In 1657, when Bergerac's utopian tale was published, the colony was still firmly under royal authority, expected to develop into a profitable extension of absolutism abroad. In tune with the optimistic expectations of imperial glory and profitable trade, the brief section set in the colonial terra nova conceives New France as a site of unlimited intellectual ability and a garden of natural marvels. Nearly two centuries later, in 1824, Julia Catherine Beckwith published *St. Ursula's Convent; or the Nun of Canada*, the very first novel written by a native and published on Canadian soil. Despite its somewhat misleading title, *St. Ursula's Convent* is not a description of life in a religious order but an adventurous investigation of Canadian history, traditions, and manners. Penned by an author of mixed French-English heritage, the text stresses the significance of both nations in the formation of North American culture and identity. The book thus is most surely instrumental in tracing the emergence of a Canadian cultural self by, as editor Douglas C. Lochhead explains in his introduction to the text, assembling a vivid “compendium of the history of British North America” (xxxiv).

Beckwith's inauguration of Canadian literature is not only Parkmanian in its sometimes tragic, often suspenseful, and always dynamic depiction of human history, it also evokes the French and Indian War as the crucial moment of Canadian cultural amalgamation. For Beckwith,

as for Parkman, the imperial clash of the two European powers produced a distinctly North American identity. While Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* highlights the rise of American (of the United States of America) independence and character, Beckwith, naturally, saw the conflict as a decisive moment in Canadian history. Although the two authors ultimately focused on different legacies of the French and Indian War, they saw the same centrifugal forces at work on the continent. For both Beckwith and Parkman the Bourbon colonial system willingly subsidized a system of epistemological darkness that not only prevented the rise of enlightenment ideas in New France, but also prohibited the emergence of an independent Canadian literature.⁶⁷ In the preface to *St. Ursula's Convent* Julia Catherine Beckwith laments the stifling cultural and intellectual climate of Canada's colonial past by saying:

It is the natural course of all sublunary affairs to proceed from small beginnings, and to advance gradually to perfection. Such has been the slow progress of improvement of British America, where, until lately, genius has slept through a long night of ignorance and inaction; and scarcely a dawn of literary illumination is yet discerned. Our incipient attempts then, can hardly hope to enter competition with the finished productions of the world. (3)

As the passage aptly shows, Beckwith conceived the British triumph in the French and Indian War as an overdue liberation from French colonial restrictions and a necessary step in the achievement of American progress. Sixty years prior to the publication of *Montcalm and Wolfe* and more than forty years before the British North America Act (1867) created the Dominion of Canada: Beckwith's novel had already begun to describe the history of North America in Parkman's terms.

⁶⁷ The restrictive nature of governmental policies and religious doctrine in New France is embodied in the novel by the negative portrayal of the clergy. Although Hart is certainly not as harsh as Parkman in her critique of religious orders, the fact remains that "many of the disasters that bedevil the main characters stem from the greed and wickedness of an evil priest" (Beckwith xxxiii).

When Parkman was writing *Montcalm and Wolfe* the contested woodlands of his and Beckwith's literary universe had already transformed into a border between two nation states.⁶⁸ In the process of defining the border between the United States and Canada, the sites Parkman describes in his narrative of the French and Indian War (Niagara, Ticonderoga, and so on) continued to play a crucial and, at least initially, equally violent part as British and American troops clashed in the War of Independence and the War of 1812. Indeed, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the northern border still represented for many American politicians the threat of colonial re-appropriation that was only dispelled as British Canada gradually began detach itself from the mother; starting with the rebellion against the British colonial government in 1837. Since then the balance of power in North America has shifted and with it the perceptions of the 49th parallel. Today, the U.S.-Canadian border is regarded by many Canadians as a metaphor for the "situation of the entire country in relationship to its more powerful neighbor" (Sadowski-Smith 11). The immediate border region is not merely home to the vast majority of the Canadian population and harbors the most vital economies, but the U.S.-Canadian border further serves to strengthen notions of Canadian cultural independence from, and resistance to, U.S. neo-imperial intrusions. While during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century the border stood for the American resistance to British invasion, its postmodern image has reversed. Today, American capitalism has been identified as the primary source of economic infringement by many Canadians and communities in direct proximity to the border have

⁶⁸ The Canadian-American border was officially created in the Treaty of 1818, following the War of 1812. Ever since, it has remained a point of exchange and interchange of opposing narratives. Whereas the Canadian border initially resembled the disastrous defeat of French colonial ambitions in the New World (and their inability to exert effective spatial control over New France), it later (after the Revolutionary period) came to represent the limits of British colonial ambitions. It therefore remains a powerful reminder of failed attempts to dominate the entire North American continent.

consequently become traditional strongholds for Canadian cultural identity. Understanding the Canadian-American border region as a site of heightened Canadian cultural autonomy clearly distinguishes the area from the Mexican-American border region that is commonly regarded as the “weakest link in efforts to maintain a distinct national identity” (Sadowski-Smith 12) in Mexico.

Despite the undisputable importance of the U.S.-Canadian border for both American and Canadian history and its central role in the formation of a North American spatial consciousness, scholars of postmodern literature (especially on the U.S. side) have somewhat neglected the literary representation of the northern border. In fact, ever since the inception of borderland history and the publication of Herbert Eugene Bolton’s ground breaking *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* in 1921, the Mexican-American border has been the preferred site of scholarly attention, all but ignored its northern counterpart. For some postmodern writers like Tim O’Brien, William T. Vollmann and Thomas King, however, the U.S.-Canadian border is equally significant for the formation of an American historical and spatial consciousness as his southern equivalent. For O’Brien, for instance, the former testing ground for pre-revolutionary virtues has become a demarcation line that separates the neo-imperialist aspirations and Cold War ideology of the Johnson and Nixon administration from Pearson’s policy of official non-belligerency during the Vietnam era. Consequently, O’Brien’s characters often view the northern border as a site of refuge.⁶⁹ By crossing the border,

⁶⁹ O’Brien here evokes the long history of the U.S.-Canadian border as a site of safety and refuge. All throughout the nineteenth century, for instance, Canada constituted a sanctuary for many thousands of runaway slaves who had escaped from the plantations of the American South (a process grippingly chronicled in Ishmael Reed’s 1976 novel *Flight to Canada*). Later, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the border became the site of increased legal and illegal Asian immigration. Specifically the Mohawk reservation on the St. Lawrence Seaway and Ontario’s Walpole Island First Nation reservation turned into popular spots for illegal border

his Vietnam draftees can avoid serving in an unpopular war but often battle feelings of personal failure and shame. O'Brien's novels, most importantly *The Things They Carried*, *In the Lake of the Woods*, and *July, July*, in consequence have become powerful testimonies to the continued importance of the U.S.-Canadian border in American literature and American memory. Especially in the context of the literary assessment of the Vietnam era the border has been rediscovered as a symbol of individual protest as well as a symbol for ideological and cultural rifts between the two nations.

Similar to the way Vietnam authors such as O'Brien interrogate the specific relevance of the border for an entire generation of American draft dodgers, Thomas King and other Native American writers highlight the U.S.-Canadian border as a locale defined by the continued displacement of Native American tribes and stress its unstable, even contradictory, connotations for the indigenous population of the continent. While the "medicine line," as the border was termed in the early nineteenth century when it resembled a site of refuge for Native Americans persecuted by the U.S. Army, has been evoked by Native American authors such as Leslie Marmon Silko as a zone of intertribal interactions that might possibly reaffirm connections among Indian nations on both sides of the border, thereby renewing its positive historical legacy for Native American culture, the border is equally frequently conceptualized as a site of failed alliances and broken treaties (some of the most notable historical reference points for Native American writers thereby include the conspiracy of Pontiac or the Tecumseh rebellion) (Sadowski-Smith 74). Despite its ambivalent implications, the U.S.-Canadian border represents a significant metaphor within contemporary Native American fiction. Similar to Parkman's depiction of the border spaces of eighteenth century New France, postmodern visions of the border

crossers. This practice was depicted by Edith Maude Eaton, the very first published fiction writer of Asian descent in North America, in her novel *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1913).

reflect its problematic history, meanwhile attempting to reestablish a sense of transnational geography defined by natural migration patterns and ethnic heritage rather than geo-economical aspirations. Especially Native American authors thereby aim to formulate a postcolonial concept of the border that acknowledges the special legacy of the Native American genocide within the context of North American history. Accordingly, contemporary authors such as Kelly Rebar (*Bordertown Café*, 1987), Guillermo Verdecchia (*Fronteras Americanas*, 1993), Janette Turner Hospital (*Borderline*, 1985), Michael V. Smith (*Cumberland*, 2002), and Thomas King (*Medicine River*, 1989 and *Truth and Bright Water*, 1999) have begun to imaginatively re-employ the U.S.-Canadian border space as an intercultural contact zone and to re-conceptualize the spatial metaphor of the “medicine line” in an effort to memorialize the annihilation of innumerable indigenous tribes during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century.

5.2 Reservations, Railroad Towns, and a Festival of Consumption: Native American Heterotopias

“They travel around the world to Bright Water because they’ve never seen space like this.”
 Thomas King *Truth and Bright Water*

Thomas King’s novel *Truth and Bright Water* is one of the most profound examples of geographically inspired postmodern literature. In a similar fashion as Parkman’s *The Oregon Trail* symbolized the peak of American travel writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, King’s work represents the apex of fictional postmodern geographies. As such, King’s oeuvre investigates the making and meaning of historical heterotopias and intercultural, even transnational, border spaces. Thereby, novels such as *Medicine Line* and *Truth and Bright Water* pay special attention to the specifically Native American conceptualization of and relationship to the environment, often criticizing the growing alienation of Native American culture from their traditional life-world. Comparable to the work of Leslie Marmon Silko, King’s novels pinpoint the historical processes that uprooted the Blackfoot nations of present day Montana and Alberta from their traditional environment and forced them into new, often restrictive, environments (such as reservations) dictated to them by the American government.⁷⁰ The U.S.-Canadian border thereby represents an arbitrary line drawn by Anglo-American governments in complete disregard of transnational tribal configurations and indigenous concepts of Pan-Americanism. As a result of this reevaluation of the northern border space, King’s texts, most notably *Medicine Line* and *Truth and Bright Water*, aim at reclaiming the border as a site of ancestral belonging for Native American tribes by introducing what Joy Porter labeled a “sacred geography” (27). These locales of lived experience and geographical, as well as spiritual, significance are designed to counter purely ideological foundations of nationhood. By grounding the history, culture, and

⁷⁰ Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) is an especially interesting alternative history project.

personal identity of his characters in the transnational geography surrounding them— rather than in the Canadian reservation of Bright Water or the American railroad town of Truth— King underscores the arbitrary nature of national borders. Accordingly, the text contrasts the notion of a geographically untied tribal nation to the concept of a strictly limited modern nation state, while tracing the growing sense of geographical alienation among the Indian population of the two towns. For King, it is the quickly diminishing ability of his characters to appreciate and decode the sacred geography of their region that not only causes a general identity crisis among the Blackfoot Indians, but further results in the decay of family structures and increased substance abuse.

In order to solve the existential and social malaise of his characters, *Truth and Bright Water* presents a number of utopian counter-geographies, what Foucault termed heterotopias, that are designed to disrupt the ideology of indigenous inferiority that locks Lum, Elvin, and Franklin into a seemingly eternal cycle of poverty, addiction, and abuse. These places include both sites of spiritual tradition, such as the Horns and the Shield, as well as unlikely sites of cultural affirmation, such as the Indian Days Festival, Monroe Swimmer's refashioned church, and the inoperative RV park. In their functions as heterotopias, Foucault explains, these physical sites "desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences" (*Order* xviii). In other words, King's spaces of Native American cultural resistance form an alternative geography of the West that cuts through the master-narrative of westward expansionism that formerly sanctioned the destruction of indigenous cultures. In contrast to other, officially approved, utopian spaces of Native American empowerment, such as casinos, King's heterotopias are

inherently disruptive to the point that they dismantle the very foundation of national mythology and cultural identity.⁷¹

As the textual geography of *Truth and Bright Water* is defined by heterotopias, it is no surprise that the landscape is initially marked by a sense of separation and disruption. While Parkman's literary heterotopias predominantly served as sites of interaction, conceived to unite the diverse protagonists of early American history, King's textual environment enforces the economic, cultural, and ideological divisions that characterize postmodern American society in general and Native Americans in particular. The opening pages of the novel consequently introduce a landscape marked by sites that enforce the fragmentation of the postmodern Native American community in the text and underscore the characters' sense of existential and geographical dislocation.

King's textual border space is defined by two settlements that interrupt the seemingly infinite immensity of the prairie. These towns are, of course, separated by the U.S.-Canadian border as well as a number of geographical obstacles, such as the Shield River, that impede easy commute between Truth and Bright Water. From the very beginning, the text thus accentuates the

⁷¹ In *Truth and Bright Water* there are two varieties of heterotopias present. First, there are the spiritual heterotopias; they represent Blackfoot traditions and stress the characters' ties to their environment. Examples include the Horns, the Shield, the prairie, and all other natural spaces that are endowed with a magical, even supernatural aura. These spaces contradict a scientific understanding of geography and challenge western models of chronological history with concepts of trans-historical continuity. They challenge written records with ancient creation myths and commodity capitalism with philanthropic gift-exchange. Monroe Swimmer clearly represents the Shaman who decodes this heterotopian landscape for his suffering community. The second kind of heterotopias in *Truth and Bright Water* involves sites of disturbing unpleasantness. Among the most prominent examples of this category are the RV park with its defect septic tank, the illegal landfill, and the railroad boxcars filled with rotten melons. These are sites of Native American reality, places that powerfully exhibit the process of economic and cultural destruction that has left the populations of Truth and Bright Water discouraged and demoralized. In contrast to the first category of heterotopias these places of obvious exploitation discredit the governmental promise of tribal autarky and demask the continuing ruin of indigenous communities.

disconnected existence of the Blackfoot community who is now split between not only two nations but also divided among two models of social organization. While some members of the community, such as Tecumseh's grandmother and Lum, live on the Canadian reserve, others, such as Tecumseh, his mother, as well as his estranged father Elvin, live in Truth, a railroad town on the American side. Truth quite literally represents the truth about Native American life in contemporary American society (high unemployment, racism, crime, and alcoholism are just some of the social issues King detects in the small Montana town). Further, the town stands for the troubled relationship between mainstream American society and Native American minorities. Separated by "Division Street" (*Truth* 31), the geography of the town reflects continuing racial tensions that frequently come to the forefront at the local railroad yard where Indian men are forced to carry out the unthankful task of cleaning the newly arrived boxcars.

The social and geographical organization of Truth, however, not only reflects the bleak socio-economic conditions of present day Native American life, but its spatial manifestation further exposes the historical reasons for the present plight of its indigenous population. The decline of Native American culture in the region and the loss of a tribal consciousness are, King's description of Truth suggests, the immediate result of the unchecked transformation of the natural environment. In fact, as a railroad town, Truth epitomizes the transformation of the prairie through modern industry. Similar to Parkman's description of St. Louis in *The Oregon Trail*, King here employs the textual heterotopia of Truth to describe the continued transformation of the American landscape through unchecked economic expansion. In Truth, business developments have increased so drastically, that even the prairie is now hidden behind the "Chinook Motel, the Farmer's Bank, and the Continental Oil tower" (*Truth* 43). While the railroad is responsible for unpleasant construction projects and workplace discrimination in

modern day Truth, the railroad tracks are conceived as a trans-historical spatial metaphor. Geographically speaking, the tracks literally and metaphorically “cut Truth in half” (*Truth* 72). The role of the railroad as a spatial divider is reinforced by the omnipotent economic power of the railroad. As the only major employer in the region, the company dictates the economic prosperity of many inhabitants and determines the social hierarchy of the community by dividing the inhabitants of Truth into employed and unemployed. At the mercy of the company’s foreman, the Indian day laborers more often than not find themselves relegated to the lowest possible strata of the railroad job hierarchy left to clean boxcars of rotten melons.

Yet as a trans-historical counter space, Truth, and its unconditional dependency on the railroad, also echoes the devastating impact the creation of a transcontinental railroad had on the life of Native American cultures in the middle of the nineteenth century. Quite obviously, the transportation industry’s destruction of Native society did not end with the completion of said railroad in 1879, but continues to this very day in different ways. The fact that the railroad still haunts the lives of Native Americans is possibly best epitomized in Lum’s desperate attempt to outrun a freight train and thereby both escape the town’s present day dependency on the company and undo the destruction it has caused in the nineteenth century:⁷²

Lum is flying across the yard at a dead run. He takes the angle and catches the engine at the swing of the curve, runs alongside it until the embankment rises to meet the trestle and the gravel shoulder begins to narrow and falls away [...] You can see Lum’s going to run out of room, that he’ll be forced to give it up, to peel off and come back down the embankment. But instead of slowing down, Lum drops his head and kicks ahead of the engine and leads the train across the bridge. (*Truth* 76)

⁷² Lum’s running signifies one of several attempts to revolt against his father’s abuse and express his longing for a life where there are “no tourists, no railroads, no fences” (*Truth* 161). In the later part of the book, Lum’s adolescent outcries get progressively more radical. First he takes off his clothes and jogs through the prairie naked, later he runs away from home, and eventually, in a final desperate act before his suicide, attempts to transform himself into a primordial warrior.

In contrast to the desolate railroad town Truth, Bright Water represents the promise of self-governance and tribal autarky. Located across the Shield River on the Canadian side of the border, the Blackfoot reservation on first impression lacks signifiers of capitalist domination. Here, no oil company high rises block the view of the prairie and no bigoted railroad employment agents consign the men to cleaning boxcars. But Bright Water is no modern Indian utopia. The supposed space of cultural and economic independence, in fact, emerges as a site of economic despair, ruthless corruption, and cultural masquerading. King, in reality, employs Bright Water as a literary counter-space to critique the concept of the reservation as an artificially designed and governmentally sanctioned space of Native American heritage. Reservations, the novel suggests, have very little to do with authentic Native American life and culture as these geographically restricted, federally imposed sites imprison the Native American population in a space of supposed liberation. The reservation consequently appears like anything but a flourishing community of Blackfoot heritage. The most noteworthy “attractions” of Bright Water are a rundown RV park that looks “like the covered wagons you see in old westerns” (*Truth* 106) from afar but also emanates a constant “foul and musty” smell (*Truth* 107) because of an unrepaired sewage tank and an illegal landfill for biohazardous waste. The landfill, officially closed due to health hazards but still secretly operated by Tecumseh’s uncle, ironically remains the most lucrative business in town and validates Lum’s conviction that “Garbage” is “the new Buffalo” (*Truth* 162).

Devoid of any other forms of profitable businesses, Bright Water has to rely on the yearly Indian Days Festival for the majority of its revenue, as this is the only time the reservation’s inhabitants “make any money” (*Truth* 23). For the inhabitants of Bright Water, making a living during the festival, however, comes with a hefty price tag. In an effort to satisfy the expectations

of the visiting tourists, the town annually transforms into a distorted simulacrum of Indian life: an overdramatized reenactment of indigenous culture that echoes the stereotypes of Hollywood westerns and dime novels. In order to attract more tourists Franklin, Lum's abusive father and the chief of the reservation, even sanctions an especially ironic attraction in which paying visitors are urged to "hunt" Buffalos on motorcycles and shoot them with a paintball gun. Paradoxically, it is Tecumseh and Lum who try out this newest attraction, thereby participating in the growing commercialization of their culture.

As a literary heterotopia, Indian Days thus epitomizes a number of historio-cultural processes that contribute to the economic and cultural marginalization, even exclusion, of Blackfoot culture in contemporary American society. First, King's conceptualization of the annual festival as a site of performed spectacle in which Native Americans become caricatures of their former selves, mimicking the Hollywood Indians visitors want to see, evokes the romanticizing of Amerindian culture we already detected in Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*. Similar to the tourists on the Oregon Trail, including Parkman and Shaw himself, the postmodern visitor of Bright Water is likewise looking for a glimpse of authentic Indian heritage. Yet, this desire for authenticity, quite characteristic for postmodern fiction, remains as unattainable as it already was in Parkman's time. While the tourists of the Oregon Trail were uninvited intruders, *Truth and Bright Water* depicts the next perverted step of the commodification of Blackfoot life. In King's novel, the staged fulfillment of the tourists' Indian desires has become the economic lifeline of the reservation; an act without many of the inhabitants would lose their only source of income. Therefore, the only choice for many members of the community is to perpetuate the very stereotypes that continue to degrade their culture.

While the commercialization of Native American culture has certainly intensified from Parkman to King, the relationship between visitors and visited has also gained complexity. The Indian Days that King conceives in *Truth and Bright Water* reflects an intricate puzzle of postmodern simulations of selfhood that reflect the reciprocal process of stereotyping between Native American and white culture. Moreover, King's literary heterotopia is a site of textual encounters in which white and indigenous narratives are contrasted, compared, and challenged. Ultimately, this strategy of juxtaposing imperial narratives of westward expansion and histories of tribal resistance creates a synthetic history of the American West that acknowledges the legitimacy of both white and Blackfoot narratives. Initially, the festival is thus a counter space in which "Native reality intrudes on the carefully constructed realities of Western tradition" (Schorcht 55). However, after the preliminary phase of juxtaposition, King employs the Indian Days festival to show the intersection of indigenous story-telling traditions with "the Christian creation story, mainstream history and with a host of storied icons from popular culture" (Schorcht 55). The image and meaning of postmodern Native America, *Truth and Bright Water* suggests, is as much tangled up in the resistance to, and complacency with, dominant popular culture (especially if we think of Lucy's fascination with Marilyn Monroe) as it is informed by their pre-Columbian ancestry. The result of this topsy-turvy Indian theater is an amalgamation of cultural representations of "Indianness" and the deconstruction of postmodern Native American identities. To complete this festival of masquerading, Monroe Swimmer, the "famous Indian artist," joins Indian Days as a photographer in disguise who does not actually takes pictures.⁷³

⁷³ Swimmer's disguise is an excellent example of his refusal to perform culturally expected roles both as an artist and as a member of the Blackfoot community. It is this refusal to take pictures when he is supposed to be a photographer or to use his artistic talent to make objects disappear rather than stand out that renders him the premier catalyst of change in the novel. He is, if you will, a heterotopian character whose actions forcefully disrupt the fables of Western histories.

Among the myriad of Bakhtinian masquerades that occur during the Indian Days Festival, Elvin's transformation (Tecumseh's father dresses as Elvis to boost the sales of his wooden coyotes) stands out as a disruptive role reversal that underwrites the heterotopian quality of the event. Instead of playing the prescribed and expected role of an Indian, Elvin switches sides and occupies the position of the cultural other. Conversely, some foreign visitors, obviously inspired by the reading of too many Karl May novels, attend the festival in complete Blackfoot apparel. Tecumseh, for instance, describes the appearance of a group of German tourists by saying:⁷⁴

Three men are moving through the cars and the pickups. They're all dressed in buckskin shirts and fringed leather pants. One of them is wearing a good-looking bone breastplate. Their faces are painted so I can't see who they are (222).

For Parkman and every nineteenth-century author, it was naturally unimaginable to willfully take on the role of the Native American "savages," unless, as I discussed earlier in my analysis of *Montcalm and Wolfe*, one desired to depict the transgression of established social conventions or horrid acts of violence as committed by the French-Indian raiding parties. For the postmodern tourist, however, geographical and personal immersion into the cultural other has become a validation for a successful vacation and a symbol for an authentic experience.

Postmodern tourists pursue Native American reservations as ideal vacation destinations in hopes to glimpse at authentic Native American life. In this kind of "heritage tourism" (Ioannides and Timothy 73), reservations are preferred travel destinations because they bring back a sense

⁷⁴ The German author Karl May penned a series of popular adventure novels about the American West during the 1890s. These immensely popular tales featured noble Indians such as chief Winnetou and even nobler woodsmen like Winnetou's blood brother Old Shatterhand. Following the tradition of romantic American authors of the first part of the nineteenth century, these texts are vivid examples of the European fascination with the Old West of myth and legend. Although May himself never visited North America until 1908, his works were instrumental in shaping the German conceptualization of the American continent and its inhabitants.

of the far western frontier to the postmodern tourist. Visiting an Indian reservation revives the mythical demarcation line between a westward driving nation of immigrants and the uncivilized defendants of an outdated existence and thereby allows the visitor to experience a glimpse of the frontier spirit that shaped the nation (Lew and Kennedy 260). In reality, of course, the frontier has long ceased to exist, if it even ever truly existed as more than an ideological construct, but its revival as a specific tourism experience is precisely so attractive because the frontier spatially reinforces the stereotypical perception of Native American customs. By visiting reservations and other sites of frontier history such as forts and battle fields, tourists are able to indulge in their own fantasies of the Wild West and reanimate the equally antiquated and simplistic perception of American history that neatly posits pioneers against Indians.⁷⁵ As a result, frontier tourism as portrayed in *Truth and Bright Water* appears as a hedonistic leisure activity that idealizes western geography (and its inhabitants) as a utopian fantasy.⁷⁶

The persistence lure of frontier mythology serves as an excellent example of tourism as a tool of spatial domination. As much as Lewis and Clark's journeys to the far West were expeditions meant to ensure geographical control over the unexplored continent, they were also tourist trips. In a similar fashion as the production of maps and the establishment of trading posts in New France and the seaboard colonies of the seventeenth and eighteenth century signaled

⁷⁵ Gerald Vizenor remarks that the "romantic manifest" ("Postindian Reflections" 173) displayed by tourists not only have negative effects on Native American communities. These sentiments also led to what he calls a "sympathy factor and a romantic response that was constructive" and "inspired foundations, public funding sources, to support Native programs by sympathy, if for no other reason" ("Postindian Reflections" 173). This support, Vizenor further explains, has recently been decreasing due to conflicts over casino politics ("Postindian Reflections" 173).

⁷⁶ To make matters even worse, the unbroken spell of frontier mythology and the continuing desire of tourists to visit authentic sites of Western history cause native communities, like the Blackfoot of King's novel, to partake in the spectacle.

geographical claims of foreign crowns, the onset of tourism, as Aldona Joanitis and Aaron Glass explain, signified the achievement of spatial control and a successful ordering of a formerly wild geography (68). This is particularly true because the presence of tourist activity always indicates the achieved supremacy of the conqueror over the conquered whose presence is now relegated from that of a threatening opponent to an object of curiosity, even entertainment.

When Parkman visited the Oregon Trail in the 1840s, he not only recorded the disappearance of Native American life, but his text also chronicled the growing presence of inquisitive travelers from all around the globe that had started even earlier with adventure seeking European aristocrats like Prince Maximilian von Wied in the eighteenth century. In consequence, *The Oregon Trail* should also be regarded as one of the first tourist accounts of the American West. During Parkman's time the premier mode of spectatorship exercised by tourists of the West was that of dehumanization. Tourists on the trail lamented the savage nature of the native inhabitants and praised their own progressive achievements. In contrast, present day tourists to Indian reservations often aestheticize indigenous culture and stress "the appealing elements of aboriginality—their art, spiritualism, connection to the earth—to hide the fact of their cultural obliteration" (Joanitis and Glass 68). In a postmodern tourist industry devoid of true adventures, many travelers longingly regard Native American life as a utopian mode of existence more closely connected to nature and untouched by the vices of commodity capitalism. Of course, these tourist fantasies are the product of an undifferentiated, highly romanticized perception of reservation life that disregards the multitude of social and economic problems that plague many Native American communities.

The Indian Days Festival is certainly a place for King to explore the postmodern representations of Indian identity and interrogate the impact of tourism, but it also functions as a

site of tribal interaction and Pan-Americanism. As a geographical and representational border space, Bright Water, similar to the U.S.-Canadian border spaces in Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* and the Ogillallah camp in *The Oregon Trail*, symbolizes a site of cultural interaction between, as described earlier, Native American and Anglo-American, even European, culture, but also between different Native American tribes. On the surface, the people of Bright Water use the festival as a source of revenue, but behind the scenes the presence of a visiting Cherokee family from Georgia leads to an opportunity for Indian nation-building. King's novel, as Claudia Sadowski-Smith rightfully notes, thus "imaginatively employ U.S. border sites to either reaffirm or establish new connections among tribal nations throughout the hemisphere" (74). It is in this context of Pan-American interaction that the only instants of authenticity occur in the text. In the moment when Rebecca narrates the story of her people in her native Cherokee, the Indian Days Festival ceases to be a spectacle of consumption and becomes an inter-tribal council that disrupts the economic and cultural exploitation of its participants. Rebecca, similar to Monroe Swimmer, clearly functions as a symbol of renewed tribal interaction and the rediscovery of Native American traditions. Like her biblical namesake she not only has a captivating effect on the Tecumseh, but also seems destined to become a tribal matriarch that might lead her people into a better future.⁷⁷

The Indian Days Festival serves as a textual counter space to investigate the production of postmodern Indian identities as well as the ambivalent relationship between tribal communities and contemporary tourism. For King, international tourism clearly represents one of very few

⁷⁷ Despite her powerful avowal of story-telling traditions, Rebecca's status as a character that signifies tribal empowerment remains ambiguous as the novel never conclusively reveals if she is a real character or the product of Tecumseh's imagination. As a trickster character she occupies, similar to the three Cousins, the border space between historically grounded physical reality and the trans-historical continuity of ancient customs and sacred geographies.

income opportunities for destitute reservations. Yet, the novel simultaneously highlights how continuously catering to tourists' expectations "stifles the development of Indian culture and self-identity" while continuing the "acculturation of traditional Indian society" (Lew and Kennedy 277). What emerges from *Truth and Bright Water*'s analysis of Western tourism is a two-fold Native American geography that carefully distinguishes between, what Ioannides and Timothy have labeled the "sacred space and ceremonies and the 'profane' space of tourists" (75). In this dual cosmos, the Indian Days Festival mirrors a site of Indian representations, an economically driven marketplace of stereotypes and masquerades designed to fulfill the desires of the tourists who visit the reservation. In contrast, Rebecca's story denotes an example of a sacred ceremony that is inaccessible to outsiders and reinforces the strict division of space into public places of performance and private locales of tribal traditions.

The theme of separation and division that dominates the general physical geography of *Truth and Bright Water* as well as the particular heterotopia of the Indian Days Festival is further supported by the seeming impossibility to conveniently travel from one town to the other. All in all, King outlines three ways to get to Bright Water from Truth and vice versa, none of which are particularly efficient or necessarily safe: by car, via the antiquated bucket lift, or by traversing the dangerously derelict bridge.

A potential means to reconnect the artificially split community, the unfinished bridge over the Shield River epitomizes the notion of man-made separation and squandered opportunity. The bridge, first and foremost, is a reminder of the failure of the national government to support Indian affairs and help the Blackfoot cope with their economic plight. As part of a highway project the bridge was meant to connect Truth and Bright Water and to link the remote towns to the infrastructural grid that promises economic prosperity. As a man-made manifestation of

unfulfilled governmental promises the bridge additionally symbolizes the long history of broken treaties that defined the United States' relationship to its indigenous populations.

As much as the bridge is now abandoned, appearing sturdy from afar but fragile and worn from up close, the Blackfoot tribes of the region have also been abandoned by the national government, leaving them with nothing more than a faint remnant of their former prosperity. While the bridge is an obvious metaphor for the troublesome relationship between Native American tribes all over the continent and their national governments, King is further eager to highlight the invasive appearance of the bridge that not only infringes on the natural surrounding but also actively alters the environment.⁷⁸ The invasive character of the structure obviously echoes the assault of the European colonialists on the Native American cosmos but it also helps to contrast the relationship between man and nature in Anglo-American and Native American societies. For King, modern, industrialized, American culture necessarily transforms, and ultimately destroys, the natural environment; its premise is to subjugate and master a natural habitat that is continuously imagined as both alien and hostile. In contrast to this antagonistic relationship between man and nature, Native American culture resembles a harmonious relationship with the environment guided by a desire to preserve their traditional living space.⁷⁹

As a complex metaphor, the bridge is instrumental in establishing the theme of separation early on in the text while foreshadowing the eventual death of Soldier and Lum. Originally, the bridge was designed to span the Shield River. The river here not only defines the landscape as it cuts through the otherwise even geography of the prairie, yet also functions as a natural divider,

⁷⁸ King specifies that the air under the bridge is always cool.

⁷⁹ Truth and Bright Water also chronicles examples to this general distinction between Native American and Anglo-American conceptualizations of nature. Tecumseh's father, for instance, clearly does not share the conservationist approach of other characters as he smuggles biohazardous waste to the illegal landfill in Bright Water.

separating the Canadian and the American side. Significantly, while borders in King's estimation are arbitrary demarcation lines, the borders in *Truth and Bright Water* are also understood as physical markers and natural barriers. In the case of the river, *Truth and Bright Water* establishes a literary border space not unlike the depiction of waterways in *The Oregon Trail* where natural barriers conflate with geopolitical caprice.

Border regions are not only sites of violent conflict or cultural affirmation; they are also often demarcation lines between rivaling religious systems, turning the border zone into a battlefield for the souls of its inhabitants. In American border history both the Mexican-American as well as the Canadian-American border have been the preeminent sites of the struggle between Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the New World. Dominance over the physical space of the border region then also has profound implications for the control over mental spaces of the population. The discussion of Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe* in the previous chapter has shown that, for instance, the untamed forests of New France must also be understood as a metaphor for the internal state of the native population. In the eyes of the Jesuit missionaries, the external chaos of the Canadian wilderness reflected the condition of the Indians' misguided souls. Consequently, the task of geographically and intellectually organizing the vast space of the Canadian territories was an integral part of their colonial enterprise. Leading the indigenous population to salvation, while subjugating the North American hemisphere to papal control was therefore the main directive of the Jesuits in the New World.

In the textual landscape of *Truth and Bright Water*, Monroe Swimmer's church summons the complex missionary history of westward migration. Guarded by mysterious trickster characters, the Three Cousins, the church represents yet another heterotopian space as it mirrors the artistic cleansing and subsequent re-appropriation of a historically and ideological charged environment.

In the beginning of the text, the abandoned church evokes the violent history of colonial geographical conquest and religious indoctrination that destroyed traditional forms of Native American social organization as well as their religions. As such, the old church, although physically corroding, triumphantly overlooks the surrounding landscape and the reservation from a hill on the American side. Although a marker of the triumph of the Christian missionaries over their indigenous victims, the church, which has been occupied by many religious congregations, none of which stayed, also evokes the inability of the missionaries to achieve a lasting conversion of the Native American population. Now the church is “gone to hell” (2).⁸⁰ As the story progresses, however, the site is redefined as a space of Indian resistance against the ongoing commodification of their culture and the ground on which it stands reclaimed as a place of ancestral belonging and rediscovered Blackfoot traditions. Monroe Swimmer’s art project, which causes the church to literally blend into the surrounding landscape, thus should be understood as an exorcism that restores the prairie to its original form and thereby erases the colonial scar left by the church’s physical presence.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Further, King notes that the church resembles a ship on the horizon, thus reflecting the missionizing zeal of the early explorers and the interrelationship between colonial conquest and religious agendas.

⁸¹ Although Swimmer’s project successfully removes the church from the prairie vista, the text also indicates that Christian missionaries were at least partially successful in converting the Blackfoot population. While Tecumseh admits, when admiring one of the stained-glass windows in the church, that “he does not know the Bible well enough to know who these figures are supposed to be well” (*Truth* 48) he, like his father and uncle, frequently use the words “Christ” or “Jesus” as exclamations of surprise or anger (*Truth* 13, 36, 44, 86, 110 (Franklin), 161, 189). His word choice thus testifies to the completed linguistic assimilation into Judeo-Christian American culture, as their language has become permeated with Christian terminology and other markers of linguistic conquest.

5.3 Simulating Space: Indian Representations

While Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* clearly continues the geographical focus inaugurated by writers like Francis Parkman in the nineteenth century, the novel also displays a number of distinctly postmodern characteristics of spatial representation. Uniquely, King evokes a myriad of utopian as well as dystopian geographies that serve to establish the historiographical context for the narrative. In similar fashion as King's description of the Indian Days Festival interrogates Native American identity in postmodern America, his description of other prominent sites in the text are equally linked to trans-historical social and economic issues. In addition to the employment of these geographical heterotopias, King further relies on what Henri Lefebvre termed "representations of space," concepts and geographies that are purely mental in nature and lack concrete geographical grounding. According to Lefebvre, representations of space "emerge at the level of discourse, of speech as such, and therefore comprise verbalized forms such as descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space" (Schmid 37). While for Lefebvre maps, plans and other tools of city planning and modern geography most accurately embody the representation of space, their defining quality is that they produce "an image" (Schmid 36). *Truth and Bright Water*, I propose, presents a literary discourse on space, a representation of space, as it creates and contrasts specific images of Native American spaces. More specifically, King's novel conceives mental geographies, such as battle sites from World War II (from the perspective of Native American combatants) and the Frontier Movie Theater, that blend characteristics of Foucauldian heterotopias and theories of Indian simulations following Gerald Vizenor to emphasize the importance of Native American history and showcase examples of cultural resistance and empowerment.

Although *Truth and Bright Water* is not a novel about the role of Native American soldiers during World War II or even a narrative about the bloody settlement history of the West, the text does evoke various trans-historical locales of warfare thereby echoing the seemingly inseparable relationship between border spaces and violence Parkman had also suggested in both *Montcalm and Wolfe* and *The Oregon Trail*. Most notably, the narrator's name, Tecumseh, of course, reminds the reader of the unsuccessful Native American resistance against Euro-American occupation and conquest during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. By referencing the famous Shawnee leader and advocate of Pan-Indianism, King, however, recounts the history of failed Indian resistance against white expansionism and sets a distinct tone for the narrative and its preoccupation with contemporary Native American social issues. Tecumseh's account of *Truth and Bright Water* must, the historical reference to his historical namesake suggests, also be understood as a story of contemporary Native American resistance against the threats of unchecked consumerism and tourism, unemployment, corruption, and family violence. As such, King's novel, as Blanca Schorcht argues in *Storied Voices in Native American Texts*, "theorize[s] the world of contemporary Native reality" and "provide[s] the answers to real-world kinds of questions" (5).

Even though Tecumseh first and foremost evokes notions of Native American resistance against white intrusion and attempts to forge an inter-tribal alliance against British soldiers and settlers, the narrator's name further stirs up images of genocidal violence committed by the U.S. army during the conquest and settlement of the continent. Tecumseh, naturally, reminds the historically inclined reader of General William Tecumseh Sherman, who not only led Union troops to victory with his controversial "scorched earth" policy in the Civil War, but further succeeded Grant as commanding general of the U.S. Army. In this position, Sherman was

responsible for the numerous massacres committed by U.S. troops in the western territories during the Indian Wars.⁸² Clearly the multi-layered historical context evoked by Tecumseh's name serves to contrast rivaling perspectives on American history in general and the Native American experience in particular. Whereas the narrator's Indian namesake symbolizes rebellion and indigenous resistance, the reference to the famous general brings to mind policies of imperial extinction. The true significance of Tecumseh's character rests, however, on the fact that the narrator's name unites both Caucasian and indigenous references and therefore represents a plea for a synthetic view of American history that brings together both Anglo-American and Native American narratives to construct an inclusive view of the past. In light of King's synthetic methodology, contemporary Native American identity, as exemplified by Tecumseh, appears as the combination of both American and indigenous cultural legacies.

In this conceptualization of Tecumseh's cross-cultural identity, King extends a narratological tool he had successfully employed in earlier texts such as *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993). This strategy, as Blanca Schorcht explains, involves the pairing of white and indigenous characters (such as Hawkeye and Chingachgook, Lone Ranger and Tonto, and Ishmael and Queequeg) in an effort to emphasize the interrelation between Anglo-American and indigenous stories and show the reader that "there is every possibility that we are part of a Native story, a Native history; white elements and Native experience of white culture form part of the story, but they are not the dominant narrative" (75). By blending white and non-white character pairings into one character, Tecumseh not only represents the next phase in King's dialectical

⁸² Interestingly, King's reference to Sherman also connects to the prominent theme of the railroad in the text, as one of Sherman's main objectives was to ensure the completion of the transcontinental railroad which he regarded as "as great a victory as any in the war" (qtd. in Marszalek 393).

narratological method, but also becomes an emblem of a synthetic, egalitarian concept of history designed to supplant the monocausationist master-narratives of Manifest Destiny.

Besides establishing the historical context of Native American resistance and its legitimization, the literary counter space of war also serves as a reminder of the service of Native American soldiers for the United States in more recent conflicts. The often marginalized history of Native American servicemen is, for instance, represented by Tecumseh's grandfather who acquired a taste for Italian operas while serving in the European theater of World War II. Furthermore, the narrator's loyal dog Soldier, in unison with the old gun Lum carries, serves as a constant reminder of this specific realm of violence. Especially Lum's revolver leads the two boys to dangerous games, and Tecumseh even fears that Lum would press him into playing Russian roulette as they had seen in a "really long movie about a bunch of men from a small town in the States who go to the Vietnam War and wind up sitting in a bar with a gun, drinking and sweating and looking tough and bored, taking bets on who is going to live and who is going to die" (*Truth* 5). The movie is, of course, Michael Cimino's 1978 film *The Deer Hunter* and while Tecumseh is certainly correct about the fact that the main protagonists wind up in a deadly game of Russian roulette, they are certainly neither bored nor are they looking tough while doing it. Tecumseh forgot that Michael, Steven, and Nick are playing Russian roulette only because they are forced to and that it is their Vietcong guards who are betting on which of the three Americans is going to die first. This scene therefore nicely exemplifies how King's use of the literary heterotopia of war serves a twofold purpose. First, the continued allusions to the service of Native American soldiers in American wars effectively underwrite the novel's revision of American historical memory by disrupting the ethnically homogenous depiction of American combat. Second, the frequent references to warfare and their media representations also serve to

establish the entertainment industry as another key site of indigenous exploitation and marginalization.

Accordingly, *Truth and Bright Water* interrogates postmodern spaces of tourism and entertainment to deconstruct the master-narrative of westward expansion. The Indian Days Festival, as discussed previously, thereby emerges as a festival of consumption that playfully enforces Anglo-American cultural stereotypes about Native American life in order to economically exploit the visitors who overrun the reservation for the event. The literary heterotopia of the Indian Days Festival thus attempts to partially reverse the process of ruthless economic exploitation of the plains Indians that occurred in the forts and trading posts along the Oregon Trail. In this attempt of an economic role reversal, the tourists' fascination with and simultaneous ignorance of Blackfoot culture enables Elvin, Lucy, and the other vendors to charge horrendous prices for their "authentic" merchandise and thereby revenge, although on a very limited scale, the injustices chronicled by Parkman in his description of frontier economics.

Yet, as the discussion of spaces of warfare already indicated, the Indian Days Festival is not the only space of *Bright Water* that attempts to undo the economic and political injustices of the past. Most notably, Monroe Swimmer's church, Tecumseh's grandmother's house, and the Frontier Movie Theater resemble other powerful sites of historiographic revision.⁸³ The novel conceives the old movie theater, for instance, as a symbol for the continual mythologization of

⁸³ Tecumseh's grandmother is the protagonist most closely associated with traditional Native American customs and is cast as a medicine woman and trickster character. Tecumseh explains that "there are even some people in *Truth and Bright Water* who think my grandmother is a witch, that she can do things such as turn herself into a bear or a wolf or a mountain lion whenever she feels like it" (56). As an embodiment of Blackfoot culture, the grandmother also represents an alternative view of American history. Her ability to solve the mystery of the skulls stands for the importance of the insufficiently acknowledged history of Native American genocide and underscores the incomplete, selective nature of official Anglo-American history of the continent.

the West in American history, politics, and culture. The movie theater, as a locale of mass-produced illusions and representations, here signifies the erroneous conceptualization of frontier life in America as the circulated Hollywood films propagate lies and legends rather than a truthful assessment of historical facts. In this Hollywood version of the frontier, the indigenous perspective is conspicuously absent or reduced to the stereotypes of vanishing Indians and uncivilized savages. Movies like *Dances with Wolves*, the text implies, thereby continue to replicate nineteenth-century narratives of cultural imperialism. The works of nineteenth-century authors such as Parkman, King argues, laid the ideological foundation for a Eurocentric perception of “the West,” “the Frontier,” and “the Indian,” that has since been continually reproduced by the movie industry and other forms of cultural production. The West as popular culture conceives it, *Truth and Bright Water* implies, is nothing more than what Jean Baudrillard described as the “proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality [...] where the object and substance have disappeared” (12). The movie theater, itself a place of illusions and projected realities, consequently functions here as the production and dissemination site for Anglo-American misrepresentations of indigenous life that, ironically, have already invaded Native American culture itself. These representations, as Tecumseh’s mother remarks, are pretty from afar but inherently troubling from close proximity (*Truth* 62).

The Frontier Movie Theater indicates just one of many literary counter spaces King utilizes throughout the narrative to unmask the reality constituting principles that have shaped, and surely continue to form, stereotypes of Native American life and culture.⁸⁴ By investigating these Indian representations that have come to define popular culture, King creates the very discourse

⁸⁴ In addition to the representation of Native American culture in Hollywood movies, *Truth and Bright Water* also deconstructs the exploitation of indigenous cultures for advertisement purposes (cigar store Indians etc.).

on mental spaces that Lefebvre had described in his conceptualization of representations of space. *Truth and Bright Water* consequently conceives literary border spaces that challenge, deconstruct, and ultimately replace stereotypical images of the American West and Native American life.

5.4 (Un-) Representative Men

King's rendition of Lefebvre's spatial theories consists of a unique mixture of spatial theories. Indeed, *Truth and Bright Water* weaves together heterotopian spaces (the Indian Days Festival and Monroe Swimmer's church) that disrupt the master-narratives of westward expansion, representations of space meant to revise the image of Native Americans in popular culture (the Frontier Movie Theater), and, as we will see in the remainder of this chapter, specifically Native American models of geography. However, King's novel is not merely an encyclopedic synthesis of geographical theories; it is also a novel that insists on the importance of a close relationship between man and nature. Not surprisingly, King's characters are therefore defined by an intricate sense of place and share an ancestral bond to their habitat. More importantly, the novel's protagonists are aware of the fact that their natural life-world has become infused with temporary alien environments, such as the Indian Days Festival, which require them to adapt their behavior in order to fulfill Anglo-American expectations of Native American life and behavior. Another excellent example of Indian role play occurs when Tecumseh and his father cross the border into Canada on their way to deliver the two motorcycles to his uncle Franklin. At the border checkpoint, father and son are controlled by a group of Caucasian patrol men. Upon realizing the situation, Tecumseh's father immediately code-switches and behaves the way the guards expect him to. King notes that Elvin, in response to the guard's question if they are transporting any illegal substances, "shakes his head and smiles and talks like the Indians you see in the westerns on television" (*Truth* 90). Uniquely, King's novel thus features characters that see through the system of racial stereotyping and understand to play expected cultural stereotypes to their personal advantage. The text thereby

identifies the literary space of the novel as a site of resistance, even reversal, of the established system of cultural subjugation.

On the level of narrative structure, the principle of character empowerment is accompanied by a profound critique of language as a tool to reinforce cultural and political oppression. Specifically, *Truth and Bright Water* aims at deconstructing the imperial language of domination characteristic of nineteenth-century literature and politics and visible in the works of writers like Parkman and Cooper. The legacy of linguistic dehumanization of previous generations is reversed in the text when, for instance, Miles refers to a group of scientists who are collecting blood samples for a DNA analysis as “real blood-thirsty savages,” (178) a description, as we have seen in the previous chapters, that was usually employed by American historians as well as the common populous to describe the tribes of the western frontier. Moreover, King’s reversal of hegemonic linguistic legacies serves to distinguish indigenous histories and their alternative methods of story-telling from the dominant discourse of American literature and culture. American writers of the nineteenth century such as Parkman, Cooper, and Irving, in King’s estimation, inaugurated a racially contaminated description of the West and its inhabitants that must be deconstructed on the level of content as well as on the level of lexicology.

King’s literary deconstruction of racial stereotypes and his attack on Eurocentric histories of the American West infuses the novel’s narratological arrangement as well as the conceptualization of his characters. Still, the center piece of King’s critique of Indian representations is the figure of Monroe Swimmer and his unconventional project to restore the prairie to its original state. While the artist’s main goal is the erasure of markers of colonial oppression (such as the old church) and the reintroduction of the buffalo (even though only in the form of metal statues) to its natural domain, Swimmer also contests the popular image of Native

American masculinity.⁸⁵ The artist's wig, for instance, immediately reminds Tecumseh of Graham Greene's hair in *Dances with Wolves*, that movie "all about some white guy who wants to be an Indian" (*Truth* 118). But unlike the Hollywood Indian, Monroe wears his artificial hair piece to critique the stereotypical representation of Native American characters. Unfortunately, his protest performance is not always understood by his audience. In fact, the wig is the very reason why Lum believes that a woman jumped off the Horns, a devastating mistake that clearly contributes to Lum's eventual suicide.⁸⁶

Swimmer's creative critique is, however, not limited to condemning the wrongful depiction of Native American haircuts in Hollywood movies. Resembling the mischievous acts of a medieval prankster, his performances often involve masquerading of all kinds to call into question the very laws of human perception while echoing indigenous traditions of symbolic performances. Employed by tribes throughout the United States, masquerades are frequently used to "comment upon history," Peter Nabokov writes, and "to suit ideological purposes or [to] make fun of its detrimental consequences" (183). In other examples of his technique of willful distortion Swimmer even dresses up as a German "puffing on the tuba, pretending to be the Bright Water German Club" (*Truth* 26) while another of his diversions is that of a picture-snapping tourist during the Indian Days Festival. As physical transformations denote a central element of Swimmer's artistic strategy, the other corner stone of his technique of reeducation human perception focuses on making unwanted objects disappear. While the painting of the

⁸⁵ Swimmer's metal Buffalo statues that he sets up around his church recall the "Peace through Unity" memorial at the Bighorn battle site.

⁸⁶ On a personal level, Monroe's return to Truth and Bright Water signifies the homecoming of the reservation's most celebrated individual and his rediscovery of his ancestral roots. However, Monroe, significantly, does not return to either of the two towns, but chooses to occupy the space in between, the borderlands that separate Truth and Bright Water.

church most profoundly illustrates this technique, Swimmer also blends a concrete platform with surrounding grass, thereby “teaching the grass about green”, and flies a kite in order to teach “the sky about blue” (*Truth* 44, 50). These disappearing acts are, of course, rituals of purification and cleansing. By rendering the church and other symbols of white intrusion invisible, Swimmer attempts to purge the Blackfoot homeland from the colonial contamination.

Whereas the majority of Swimmer’s performances go unnoticed by the other inhabitants of Truth and Bright Water—much in the same way as Native American history went by largely unacknowledged by white historians—, his very presence represents a significant event in its own right as it announces the first stage of his rehabilitation project that is ultimately designed to reclaim the entire prairie surrounding Truth and Bright Water and thereby rekindle the connection between the Blackfoot community and their ancestral homeland. Indeed, King’s novel should be understood as a text that explores the theme of geographical restoration, by highlighting one man’s attempt to reverse his tribe’s seemingly irreversible alienation from the place of their communal and spiritual origin. As such, *Truth and Bright Water* clearly echoes other examples of what Donelle Dreese termed “reinhabitory writing,” (71) such as the works of Linda Hogan and Wendell Berry and thereby participates in the larger discourse on Native American space.⁸⁷

During his many years away from Truth and Bright Water, Swimmer worked as a restorer of art in the nation’s most prestigious museums. As such he “went around the world fixing paintings” (*Truth* 138). It was during this period of his life that he discovered the larger purpose of his art and began to reinserted Native American characters into the paintings he was restoring.

⁸⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the notion of “rehabitation” consult Gary Snyder’s essay of the same title in his book *A Place in Space* (1995).

Swimmer explains to Tecumseh that the figures originally omitted from the painting were slowly “coming up through the layers of paint” (*Truth* 138), as if to magically reassert themselves into the depiction of the American past. Monroe’s description of the omission of Native American characters from American art not only echoes my earlier discussion of Leutze’s famous portrait of westward expansion, *Westward the Course of Empire takes its Way*, but also criticizes the conscious and continued exclusion of Native American culture, interests, and history from American history and art. American art, the text laments, does not only omit Native Americans but also resists a modification of the status quo (hence Monroe got fired when his superiors discovered his secret additions). Further, the metaphor of the fading Indian also reflects the position of Native American culture throughout the nation’s past and testifies to the exclusion, or at least marginalization, of the indigenous perspective from American national history. Moreover, the powerful image of the bleached out Indian village at the lake’s shore in the Smithsonian painting clearly reverberates with the social and economic plight of Native American populations all over the country.⁸⁸ Re-inserting indigenous characters in landscape paintings obviously functions as a metaphor of correcting centuries of Native American marginalization and exploitation that permeated all of American society, including the realm of artistic production. Nonetheless, Swimmer’s revised paintings must also be understood as yet another example of textual heterotopias, for the modified images thoroughly unsettle the history of American art by exposing its imperial orientation.

As a restorer of landscape paintings, Swimmer altered depictions of the American past to include Native American settlements in an effort to undo the work of the many nineteenth-century historians and artists who had gracefully omitted the Native American presence from the

⁸⁸ The painting further echoes Tecumseh’s journey to Crypt Lake with his mother and father.

grand canvas of American history. While attempting to correct the representation of American history, Swimmer began to take his restoration project to the next level. Instead of merely rectifying the image of the past he started to actually *restore* the past by returning Native American artifacts, most importantly the remains of Native American children excavated by archeologists and “imprisoned” in the museums of the country, to their cultural and geographical context.⁸⁹

Reverting the alienation of man from his surrounding and restoring a close relationship between people and place, for Monroe Swimmer, goes hand in hand with reuniting the history of Native Americans, even the history of America, with its geographical context.⁹⁰ Clearly, returning the children’s skulls to their natural environment is thus also a plea for the intricate relationship between geography and history. The ritualistic burial that Swimmer orchestrates for the dead children naturally signifies their return to a place of ancestry and belonging but also denotes a ceremonial repossession of the land once stolen from the Blackfoot by intruding white settlers. Similar to the Dakota warriors desperately attempting to protect their ancestors from rivaling war parties that Parkman had described in *The Oregon Trail*, Swimmer’s act mirrors a desire to geographically ground Native American existence by establishing and preserving an

⁸⁹ Swimmer’s practice of returning archaeological artifacts to their original geographic and cultural context echoes Ishmael Reed’s novel *Mumbo Jumbo* (1976). In Reed’s text a multi-ethnic group of art thieves, the Mu’tafikah, steal art from European museum around the world in order to return the objects to their place of origin. Reed’s text thereby highlights one of the byproducts of European colonialism, the theft of indigenous cultural and historical artifacts and their exhibition in a western context of imperial domination, but also draws a powerful parallel between the physical subjugation of colonized cultures and the cultural and historical oppression, even plunder, that coincided with their defeat.

⁹⁰ The character of Monroe Swimmer, as Claudia Sadowski-Smith has noted, evokes a number of historical Native American and Anglo American figures rendering him a true hybrid character. References include a hint to a famous Cherokee healer, rendering Swimmer a symbol of tribal alliances, as well as to the fifth American president James Monroe and the Seminole Wars fought during his presidency (93).

ancestral memorial site. Following Peter Nabokov's interpretation of the importance of skeletal remains and burial sites for Native American cultures, the return of the skulls might be regarded as crucial step in Swimmer's "imaginative rehabilitation" (149) of the original Blackfoot living space and his attempt to reconnect the inhabitants of Truth and Bright Water to their ancestry.

Swimmer's final act, to reintroduce the buffalo and thereby repopulate the entropic prairie with the beings that once defined its geography, accordingly represents the transformation of the prairie from a site of tourism and unemployment to a heterotopian environment. This metaphorical undoing of the destruction of Native American culture holds the promise of revitalizing a sense of community and tradition among the populations of Truth and Bright Water that will enable them to rediscover their own identity within the myriad of postmodern simulations of Indian character. Unlike Elvin who believes that the Blackfoot "should have gone with them" (*Truth* 96), Swimmer understands the return of the buffalo (even though his are made of cast iron) as a sign of tribal recovery and indicator that Native American history represents more than an irretrievable memory of the past, but a life form that can and should be resurrected. As a powerful example of this realization, Monroe Swimmer's final gift-giving celebration by the bonfire symbolizes a ceremonial communal cleansing designed to center people's attention on their own identity and prevent them from chasing a sanctioned myth of Indian life under the gospel of materialism.

5.5 Towards a Counter-Geography of the American West: Sacred Spaces

“No tourists,” says Lum. No railroads. No fences.”
Thomas King *Truth and Bright Water*

The novel's geographical setting is dominated by the seemingly endless prairie that engulfs both the American railroad town Truth, and the Canadian reserve Bright Water. The prairie's sense of infinite continuity serves as a natural antipode to the theme of separation embodied by the two towns. Further, the prairie, similar to Parkman's conceptualization of the Great American Desert in *The Oregon Trail* represents a particularly dangerous environment, hostile, even deadly, for the unprepared traveler. King's allusion to the tragic fate of the two German tourists dying from exposure (*Truth* 165) underscores the potential hostility of the territory even in the age of climate controlled cars. Despite its killing potential, Parkman was fascinated by the radical landscape of the West as “here each man live[d] by the strength of his arm and the valor of his heart” (*Oregon Trail* 63). But although he conceived the prairie as a testing ground for individual bravery and vigor, Parkman ultimately insisted that it was not a space fit for Anglo-American colonization that might even put an end to westward migration altogether. Like Cooper and Irving, as discussed in detail in chapter two, Parkman saw the prairie as an unchangeably hostile environment which could serve only one function, namely to “become the final gathering place of the red man” (Cooper vii). King's depiction of the prairie certainly echoes the potential dangers of this challenging geography Parkman had emphasized one hundred and fifty years earlier; however, *Truth and Bright Water* clearly attempts to reverse Parkman's assessment that the prairie is nothing but “a monotony of waste” (*Oregon Trail* 63). In fact, the novel conceptualizes the prairie as the original locale of Native American life and culture where “the air was light and gold” (*Truth* 83). As an unrestricted space, the prairie here functions as an example of counter-geography devoid of boundaries, borders, and other western

markers of space. In contrast to Anglo-American conceptualizations of space the textual geography of *Truth and Bright Water* embraces a concept of indigenous sovereignty that is founded on, what Gerald Vizenor called, “the sense of transmotion and a visionary presence” (“Postindian Reflections” 168). Indeed, for King, the concept of Native American geography evokes a distinctly borderless understanding of space that is complemented with an existence defined by unrestricted mobility.⁹¹

Undoubtedly, King’s description of the prairie serves to articulate and define alternative understandings of geography. Similar to the heterotopian and representational spaces discussed earlier, the prairie’s seemingly limitless expanse challenges western definitions of space founded on private property ownership. The final component of King’s counter-geography is, however, the concept of sacred geographies. In this specifically Native American notion of space, the natural environment is perceived as a place, as N. Scott Momaday writes, in which “time has a spatial expansion,” where “that which once happened literally took place and still has a place” (qtd. in Brown 24). Sacred geographies are therefore locales where time and space come together. They are often defined by spiritually significant landmarks, such as the Horns in *Truth*

⁹¹ In the textual geography of *Truth and Bright Water*, the prairie is juxtaposed with the mountains surrounding Crypt Lake. On the level of content, the mountain episode functions as a reminder of Elvin’s unreliability as he abandons Tecumseh and his mother on the lake’s campsite. Moreover, Tecumseh’s mother’s desire to vacation in the hotel near the lake reflects her wish to reverse the tourism hierarchy in the text. For once, Tecumseh’s mother wants to be the one who travels to a different locale and visits the sites rather than being the constant object of tourists’ scrutiny. But Crypt Lake further signifies the transformation of natural sites into spaces of separation. As an invisible border (the 49th parallel runs through the lake), the site recalls the arbitrary nature of borders. King thus employs the comparison between the mountains and the prairie to challenge conventional notions of borders as land barriers or check points and highlights the process of cartographic nation-building. The border is thus not a natural space but an artificially and arbitrarily created locale. *Truth and Bright Water* is not the only work of postmodern fiction that investigates the particularities of the U.S.-Canadian border in relation to waterways and other natural sites. Specifically, Tim O’Brien’s *In the Lake of the Woods*, as the title already suggests, examines natural border sites along the 49th parallel.

and Bright Water, and allow the tribal community, through the convergence of time and space, to repeatedly experience mythic events and thereby establish a “sacred reciprocity” between people and place (Brown 24). Sacred geographies are therefore spaces that challenge concepts of historical progress and chronology, suggesting that past events continue to exist in a plain of temporal simultaneity that is accessible through specific sites. As a result, sacred geographies challenge not only western notions of history but also conceptualize space as the conflation of time, nature, and human presence. Monroe Swimmer effectively makes use of this understanding of time and space when he performs the burial ceremony for the children’s skulls. By returning the skulls to a sacred site, the Horns, Swimmer is not only returning the dead children to their homeland, but he also revisits their murders. While he is of course unable to undo the massacres that killed the Blackfoot children, his ceremonial burial does alter the memory of the event and transforms a formerly unacknowledged event of American history into an affirmation of Native American culture and tradition.

The sacred geography of King’s novel is not readily accessible but requires an intricate knowledge of Blackfoot mythology and traditions as well as a map. The key to unlock the sacred geography of *Truth and Bright Water* is the quilt that Tecumseh’s mother is creating. Her quilt resembles a never ending project—a never ending story if you will— that she began just after Tecumseh was born and as such it embodies the story of his life as well as the story of his people. Besides its narratological function, the quilt represents also a map that depicts “Truth in one corner of the quilt and Bright Water in the other with the Shield flowing through the fabrics in tiny diamonds and fancy stitching (63). Clearly, the quilt here functions as an alternative map that visualizes the geographical setting of the novel and defines the spiritual landmarks of its sacred geography. As a guide to the text’s “counter-cartography” (Nabokov 144), the quilt is not

an exact topographical survey of the region, but instead represents the mystical, trans-historical, literary landscape of *Truth and Bright Water* designed to counter western notions of space. The map is thus a totem symbol that links the bleak reality of an American railroad town with high unemployment and a cut off Canadian reservation depended on illegal waste dumping and Indian charades to a mythical past. As a relic that makes Native American history accessible, the quilt is also, like the history it represents, a problem. Over the years the quilt has morphed from a piece of fabric consisting of “squares and triangles” (63) into a complex concoction of textiles, safety-pins, broken glass, needles, and other objects.⁹²

Whereas King utilizes the quilt to challenge western models of cartography, space, and reality, he employs the book, a small transparent portion in one of the stained-glass windows of Swimmer’s church, to investigate the notion of historical truth. While the quilt maps the geographical element of the region’s sacred geography, the little stained-glass window lays out the temporal aspect of the time-space convergence that defines the sacred sites. The book in the image, likely a bible, allows Tecumseh and Lum to spy on Monroe and his female companion (possibly Tecumseh’s mother or aunt and thereby resembles a window into the boy’s own past. The glimpse through the small transparent section uncovers the truth about Tecumseh’s own family history, potentially revealing that Monroe Swimmer is his real father. Yet the window additionally refers to the purpose and function of the text itself and its concern to reveal the truth

⁹² The quilt, however, is not the only symbolical map featured in the narrative. While travelling with his father to Lionel’s Home Entertainment barn, Tecumseh notices a wall full of stacked up televisions. The image reminds him of “a map of America” (91). The wall of television set serves as the cartographic antipode to the sacred geography of the quilt. On the screens, geography and natural environment has transformed into an inaccessible representation that no longer can be experienced first-hand but that now marks the reality of our existence. As the concept of a natural life has become so increasingly alien to Native Americans and Anglo-Americans alike a representational hyper-space has replaced the natural environment as the context of their existence.

about Native American history and culture. The text, after all called *Truth and Bright Water*, thus understand itself as a small window of truth within a larger labyrinth of metaphors, media representations and other forms of illusions. As such the novel advocates the power of literature as a historiographical education tool that can unmask the lies of master-narratives put forth in official histories, museums, and other institutionalized catalysts of mythology. In the same fashion as a spiritual landmark offers to indigenous communities repeated access to mythic events of the past in order to strengthen tribal traditions and affirm cultural independence, a novel, King suggests, offers continued access to the vast pool of ancient creation stories while scripting modern tales of Native American empowerment.

King's novel is a powerful example of postmodern Native American fiction and a comprehensive compendium of spatial discourses. Like Parkman, King acknowledges the centrality of geography for American history. While Parkman saw American history as a continuous struggle between man and his environment, King's fiction announces the need for a symbiotic relationship between people and place. As the text explores heterotopian geographies and representations of space that unsettle the Eurocentric history of American national becoming, such as the Indian Days Festival and the Frontier Movie Theater, *Truth and Bright Water* scrutinizes the process of Native American identity formation in postmodern America. King posits that the Blackfoot characters of *Truth and Bright Water* are caught in the maze of Indian myths of popular culture and official history and, as a result, rendered increasingly unable to discover and comprehend their own cultural traditions as well as their individual identities. This lack of cultural self-awareness, the text implies, has aided the process of cultural oppression and historiographical exclusion of Native American societies. In order to rediscover their heritage, the novel suggests, the inhabitants of Truth and Bright must embrace, as I discussed

earlier, their natural surrounding as an integral part of their cultural matrix and rediscover the sacred geography they inhabit. Only then will they be able to reverse the commodification and exploitation of the Blackfoot through modern tourism.

AFTERWORD

6.1 Parkman Redux: William T. Vollmann's *Fathers and Crows*

"I honestly believe that *Fathers and Crows* is my best book so far and that it will eventually be recognized as such."
William T. Vollmann

"In fact his work is history just as much as it is fiction, and it penetrates the barrier between these two categories much more thoroughly and significantly than Mailer or Capote ever did with the so-called nonfiction novel."
Madison Smartt Bell on William T. Vollmann

The previous chapter has exemplified how postmodern authors of cultural resistance such as Thomas King affirm the interplay of geographic region, cognitive space, and historic action Francis Parkman inaugurated in his histories. Yet King and other Native American authors also redirect the focus of literary history and historical fiction/metafiction to include the formerly marginalized indigenous populations of America, to compose a new history of the American West, and to recover the lived spaces of their sacred geographies. While contemporary Native American fiction examines the interconnections of literature, history, and geography in an especially productive manner, writers like King, Vizenor and Momaday also contribute to the theoretical discourse on the nature and function of geography in postmodern America. As I have explained in my discussion of *Truth and Bright Water*, their novels of cultural affirmation blend distinctly Native American notions of nature and space (sacred geography) with western concepts of spatial resistance (heterotopias). By combining ancient traditions of lived practice with the philosophical systems of Foucault and Lefebvre (to only name two examples) Native American literature has become one of the foremost genres for the analysis of postmodern human geographies and firmly established the textual space of the novel as a site of cultural resistance and historiographic revolt.

To the benefit of America's contemporary literary landscape, other postmodern writers have equally recognized both the continuing relevance of Parkmanian themes as well as the need to improve existing historiographies. As I mentioned briefly before, Tim O'Brien's fiction, for instance, continues the literary exploration of border spaces, heterotopias, and other sites of cultural as well as political resistance. In the same fashion as King or Vizenor critique the historiographical exclusion of Native Americans, O'Brien challenges the official accounts of the Vietnam War. His novels aim at deconstructing the ideological mythologies that have effectively concealed the reality of the conflict and the underlying reasons for America's involvement in Southeast Asia. For Tim O'Brien the chaos of the Vietnamese jungle equates to the maze of political explanations and justifications for a war that was ultimately driven by neo-imperial desires and economic interests.

The heterotopian landscape of unrestricted jungle warfare in O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* or *Going After Cacciato* clearly echoes Parkman's guerilla fighting of the French and Indian War, only that O'Brien's representative heroes are no models for imitation. Their struggle is not a fight for freedom and liberty but an unpopular and unending one. While O'Brien's fiction uniquely employs foreign landscapes to interrogate America's past, his Vietnam novels further accentuate the importance of global, transnational, geographies for postmodern American identity. O'Brien's 1978 novel *Going After Cacciato*, for instance, takes the reader on an imagined journey from the battle fields of Vietnam to the street cafés of Paris. However, the most recurring transnational environment of O'Brien's novels is the American-Canadian border. In the time of Cold War proxy wars and a seemingly never-ending engagement in Vietnam, the country's northern border no longer resembles the testing ground for pre-revolutionary virtues it had signified in Parkman's histories. Instead, the border in O'Brien's novels has become a

demarcation line that evokes a plethora of national as well as personal deficiencies, including neo-imperialist aspirations and Cold War ideology, the unavoidability of serving in an unpopular war, or the failure and shame of dodging the draft when it was possible. Unlike Parkman's settler-soldiers who, aggravated by French border raids, turned into determined militiamen, O'Brien's draftees have not only lost their patriotic determinism but also their personal courage. O'Brien's texts thus frequently revisit the American-Canadian border in order to challenge not only the historical portrait of the Vietnam era but the fundamental assumptions of American self-definition.⁹³

As much as Thomas King, Tim O'Brien, and many other contemporary writers continue to revisit the geographical cosmos that Parkman had defined as the site of American destiny, there is one work that stands out as the most sustained revision of Parkman's oeuvre. William T. Vollmann's novel *Fathers and Crows* (1992) is in many aspects the postmodern *Doppelgänger* of Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Both texts form the centerpiece of a seven volume series (although in Vollmann's case not yet completed) on the history, geography, and population of North America: Parkman's *France and England in North America* and Vollmann's *Seven*

⁹³ O'Brien's re-conceptualization of the border is twofold. On the one hand, the portrayal of the American-Canadian border echoes the promise of liberation from social injustice often depicted in fugitive slave narratives (of both the nineteenth century and postmodernity, as for example in Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* and Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada*). For O'Brien's characters the promise to escape the draft, however, always ends in the forced acknowledgment of their own weakness. O'Brien's second border space, the Vietnamese jungle, as much as the Canadian border, resembles the vast chaos of the unrestrained historical event, that is, an historical event which resists traditional modes of historical sense-making. Comparing the actual combat in both conflicts (French and Indian War and Vietnam) helps to sustain the comparison. In both conflicts covert operations played a prominent role. The Green Berets' of the British-French conflict were the Iroquois raiding parties who were mainly recruited by the French to execute stealth missions on British troops and terrorize frontier settlers. Similar to the Green Berets' in Vietnam, their strength was to blend in with the country and quickly attack their targets.

Dreams: A Book of North American Landscapes.⁹⁴ In addition to their shared desire to compose an exhaustive compendium of North American history, both Vollmann and Parkman focus on the bloody struggle for dominance on the American continent as the *modus operandi* of American history. In similar fashion, *Montcalm and Wolfe* and *Fathers and Crows* showcase colonial aspirations, indigenous genocide, and economic exploitation to extract the tragic element from the clash of their protagonists and scrutinize geographical as well as textual border spaces in their path.

After reviewing the many similarities between the two authors, it is no surprise that *Fathers and Crows* acknowledges Parkman on its opening page. Although the lengthy quotation from Parkman's "Pioneers of France in the New World" represents the kind of imperial historiography *Fathers and Crows* is designed to replace, the two authors most certainly share, despite all of Vollmann's condemnation of Parkman's "melodrama" (*Fathers and Crows* 3), a preoccupation with place.⁹⁵ Whereas Parkman's progressive history of North America focuses on the inevitable collision between two colonial powers who equally claim North America for their respective crown, Vollmann highlights the detrimental effect of the colonial onslaught on Native American culture and tries to give voice to the unheard stories of the continent. By collapsing the spatial dialectic of imperial conquest—which defined New France as the battlefield for two external powers—*Fathers and Crows* rediscovers the manifold cultures of New France that had been the

⁹⁴ There is no doubt that Vollmann's multi-volume saga *Seven Dreams: A Book of North American Landscapes* echoes the traditions of nineteenth-century historians to craft exhaustive accounts of America's past. The series is projected to encompass seven books; so far four have been published: *Fathers and Crows* (1992), *The Ice-Shirt* (1990), *The Rifles* (1994), and *Argall: The True Story of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith* (2001).

⁹⁵ The first prelude that Vollmann's authorial alter ego William the Blind offers to his readers for a better understanding of the text is aptly named "the Mental Image of Place" (4). The second prelude, entitled "Mental Examination of Place" (5), further affirms the novels focus on spaces of history.

victim of historiographic disregard for centuries. Consequently, Vollmann's postmodern history of New France reverses Parkman's epic encounter of representative men and turns the progressive determinism of his predecessor into a nightmarish historical tragedy designed to, as Michael A. Hemmingson puts it, "magnif[y] the narrow, dogmatic points of view of European superiority" (*A Critical Study* 31).

Unlike *Truth and Bright Water*, *Fathers and Crows* is not a synthetic, diplomatic exercise in geo-historical revision. Whereas King's fiction joined European intellectual traditions with ancient indigenous practices to form a trans-cultural concept of empowerment, Vollmann's approach is confrontational. *Fathers and Crows* does not attempt to create a symbiotic textual landscape but rather attempts to wipe out the imperial narratives of European colonizers and missionaries as they had annihilated the Native population of New France. In this attempt to thoroughly deconstruct the master-narratives of Canadian cultural becoming, Vollmann not only attempts to discredit canonical reference texts such as Parkman's *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, but, in fact, renders them obsolete. In their place, the text creates an alternate multi-vocal history of North America focused on the indigenous inhabitants and their narratives. If Parkman's perspective was dominated by the voice of a proud descendant of Wolfe's victorious armies, Vollmann's angel of history appears in the guise of the Iroquois convert turned Catholic saint Kateri Tekakwitha, and speaks through the prophecies of the medicine women Born Underwater and Born Swimming. This emphasis on formerly marginalized protagonists of Canadian history certainly serves to undermine the historical master-narratives of Anglo-American cultural superiority. Yet, as *Father and Crows* replaces Jesuit documents with Iroquois visions as the foundation for historical truth, the novel's creation

of an alternative history of New France is accompanied by an equally substantial reevaluation of American space.

As part of Vollmann's larger project, the *Seven Dreams* series, *Fathers and Crows* forms just one puzzle piece in his alternative American geography. Nonetheless, the text nicely mirrors the methodology Vollmann also employs in *The Ice-Shirt* and *The Rifles*. This "new cartography" (Russell 183), evoked in *Fathers and Crows* questions dominant cultural narratives and representations of American environments and blurs the distinctions between physical geographies and fictional spaces. By the end of the text, the New France Parkman had described as the ancestral cradle of American freedom has been transformed into a literary dystopia defined by unjust tyranny. In this process of fictional reconfiguration of North American history and geography, Vollmann's main narratological strategy is the defamiliarization of latent historiographical stereotypes which ultimately refashions New France as a trans-historical "map of our misdoings" (Russell 183). Although a number of Vollmann's most powerful testimonies for European despotism in the New World in *Fathers and Crows* are, of course, fictitious, some scholars, such as Alison Russell, see the novel as a much more "authentic" account of Canadian history than its proper historical predecessors and therefore believe that recasting American geography as a site of colonial terror rather than divine providence or human progress, confirms Vollmann's status as a "postmodern realist, cognizant of the way our perception of spatial relationships has changed" (187).

6.2 “Et in Arcadia Ego Ante:” De-romanticizing Colonial Geography

In a letter from February 18 1991 William T. Vollmann responded to his editors’ proposal to substantially cut the manuscript of *Fathers and Crows* by four hundred pages. In the letter, Vollmann not only passionately argued for a reconsideration and reduction of the proposed cut, but also aptly characterized the focus of *Fathers and Crows* by saying that the

book tells every move of the five-cornered chess game in which the French killed the Huron, with kindness making them dependent on their trade goods, disrupting their society with missionary ideology, and meanwhile destabilizing the world around them by introducing firearms, which pitted tribe against tribe in bloody and escalating arms races. (Vollmann, McCaffery, Hemmingson 313)

To Vollmann, the letter further reveals, *Fathers and Crows* is not only a novel but as much an “accurate work of history” (Vollmann, McCaffery, Hemmingson 313). As such, the text aims at uncovering the true gruesome nature of French colonialism in North America. The publication of such an account was especially necessary and significant, Vollmann further reminds his European and North American editors, as there had (at the time) only been three other works written on the subject: Brian Moore’s novel *Black Robe* (1985), Bruce Trigger’s anthropological study *The Children of Aataentsic* (1976), and Leonard Cohen’s novel *Beautiful Losers* (1966) (Vollmann, McCaffery, Hemmingson 313). Chronicling the plight of native tribes under French rule and demythologizing Canada’s early settlement history was therefore not only a matter of historiographical importance but also a necessary step in filling the literary void associated with the topic. While Vollmann did not succeed in avoiding the demanded cuts, he did successfully complement the literary landscape of North American colonial history.

Like Parkman, Vollmann realized that one of the most suitable geographical locales to unravel the complex history of French-Indian interaction was Acadia. For Parkman, Acadia represented a contested contact zone between the two colonial systems, but also a place of deceit

and betrayal, a literary inversion of the biblical motif of untainted blissfulness. In *Montcalm and Wolfe*, the struggle for Acadia mirrored the intensifying tensions between the French and British and reflected the emergence of distinct colonial identities that would eventually topple their imperial hegemonies. Vollmann, on the other hand, conceives Acadia not as a site to study the relationship between colonial subjects and their royal overseers. For him, the truly relevant aspect of Acadian history is the initial contact between the Native inhabitants and early French explorers. Indeed, there is no better region than Acadia to investigate these first encounters between invader and invaded and to unravel the beginnings of a fateful coexistence. As a text concerned with the disruption of Eurocentric narratives, *Fathers and Crows* aims at replacing the sanctioned histories of conquest with a dialogical revision history. His counter-narrative of Acadia thus foregrounds the formerly excluded episodes of history and imaginatively fills the gaps of the official record (*The Jesuit Relations*). Structurally, the text replaces the official, objective historical account with an imagined discussion between a fictional reader and the unconventional as well as untrustworthy narrator. Vollmann, in fact, warns his readership of the eccentric nature of his account:

A single hint of insolence on this page, the faintest shine of gloating over all these delays, and you will slam the volume shut—don't claim I can't predict it!—What can I say to appease you? That I am weak-kneed, that can bully me into leaving out all these extraneous histories which don't matter, which merely *protrude* like those octagonal stalagmites with windows which grow from the corners of houses in Kebec? (*Fathers and Crows* 54)

While the ultimate goal of Vollmann's description of the French colonization of Acadia is the deconstruction of established historiographical accounts, the passage starts out in the same fashion as many Anglo-European histories of the New World begin: with the initial moment of contact between the European explorers and the indigenous population. In these stylized narratives of first contact, or better conquest—as we have seen in the earlier discussion of

Columbus' arrival in the New World and Jacques Cartier's elaborate possession taking ceremony involving the erection of a massive wooden cross— European land claims are not only announced to other rivaling powers, but the forceful subjugation, even extinction, of the Native inhabitants is also legitimized. By portraying them as uncivilized, naïve, and easily exploitable, European writers often immediately dehumanize the indigenous population and thereby render them expendable. In an ironic reenactment of such narratives, Vollmann presents Poutrincourt's landing on the Acadian shore in 1604 and his subsequent meeting with Membertou as an epitome of imperial prejudice. Vollmann's metafictional royal explorer leaves, in fact, no doubt about his contempt for the people of Kluskap: "Eh, he thought in astonishment, these clubs and bows and arrows of theirs are the arms that were in fashion just after the creation of the world!" (*Fathers and Crows* 55).

Though Poutrincourt regards the Acadian natives as nothing more than primitives eternally locked into a primordial state of savagery, he "commanded his retainers to raise their arquebuses and take aim at the Savages just in case" (*Fathers and Crows* 55). The passage clearly mirrors, yet from an ironic distance, stereotypical accounts of imperial endeavors including the obligatory dehumanization of the cultural other and the existential anxiety said foreign environment and peoples evoked among the European intruders. The rest of Vollmann's Acadia section, however, is undercut by a variety of competing narratives that aim at de-centering the all too familiar colonizer-colonized parallax. As a result of this technique, *Fathers and Crows* creates a textual heterotopia, similar to Thomas King's discussion of the Indian Days Festival in *Truth and Bright Water*, which effectively disrupts the culturally accepted accounts of American settlement history.

The first element that distorts the reader's expectations is the unreliable narrator who frequently, not just in this passage but throughout the book, unsettles the narratological frame. Equipped with seemingly trans-historical knowledge and unbound from restrictions of geography and time, the narrator (better one of the many narrators) jumps back and forth between present day Canada and seventeenth-century New France, shifts perspectives, and contradicts information. While the untrustworthy narrator obviously serves to debunk the absolute truth claims of official histories, Vollmann's act of linguistic defamiliarization, in fact, further serves to establish *Fathers and Crows* as a textual heterotopia. Disrupting historical narratives and memory, Foucault explains in *The Order of Things* goes hand in hand with unsettling the structure of language. Heterotopias, Foucault writes, "are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite to one another) to 'hold together'" (xviii). Vollmann's unconventional chronicler must accordingly be understood as a tool to defamiliarize both historical events and the language of historical memory to prepare the reader for an alternative vision of the past. Similar to acts of ritualistic cleansing that Monroe Swimmer performs in an effort to reclaim the sacred geographies of *Truth and Bright Water*; Vollmann uses his storyteller as a linguistic shaman designed to exorcise the ghosts of a colonial past.

William the Blind, Vollmann's narrator alter ego, certainly is one of his most powerful utensils to challenge narratives of European dominion. However, it is not the only one. The second element in Vollmann's strategy to reclaim Canadian history for its indigenous inhabitants is his employment of parallel perspective. In the example above, the description of

Poutrincourt's landing in Acadia is based on the account of Lescarbot in his *History of New France* (1618). Yet, at the same time as the novel follows the account of the French official, Vollmann undercuts the historical source material by including the vision of a Native medicine woman, Born Swimming, who offers an indigenous creation story to contrast the European account. More precisely, the European tale of conquest is, in actuality, presented as a dream within the larger vision of the Indian prophetess and thereby relegated to an episode within the larger Iroquois creation myth. As a result of this narrative paring *Fathers and Crows* highlights the limits of western historiography and story-telling and foreground the validity of indigenous narratives of tribal ancestry and geographical becoming. The history of Acadia and initial contact as most westerners know it from the *Jesuit Relations* or related texts barely, Vollmann emphasizes, scratches the surface of North American history. Whoever wants to truly understand the history of the continent and its inhabitants must seek to learn the stories of the Iroquois and Huron (as well as embrace their understanding of history, time, and place).⁹⁶

⁹⁶ The remainder of the section on Acadia thus gravitates freely between three focal points: the preparations for the exploration in France, the attempts to establish a colony in New France, and the response of the native population. A good example for Vollmann's comparison and contrast strategy is the description of the Ln'uk tribe's ability to adapt to the harsh winter. Vollmann stresses that due to their ingenuity and craftsmanship for the Ln'uk the "heavy winter was a time of plenty" (*Fathers and Crows* 98), adding that in the mean time the French settlers were starving. In his portrayal of the native populations of early seventeenth-century Canada Vollmann stresses not only their close relationship to their habitat and their mastery of the harsh conditions, but also their initial curiosity, even pity, for the "iron people" (*Fathers and Crows* 99). Membertou and his man do not understand why the French could possibly be interested in beaver furs and their "rags of clothing" (*Fathers and Crows* 99). To them the French appear "stupid" and "unmanly" (*Fathers and Crows* 99). Still, the Ln'uk change their hunting habits to satisfy the French's desire for furs and thereby contribute to their own demise as they are slowly locked into the transnational system of commodity exchange that will eventually turn the proud hunters into commissioned fur deliverers. Only later they realize, epitomized by the medicine man Smoking Pipe's vision, that they were now caught in "a dream of Iron Ghosts" (*Fathers and Crows* 128).

Both the linguistic defamiliarization of historical memory and the reconfiguration of historiographic hierarchies effectively support Vollmann's declared goal to conceive a "new view of the seventeenth century" (Vollmann, McCaffery, Hemmingson 315). Nonetheless, the textual heterotopia that is *Fathers and Crows* launches one final assault on the historical prejudices of its readership as Vollmann's depiction of the French colonization of Acadia also attacks the myth of heroic individualism Parkman and other romantic historians had celebrated. For Parkman, as we have seen through the analysis of his character development in *Montcalm and Wolfe* and *The Oregon Trail*, French and British colonial might in the New World was at least partially the consequence of Wolfe's cunning and La Salle's resilience. In Vollmann's estimation these supposed representative heroes of history were mere stand-ins for the larger forces at play (Catholicism, capitalism, and colonialism). Individual agency, in the bleak universe of *Fathers and Crows*, is only another myth perpetuated by the imperial elites to control the average populace. Consequently, Vollmann's history of Acadia does not follow the heroic explorers that first landed on the Canadian shore *forward* into their often disastrous attempts to establish colonial bridgeheads. After the depiction of the initial encounter between Poutrincourt and Membertou the narrative jumps instead *backwards* to unravel the underlying processes that landed Poutrincourt and his "half-dozen Swiss soldiers" (*Fathers and Crows* 55) at the shore of Acadia in the first place. Accordingly, Vollmann's anti-chronological history of Acadia spotlights the very man who watched "Poutrincourt's doings through the "telescope" (*Fathers and Crows* 56), the Sieur de Monts, and interrogates the origins of the French colonial system at the Bourbon court.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ For Vollmann, history, even as it unfolds, is always tied to voyeurism as each historical event is already watched from afar by the larger forces at play. In his novel *Europe Central*, Vollmann describes the German field marshal Paulus as a true voyeur of warfare who follows the tank of

6.3 Angels of History

“The study of history is the best cure for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings; fine things to take as models, base things, rotten through and through, to avoid.”

Livy *The Early History of Rome*

Parkman’s representative men were literary idealizations; real-life characters that through the historian’s heroic tales had been transformed into timeless models of human virtue and military bravery. Collectively they formed the pantheon of American heroes and provided the foundation of American identity. As models of virtue and virility Henry Chatillon and his heirs did not only dominate the writing of American history for the better part of the nineteenth century but also dictated dime novels and romantic adventure stories.

In the same fashion as Vollmann’s novel juxtaposes Parkman’s forest history with a tale of rivers, *Fathers and Crows* attempts to discredit the established circle of explorers, generals, and governors that have dominated the historical narratives of New France for the past centuries. As a continuation of the text’s disruption of Eurocentric heroic mythmaking described earlier, these colonial saints undergo a profound revision and are, more often than not, recast as willing executioners of colonial greed. In their place the text inaugurates a new league of formerly marginalized, or entirely omitted, indigenous protagonists who force Champlain, La Salle and other canonical figures of North American history from their historiographic pedestals. One of Vollmann’s most intriguing and powerful anti-heroes is Catherine/Kateri Tekakwitha.

his son Ernst from his command stand without the slightest emotional involvement; the pair of binoculars resting in his perfectly steady hands that are protected from the painful winter breeze by a pair of clean white gloves. Both events, the battle of Stalingrad in *Europe Central* and the conquest of New France in *Fathers and Crows*, thus appear as the result of an almost untraceable chain of decisions and actions that leaves little room for individual achievement.

Tekakwitha was the daughter of a Mohawk chief and an Iroquois mother who followed her mother's example and converted to Catholicism. After her conversion as a young woman, Tekakwitha became a devoted nun who embraced physical mortification as a sign of her religious devotion. Tekakwitha died at the age of twenty-four in 1680.⁹⁸ Over the centuries, as studies such as Daniel K. Richter's excellent book *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (2001) validate, Tekakwitha's life has been exploited by Jesuit missionaries and French royal bureaucrats as a model for dutiful Indian conversion and submission. Accordingly, she was eventually sanctified as an indigenous embodiment of Catholic female servitude and chastity.

Vollmann's portrayal of Tekakwitha surely serves to deconstruct the mythological canon of European and Anglo-American heroes and is designed to establish an alternative set of historical characters. However, the investigation of Tekakwitha's historical legacy further highlights the ideological appropriation of Native American culture through the Catholic Church and other colonial authorities. The example of Tekakwitha mirrors the incorporation of a potentially subversive figure into the colonial control structure to prevent the emergence of alternative authorities and idols. Vollmann's textual hunt for Tekakwitha's historical legacy, similar to his portrait of the medicine woman Born Underwater, takes him from the time of initial French-Indian contact to the bars of contemporary Quebec. As the narrative jumps back and forth in the stream of time, Vollmann mixes descriptions of modern prostitutes with the fictionalized account of Tekakwitha's life and beatification; imaginative scenes, such as the scalping of rival suitors, blend with historical documents as the text slowly erases the carefully constructed image of the Catholic saint and uncovers the Native American identity western renditions of her life are eager

⁹⁸ Her gravestone describes her as the "fairest flower that ever bloomed among red man."

to neglect. Like Thomas King's interrogation of Blackfoot identity discussed in the previous chapter, Vollmann's narrative here described the manifold ways in which colonial conquest, cultural oppression, economic exploitation, and historiographic apathy have rendered Native Canadian identity almost undetectable.

Madison Smartt Bell has described Vollmann's technique of storytelling as a "modular design" that is meant "to break the constraints of narrative continuity so as to draw structural and thematic analogies between otherwise unrelated storylines" (41). Earlier, I have described how this technique of linguistic defamiliarization aids Vollmann in creating fictional heterotopias that undercut master-narratives of Canadian conquest. In relation to *Fathers and Crows*' conceptualization of historical anti-heroes, Vollmann employs the "thematic analogies" (Bell 41) Bell identified to achieve a similar effect of historiographical intervention. By pairing chronologically or geographically unrelated events Vollmann randomly intersects the narratives of European invaders and Native cultures. The consequence of this encounter is often gruesome, confronting the reader with "a sense of the aesthetic possibilities of horror" (Bell 40) that contradict the polished monuments and marble statues erected in honor of European colonizers and Native converts.

Into his depiction of inter-cultural violence Vollmann weaves narratives of cultural empowerment and indigenous resistance that are designed to further undermine the authority of European master-narratives. The text, for instance, echoes the Dekanwida creation myth of the Iroquois. In the legend, Dekanwida, a fatherless boy doomed to die emerges as an unlikely but powerful leader and Christ-like prophet who unites the Mohawk tribes of New France and their former enemies, the Iroquois. Vollmann effectively places the mythological reference in the discussion of growing Native dependence on French trading goods as a plea for Canadian pan-

Indianism. Similar to Thomas King's use of Tecumseh and Monroe Swimmer as symbols for the importance of inter-tribal alliances to preserve Blackfoot customs in *Truth and Bright Water*, *Fathers and Crows* evokes the possibility of cultural resistance through pan-Indian coalitions.

6.4 Dreaming of Rivers

“My aim in *Seven Dreams* has been to create ‘Symbolic History’— that is to say, an account of origins and metamorphoses which is often untrue based on the literal facts as we know them, but whose untruths further a deeper sense of truth.”

William T. Vollmann *Fathers and Crows*

Parkman’s defining geographical feature of New France was the seemingly all encompassing eternal forest. These dark and dangerous woods marked the ultimate testing ground for his representative heroes and the terrain that mostly profoundly challenged European settlers and soldiers. *Montcalm and Wolfe* exemplified how the Canadian forests rejected Old World military conventions and defied century-old concepts of spatial domination. The woodlands of New France rendered the massive fortifications of Fort William Henry and Duquesne equally useless as they disproved the superiority of Braddock’s battle formations. However, Parkman’s great American forest is not merely a metaphor for the resistance against European conventions; it also resembles a plea for uniquely American customs and values. It is in the mysterious woods of North America that guerilla skirmishes supplant open field battles and lay the foundation for American military victory in the Revolutionary War. It is on the contested border spaces of the forest frontier that Parkman envisioned future American heroes develop the skills necessary to lead the young nation into a bright future.

Fathers and Crows clearly rejects the established pattern of spatial signification and instead conceives a counter-geography that describes the Canadian rivers as the defining feature of the continent. Similar to Thomas King’s juxtaposition of Anglo-American spaces of consumption and economic exploitation and sacred geographies of tribal regeneration, Vollmann’s novel contrasts the stagnant space of the forest with the fluidity of waterways. Already the opening sequence of the novel announces this geographical focus by stating that “in this tale of *Fathers*

and Crows, the word writ in grandest majuscule must be **RIVERS**" (7). Following this forceful revision of Parkman's geographical assessment of American history, Vollmann differentiates between various types of rivers and their respective functions (small rivers, he clarifies, are known in Canada as rivières, while bigger ones are called fleuves). This private geography lesson, of course, serves to counter established conceptualizations of Canadian culture and identity while also redefining North American settlement history. The emphasis on waterways certainly evokes the French colonial legacy over the often favored (because of their eventual victory) British history of the continent. Indeed, it was French voyageurs such as Louis Durand who opened the vast Canadian interior for the lucrative fur trade and thereby initiated the economic exploitation of the region. In addition to underscoring the Franco-Canadian heritage of modern Canada, the emphasis on the nation's rivers and lakes also evokes those explorers who landed with their dragon-helmed longboats on American beaches long before French and British frigates anchored in the Chesapeake Bay and on Prince Edward Island. The Vikings with their shallow haul ship design likely penetrated the interior of the country as far as the Great Lakes, an episode of transatlantic encounters Vollmann chronicles in *The Ice Shirt*, the first installment of the *Seven Dreams* series. Yet, first and foremost Vollmann's concentration on rivers is meant to juxtapose the rigid, land, and property based cultures of European colonists with the nomadic, unrestricted social organizations of the Huron and Iroquois. After all, it was the Native inhabitants of the continent who instructed the French voyageurs how to master the colony's mighty rivers and how to employ this superior system of transportation for the lucrative fur trade.

In addition to further defamiliarize and disrupt the familiar colonial history of Canada, the river metaphor in *Fathers and Crows* is designed to symbolize the historical process as a whole. Whereas Parkman's forest stood for the inevitable alienation of man from nature and the

eventual destruction of the forest for the questionable sake of human progress, Vollmann's rivers represent the symbiotic relationship between people and place. The rivers in *Fathers and Crows*, in fact, recall the sacred geography of the Shield in *Truth and Bright Water* and equally symbolize a location where time and space converges. Vollmann's stream of time thus encompasses all of history and accordingly creates a "time/space continuum" (Hemmingson *A Critical Study* 34). The time-space conflation Vollmann evokes with his emphasis on seemingly uninterrupted waters is, of course, *Fathers and Crows* itself. As the novel's main structuring device, this trans-historical flow of history unites in eternal simultaneity all that was and all that ever will be and thereby allows the narrator, as well as the reader, to readily jump from one time period to the next. Vollmann's stream of history is thus both the thematic and structural core of the text; it legitimizes the novel's anti-chronological structure and validates its mosaic selectiveness. In consequence, *Fathers and Crows* consciously resists to follow the current of this ever moving river (and thereby replicate normative explanations of chronological North American history), but always struggles against it, forcing its way up stream, deeper and deeper into the murky past where the most inaccessible but possibly also most crucial lessons of Canadian history are hiding. For Madison Smartt Bell Vollmann's anti-chronological technique reintroduces an element of authenticity to postmodern fiction that helps formulate what Michael Hemmingson termed "an interpretation of history and treatise on how the past has influenced the present" (*A Critical Study* 31). Bell summarizes the effect of Vollmann's technique by arguing that "the Jesuits swam against the stream in an effort to recover for themselves a direct, personal, sensory, eyewitness experience of the Passion of Christ. Vollmann swims against it to recover just such an *authentic* experience of what happened to the French and Indians in seventeenth-century Canada, and thereafter" (Bell 42-43).

To successfully enter Vollmann's stream of time the reader has to abandon a scientific understanding of historiography. *Fathers and Crows* is, although comprehensively researched, not an empirical history of New France. In that sense it is a true heterotopia, especially as the text begins with a plea to suspend the imprisoning distractions of our modern surroundings and to delve into the imaginative, creative space of hybrid history.⁹⁹ Vollmann makes no secret out of the fact that his account of Canadian history is filled with what he calls "false islands of autumn leaves trapped between its rocks" (*Fathers and Crows* 5) ready to distract his readers. Yet, like Monroe Swimmer's attempt to teach "the grass about green" and "the sky about blue" (*Truth* 44, 50), Vollmann's fictional interventions help to cleanse Canadian history from its preoccupation with missionaries, fur traders, and explorers and allow for a rediscovery of indigenous narratives and their sacred rivers.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The term hybrid history seems appropriate here as Vollmann's narrative is a mixture, a hybrid, constituent of legitimate, verifiable historical facts and fictionalized anecdotes, imaginative portraits, and invented psychological studies.

¹⁰⁰ Most fundamentally, Vollmann supplants Parkman's forest history with a fictionalized river saga that embraces a symbiotic, anti-chronological vision of history. Furthermore, *Father and Crows* reinterpreted the early settlement history of Acadia as a moment of initial encounter between French explorers and Native inhabitants that laid the foundation for future disaster. In contrast, Parkman saw Acadia first and foremost as the site of affirmed colonial identity and the beginning of a long struggle for independence. Structurally, Vollmann replaced Parkman's omnipotent narrator with a blind bard unwilling or unable to reveal the truth about Canada's past. Not unlike their heroic creator, Parkman's representative men were replaced by a set of indigenous protagonists whose often unfortunate fate highlighted the colonial tyranny of their murderers. Like Parkman's text, however, Vollmann's novel resembles a textual heterotopia that disrupts historiographic conventions and ideological stereotypes. In Parkman's case, his tragic history of European colonial conflict and eventual American becoming inherently challenged established accounts of America's past that preferred to extract American national identity and political autonomy from the British colonial context alone. Since then, Parkman has, of course, himself become the status quo ante of American historiography and both Vollmann and King impressively expand Parkman's cosmos to include formerly excluded protagonists and forgotten geographies. In all their eagerness to reconfigure Parkman's historical geographies, both *Fathers and Crows* and *Truth and Bright Water* do in fact one thing more than anything else, they testify to the continued relevance of Parkman's historiographical method.

6.5 Unconscious Geographies: Dream Space

“Here I could quench my thirst to understand,
 For here all knowledge stood at my command.
 There was provision here for every need:
 A title full of promise on each book
 Responded to my every rapid look.
 Here there was fruit to satisfy the greed
 Of any student's timid aspirations,
 Of any master's bold investigations.
 Here was the inner meaning, here the key,
 To poetry, to wisdom, and to science.
 Magic and erudition in alliance
 Opened the door to every mystery.
 These books provided pledges of all power
 To him who came here at this magic hour.”
 Josef Knecht *The Dream*

The lines above are part of a poem by Josef Knecht, Hermann Hesse's main character in his opus magnum *The Glass Bead Game* (1943). Set in a far but undefined future, the novel describes Knecht's life as part of an elitist order of intellectuals in the ethereal community of Castalia. Isolated from the rest of society, the Castalians lead an existence of diligent scholasticism aimed at unlocking the mysteries of the universe by studying all arts and sciences. An integral part of their education is the mastery of the glass bead game, an extremely complex contest that involves the successful synthesis of thought and action.¹⁰¹

The poem *The Dream* describes Knecht's visit to the fabled library of Castalia where he discovers volumes upon volumes of secret histories that combine in an unprecedented fashion the various strains of human knowledge. As he begins to read, Knecht experiences a vision of

¹⁰¹ Eventually, Knecht grows weary of his secluded life of intellectualism and abandons his order. Against the will of his superiors he leaves Castalia and takes a position as a teacher. Shortly after his departure from Castalia, he dies in a swimming accident. The remainder of the novel consists of three stories that describe the potential lives Knecht might have lived if he had not drowned. Interestingly, one of Hesse's tales of reincarnation involves Knecht becoming a shaman who volunteers himself for tribal sacrifice after his powers to summon rain disappear.

total enlightenment, but just as he begins understands the interconnectedness of all things, a librarian appears and erases the titles of the volumes and rewrites their content:

He took my book and with a subtle smile
 Brushed his finger lightly to elide
 The former title, then began to write
 New promises and problems, novel inquiries,
 New formulas for ancient mysteries.
 Without a word, he plied his magic style.
 Then, with my book, he disappeared from sight. (Hesse *Glass* 243)

While the poem expresses the inherent human desire to unlock the secrets of the universe and its limitations, Knecht's dream also represents a fitting metaphor for the writing of history. As such, Knecht's vision of perfect knowledge is defined by two distinct features. On the level of content, Hesse posits the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship and synthetic historical narratives. For Josef Knecht, as for the authors discussed in this dissertation, history is ultimately not merely the study of human actions within a specific geo-temporal setting, but a complex quilt (to return to the metaphor Thomas King evoked in *Truth and Bright Water*) that unites verifiable records, personal memories, cultural practices, and communal narratives and blurs the demarcation lines between academic disciplines. It blurs the distinctions between thought and action, past and present, dreams and reality. Only this synthetic view of history promises individual and communal liberation from the system of marginalization and exclusion perpetuated by national histories of Western dominion.

On the level of structure, Knecht's vision then accordingly implies that history, as any written record of human knowledge, resembles often nothing but a dream; as an act concerned with recreating past events and individuals, history dreams up visions of bygone times. These dreams of the past might be romanticized (as in Parkman's case) or nightmarish (as with Vollmann), but they always represent a fleeting, ever changing, image of an ultimately

unknowable reality. King and Vollmann understand the ghost-like elusiveness of historical characters and therefore embrace visions of the past that promote the structure of the dream as an alternate model to configure the past. Thereby, texts like *Fathers and Crows* and *Truth and Bright Water* not only challenge established models of historical writing but also conceive novel forms of narrating the American experience. While the combination of history and fiction has been a staple of postmodern fiction for decades, the way Vollmann and King conceptualize visions and dreams as both symbol and structuring device for historical narratives expands the limits of contemporary literature in a unique fashion.¹⁰²

Dreams, in Vollmann's understanding of the term, stand not for false realities or illusions, they represent utopian mental spaces and, as such, a final example of textual heterotopias. They are unconscious landscapes that conflate time and space, fact and fiction, to form a literary Castalia: a literary space where "new formulas for ancient mysteries" (Hesse *Glass* 243) are conceived. Dreams, in *Father and Crows*, harbor the unacknowledged and inaccessible events in American history that have been consciously (by means of censoring, omission, and neglect) or unconsciously (as a result of the absence of sources) removed from the history of New France as victims of what could be termed a historiographic super ego. Similar to Josef Knecht's fleeting vision of total knowledge, Vollmann's text is trying to produce a complete historical picture of

¹⁰² As a model for historical memory and historical narratives, however, dreams also resemble the ongoing internalization of history. Dream-history removes historical action from a distinct geographical setting and turns the past into a space of pure representation. While this strategy seems ideal for the intellectual discourse about history and allows authors to challenge established models of historical narrative, it also unhinges historical memory from its geographical grounding.

the North American past that establishes formerly unrecognized connections and features unprecedented protagonists.¹⁰³

Like the proverbial stream of time, dreams are trans-historical entities able to summon events from the distant past as well as from the far future. Vollmann's dreams are thus conceptualized as unique historiographic heterotopias that force their way to the forefront of America's historical consciousness. As such they are necessarily unsettling tales meant to disrupt the smooth canvas of colonial history that mingle imagined and real historical characters in an hypothetical account of American becoming. Like a nightmare that disrupts the peaceful sleep, Vollmann's fiction refashions "the past [as] a force of its own, coercing itself onto the present" (Hemmingson "Native American" 82), thereby urging the reader to leave the intellectual ivory tower of Castalia and turn their vision of the past into future practice.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Vollmann's use of the dream structure as an organizing principle for his counter-history of North America certainly testifies for the continued popularity of dream imagery in postmodern fiction. After all, postmodern authors from Thomas Pynchon to Toni Morrison have employed dreams as narratological tools for decades. This postmodern fascination with dreams has, in fact, caused some critics, such as Gordon Globus, to proclaim an intrinsic connection between our nightly visions and postmodern reality; for Globus, dreams are not only an ideal tool for writers to convey the core assumptions of postmodernism, but they are also "deeply emblematic of the postmodern," (120) as they are governed by the same process of persistent re-signification that also causes "the continual eruptions of texts into discourse" (123).

¹⁰⁴ The creative properties and reality bending qualities of the dream structure implied by the title of the *Seven Dreams* series accordingly build an inner-textual tension with the overwhelming amount of source material, documents, and public records that ground the novel in the aura of historical accuracy. As a dialectical exercise that pivots conscious reality against dream states and "official" histories against oral traditions, Vollmann's novel uniquely combines original sources (many of which Parkman researched as well), secondary scholarship, Huron creation mythology, and fictional narrative to extend the definition of historiographic metafiction. For Vollmann's goal is not simply to unveil the subjective, literary, and mythological quality of historical writing but to create, what he calls, a "Symbolic History" (*Fathers and Crow* 939).

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