

## The West and Manifest Destiny

MADSEN, Deborah Lea

### Abstract

Westward expansion is central to American Studies for the very simple reason that the object of study (the United States) has been constituted by successive processes of westward migration and territorial expansion. At the same time, the rhetoric of American Studies as a discipline, in terms of both the vocabulary of American selfhood and of the US nation, has been grounded in migration histories. From the corporate expansionism of the 1630s, which Perry Miller fixed into the paradigm of "the Great Migration," American Studies has been characterized by disciplinary metaphors like Sacvan Bercovitch's powerful analyses of "the Puritan origins of the American self" (1975) and a foundational understanding of the US as formed by the Americanization of (European) migrants. In the wake of ground-breaking work by Ronald Takaki, Gary Okihiro, and others, Americanists have been encouraged to look not across the Atlantic but across the Pacific, from and to "a different shore," to borrow Takaki's phrase. Richard Drinnon's account of American conquest, *Facing West* (1980), begins in early seventeenth-century Massachusetts but ends in [...]

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## The West and Manifest Destiny

Deborah L. Madsen

Westward expansion is central to American Studies for the very simple reason that the object of study (the United States) has been constituted by successive processes of westward migration and territorial expansion. At the same time, the rhetoric of American Studies as a discipline, in terms of both the vocabulary of American selfhood and of the US nation, has been grounded in migration histories. From the corporate expansionism of the 1630s, which Perry Miller fixed into the paradigm of "the Great Migration," American Studies has been characterized by disciplinary metaphors like Sacvan Bercovitch's powerful analyses of "the Puritan origins of the American self" (1975) and a foundational understanding of the US as formed by the Americanization of (European) migrants. In the wake of ground-breaking work by Ronald Takaki, Gary Okihiro, and others, Americanists have been encouraged to look not across the Atlantic but across the Pacific, from and to "a different shore," to borrow Takaki's phrase. But this proposed change of direction from West to East has transformed not the rhetoric of migration and Americanization so much as extended the remit of western expansionism to Hawai'i, the Pacific islands, and into Asia. Richard Drinnon's account of American conquest, *Facing West* (1980), begins in early seventeenth-century Massachusetts but ends in Indochina, with a chapter appropriately titled "Closing the Circle of Empire."

The West, particularly western imperialist expansion into the Americas, across the continental US and beyond, continues to provide the basis upon which later revisions of the disciplinary paradigm are based. As Raymond Williams (1983) points out, in his *Keywords* definition of "Western," thinking about the wider significance of a global North/South polarity is modeled upon existing meanings of East/West relations. Even the shift to Transpacific or East Asian histories in American Studies inscribes the West as the primary point of comparison. Williams observes that the concept of "the West" is no simple geographical concept. In our current usage, and in the period since the Cold War, the West has been largely identified with free-enterprise or capitalist states and their political or military allies, while the East is identified with socialist or Communist societies (334). Williams sees this as a development arising out of ancient East/West divisions of the Roman empire and the early Christian church, and draws attention to the politicization of geography that complicates efforts to think about "Western civilization." A consequence of this discursive history is that when we think about the importance of the West and westward expansion in the US context we must keep in mind the wider global context within which the idea of the West operates. The very notion of the continental US as organized into East and West is a European conceptual imposition. The indigenous peoples of the Great Plains, for example, did not think of themselves as living on "western" lands. The description of those lands as "western" also carries a strong Eurocentric association, such that the land is identified with the West of Williams's definition – a free-enterprise or capitalist state – which is emphatically European rather than indigenous. As Raymond Williams warns, the language we use to describe concepts like "the West" in fact prescribes the object we would study.

The West as an object of study is slippery for more than terminological reasons. In what follows, I want to begin by asking "where is the West?" because this location has changed both in historical terms and in disciplinary terms, and continues to be debated. I then

turn to the issue of how the study of the West has changed, from foundational work by scholars like Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx, and R. W. B. Lewis, to the “new” West Studies which turns away from the understanding of the West as a process to focus more on the West as a place. “New” Western scholars, following the work of historians such as Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, Peggy Pascoe, and Donald Worster, address the specificities of experience of people living in the West, both the colonizers from the East and the Western colonized, particularly in relation to issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. The particular case of indigenous communities and their experience of Euro-American expansionism with its ideological justification, “Manifest Destiny,” brings my chapter to a close.

### **Where is the West?**

The geographical location of the West has continually moved, as the reference point from which it is defined changed. From the early Spanish and French colonies, through the Anglicization of the original thirteen Atlantic colonies, to the incorporation of Alaska and Hawai'i as states in 1959, the United States as a nation has been in continual transition. This means that what constituted the West in the colonial period is not the same as that in the early republican period and it is certainly not the same as twenty-first century understandings of the American West. Any contemporary reader of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* is led to ask how Cooper can refer to upper New York State as “the West” and such a reader will sympathize with Leslie Fiedler's question, posed in *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968): “where, geographically, is the elusive West? We know that first of all it was Virginia itself, the Old Dominion, then New England, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, Missouri, Texas, the Oregon Territory, etc., etc.—always a bloody ground just over the horizon, or just this side of it, where we confronted *in their own territory* the original possessors of the continent” (26). Fiedler's is a powerful reminder of the indeterminacy of this concept and the extent to which it is tied to European colonial ambitions in North America. As historian Clyde A. Milner II (1994) summarizes:

The American West is an idea that became a place. This transformation did not occur quickly. The idea developed from distinctly European origins into an American nationalistic conception. The western edge of several European empires, especially the British, moved into the hinterlands of North America. The United States inherited this westward edginess and made it the main directional thrust of its own empire. Once across the Mississippi, these American lands did not fill up with a steady progression of settlers. Overlanders and gold seekers pushed ahead to Oregon and California. The mountains, plains, and deserts would be filled in later, if at all. Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States laid claim to more and more of its West, culminating in 1898 with the annexation of Hawai'i. All of this occurred because a nation established mainly by African and European peoples created a region that replaced a world -- a homeland once defined exclusively by native peoples" (35).

This process of territorial expansion was, of course, complex and carried different meanings at different moments in time: just as the frontier shifted with each incremental extension of the US, so the place and people next to be conquered changed. While the practicalities changed, the reasons for expansion and the ideological justification of conquest largely did not change over time and in fact appear to have solidified into a national

mythology. The initial generations of settlers saw their colonies as constituting a divinely ordained "errand into the wilderness," to use Perry Miller's phrase, which has come to be called the mythology of "American exceptionalism." Exceptionalism names the idea that the New World (and specifically that part of it which became the United States) has been singled out above all nations for a distinctive, God-given destiny. The nature of this destiny was variously interpreted: as the purification of the Anglican Church, for the seventeenth-century Puritans, but as the perfection of a new political system of democratic republicanism for the architects of the Revolution. What remained constant was the vision of this destiny as a matrix of political, religious, economic, social and, above all, territorial relations.

During the nineteenth century period of rapid national expansion, this "destiny" was focused by national ideology upon the creation of an empire of middle-class farming communities: an extension of the eighteenth-century agrarian ideal that impressed commentators such as Hector St Jean de Crèvecoeur (1782). Territorial expansion in the name of democracy was prescribed for an "exceptional" nation destined to occupy the continent from East to West. Expansion was articulated as a democratic "Manifest Destiny." This term was first used by John L. O'Sullivan in the *Democratic Review* in 1845, in a comment that brings together the twinned ideologies of Manifest Destiny and American Exceptionalism. He refers to: "our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" (quoted in Hietala, 1985, 255). It is worth pausing to unpack this statement. O'Sullivan implies that the American continent was assigned by God to the United States. In fact, by using the term "Providence," he suggests more than this: he suggests that the "Manifest Destiny" of the United States is part of a sacred providential history, designed by God, and played out through His agents. Consequently, the US labors not simply under a duty to conquer and possess the North American continent but under a divine and irresistible necessity. This necessity is juxtaposed with the cause: "the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." Whether this demographic multiplication is the result of a growing domestic population or to increases in the national population due to immigration, is left unclear. What is clear is the sense that the new nation required ever more space in which to develop freely, even while acting out a divine script in all its historical inevitability. This tension between freedom and necessity characterizes the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny. As Thomas Heitala (1985) remarks, O'Sullivan's original vision of US expansion was a process based on the experience of Texas: where a group of settlers formed their own autonomous government and later sued for annexation to the US. However, in a January 1848 debate in Congress, Senator John A. Dix of New York (1848) articulated the now-accepted understanding of "Manifest Destiny" when he claimed: "no one who has paid a moderate degree of attention to the laws and elements of our increase, can doubt that our population is destined to spread itself across the American continent, filling up, with more or less completeness, according to the attractions of soil and climate, the space that intervenes between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans" (181).

New World exceptionalism was legitimated and supported by the assumption that North America represented a land of opportunity: economic opportunity for the landless of Europe and religious opportunity for those who sought a haven from persecution. In fact, from the early colonial period both sets of assumptions were false: Puritans persecuted the Quakers of the Pennsylvania colony and the Catholics of Maryland, for instance, and land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of wealthy settlers through the operation of land grants such as the "headright" system introduced in 1618 in Virginia. Under this system every new settler was entitled to a grant of 50 acres and every colonist who paid the passage of a new settler received the same grant. Thus, wealthy colonists who brought indentured servants to Virginia could quickly accumulate extensive land holdings. Benjamin Franklin proposed a similar system in his "A Scheme for a Western Settlement" (1763/4) under which both settlers

and "contributors" to the governing company would be granted a parcel of land, and where individuals could acquire land in both capacities. While it may not have been true, the promise of land and economic opportunities for all was repeated over and over in pamphlets, promotional life writings, newspapers, and so on, from the earliest reports prepared for Queen Elizabeth by courtiers who never visited North America, to Benjamin Franklin's representation of himself as living proof that hard work will bring extraordinary success, to the belief held by contemporary immigrants that in the US they will enjoy opportunities unavailable elsewhere.

The sheer repetition of this claim perhaps accounts for its power, which is the power of the "American Dream." The promise relied on the perception that the New World offered unlimited land and other natural resources that could be claimed by European migrants. The emphasis continually placed upon hard work and the improvement of the land justified European over indigenous possession even while it underlined the values of progress, technology, rationality, and the work ethic: the values of "the West." If, unlike the previous inhabitants of the land, colonists increased the productivity and commercial value of the land, by bringing European technological innovation and Protestant hard work to bear, then these colonists justified and legitimized their new territorial ownership. Territorial expansion thus brought into being a frontier where "civilized" European agriculture met traditional or "savage" tribal lifeways. This trope of a continually moving, linear frontier has proven resilient and influential, particularly in terms of thinking about the distinctive nature of the American national character. The so-called "Turner Thesis," proposed by historian Frederick Jackson Turner, locates the source of a set of specifically American character traits in the unique historical experience of the moving frontier. Turner's essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) sets out a vision of American history that is identical with the process of western colonization. The continuous retreat of an area of "free" land before the forces of westward settlement provides the context in which existing social institutions are required continually to adapt and change, giving rise to a culture of individualism, self-reliance, and Western democracy. The frontier, for Turner, represents a confrontation with the "primitive" and a consequent redevelopment of the social structures brought by settlers and a transformation in the character of the European settler who becomes Americanized by the wilderness. The constant rebirth of American "civilization," in the face of western "savagery," provides Turner with the forces that shape a distinctively American national character. Later historians, such as Walter Prescott Webb, argued that it was not "savagery" or "wilderness" that caused the reappraisal of conventional modes of society so much as the environmental differences between the Atlantic seaboard of the East and the Great Plains of the West. One definition of the West is the area beyond the 98th meridian where annual rainfall drops to less than the 20 inches required for conventional agriculture. The lack of water and timber, the differences in vegetation, wildlife, and the features of the landscape, all set the West apart from the East and account for changing social institutions.

Turner's frontier thesis was influential throughout the early part of the twentieth century, and continues to be debated, but his vision of the frontier was decisively challenged by an alternative model of colonial relations typified by Mary Louise Pratt's understanding of the colonial "contact zone." Pratt (1992) defines the concept of contact zones as: "social spaces where highly disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). Such spaces are not unlike the "middle ground" described by Richard White (1991) in his study of colonial indigenous-white relations in the Great Lakes Region. Pratt goes on to describe how she uses the term to refer to "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable

conflict” (6). Turner presents a view of the West as a kind of *tabula rasa*, awaiting the arrival of civilization; Pratt's contact zones are much more complex spaces where the trope of *translatio imperii*, the continual westward movement of Empire, is continually placed in question. Turner's thesis enacts the myth of the westward course of empire, assuming the necessary triumph of Eurocentrism in the unconquered western territories. Of course, Turner announced his theory at precisely the moment that the frontier was declared “closed” and this is no coincidence. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam remark in their introduction to *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (2000), Eurocentrism is the vestigial worldview of colonialism that remains even after formal colonialism has ended; further, Eurocentric discourse projects a linear historical trajectory leading from one empire to the next and “attributes to the 'West' and inherent progress towards democratic institutions” (2). What they call the “Plato to NATO” paradigm of Eurocentrism identifies historical progress with European progress (14), just as Turner does.

If for Turner the West is a shrinking zone always one settlement away from the frontier, for Shohat and Stam the West is a no less elusive place but one clearly located in discourse. In their discussion of the constitutive Eurocentrism of Western films, they note the many titles of Hollywood Westerns that include the names of European-designed state borders – such as *Colorado Territory* (1949) or *Oklahoma Kid* (1939) – while in fact many states and natural environmental features (such as rivers and mountain ranges) carry indigenous names. Other titles that gesture overtly to westward expansion, such as *Westward Bound* (1959) and *The Way West* (1967), “relay the 'becoming' of the American nation, which reached its telos with the complete transmutation of nature into culture, a point fully reached only in the age of cinema” (117-8). For Shohat and Stam, then, the question “where is the West?” is easily answered: “the west was thus less a place than a movement, a going west, a moving horizon, a 'vaguely realizing westward' in Robert Frost's phrase, a tropism in both senses of the word – a movement toward and a figure of speech” (118).

### **The West: Old and New**

The discursive importance of the West was a foundational element for early American Studies scholars as they sought to define a distinctive methodology for the new academic discipline. Henry Nash Smith, in the preface to *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950), defines his key terms “myth” and “symbol” as words that “designate larger or smaller units of the same kind of thing, namely an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image.” He goes on: “The myths and symbols with which I deal have the further characteristic of being collective representations rather than the work of a single mind” (xi). The myth of the frontier is the idea with which he begins his classic study. He argues that St Jean de Crèvecoeur's question, “what is an American?” can be answered by what Nash Smith calls “the pull of a vacant continent drawing population westward ...” (3).

The myths and symbols used by successive generations of Americans reveal the impact of the US as “a continental empire” upon what he presents as “the American mind” (4). In Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964) the Virgin Land myth gives way to the pastoral motif of the West as a Garden, where progress is represented by technology in general, and the locomotive in particular, and the pastoral ideal promises opportunities for self-invention and a new life. The tensions that arise when the pastoral ideal conflicts with the destructive force of industrialization are explored by Marx through the conflict between nineteenth-century progressive and pastoral ideals. In this conflict Marx finds “the American view of life” (3), a distinctive “way of ordering meaning and value” (4), which is his subject. Marx is indebted to

Henry Nash Smith for his methodological focus on national consciousness through the analysis of myths and symbols. Marx's definition of a "cultural symbol" as "an image that conveys a special meaning (thought and feeling) to a large number of those who share the culture" (4) clearly draws on Nash Smith's earlier work. Marx's work also follows R. W. B. Lewis's *The American Adam: Innocence, Tradition, and Tragedy in the Nineteenth Century* (1955), which traces a distinctive American style of writing to the experience of the "newness" of the nation, represented by the wilderness of the frontier. For Lewis, the consciousness of the nineteenth-century American is akin to that of a "new Adam" perpetually struggling to separate from the corrupt world of the historical past. Among canonical writers like Emerson, Hawthorne, Henry James, Melville, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, as well as lesser-known writers such as George Bancroft, Horace Bushnell, Orestes Brownson, and Theodore Parker, Lewis finds a common engagement with the prospect of an American future that is unburdened by the past.

Richard Slotkin's trilogy dealing with the history of US national mythology begins with *Regeneration Through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (1973), where he argues that US culture is characterized by attitudes, values, rituals, and traditions that can be traced back to the historical experiences of the settlers who violently displaced native communities as they established their frontier towns. Historical experience becomes symbolic myth which legitimates and perpetuates particular values and behaviors. In *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (1992), Slotkin shows how vigilante violence is rationalized through western myths, such as those of the "winning fo the West," the outlaw gunfighter, and the lawless Wild West. The racialized nature of vigilante violence is made clear in Ken Gonzales-Day's study *Lynching in the West, 1850-1935* (2006), where he shows the frequency with which Latinos but also Native Americans and Asians were lynched in California. This personalized vigilante violence, the right to take the law into one's own hands to seek private justice, Slotkin links with the issue of race to explore, not so much "the American mind" which interested Henry Nash Smith, but the particular power of US national mythology to perpetuate destructive domestic and foreign policies. He explores the western myth in relation to the Philippine-American War, the Cold War, and the My Lai massacre. In the second volume of his trilogy, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890* (1992), Slotkin argues that the myth of westward expansion, together with the powerful discourse of Anglo-Saxon racial purity, was a key factor in the promotion of America's imperial image through the late nineteenth century. Like earlier Americanists, Nash Smith, Lewis, and Marx, Slotkin ranges widely in his discussions of both "high" and popular culture. But where earlier scholars sought to analyze a national consciousness or "American mind" Slotkin states clearly that his interest is in the operations of cultural ideology. He offers then not an explanation of "Americanness" but a political critique and revisionist historiography of the US. Annette Kolodny's work brings a feminist critique to these issues of ideology and mythological legacy. In *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) she examines the troping in exploration narratives of the land as female, the explorer as male, and conquest as rape; in *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (1984) she looks to women's appropriation of frontier experience in a feminine tradition of western writing.

Slotkin's monumental work on the legacy of the western "savagery versus civilization" mythology, and the ideological freight borne by this trope, has been very influential on later directions of scholarship on the West in general and popular westerns in particular. Kim Newman (1990) observes that "[w]hile couched in terms of the coming of civilization, the rise of law and order or the establishment of community values, the Western is essentially about conquest. Cavalries conquer the Indians, pioneers conquer the wilderness, lawmen conquer

outlaws and individuals conquer their circumstances. But with each conquest, another stretch of territory, whether geographical or philosophical, comes under the hegemony of the United States of America" (1). As Shohat and Stam in their work on Eurocentrism argue, the ideological premise of the western genre is based on making indigenous people appear to be invaders in their own land, as enemies of western progress, presented with "elegaic nostalgia" and "thanatological tenderness" (118) towards this now-vanished race. In contrast to the elimination of these enemies of national progress and Manifest Destiny, a happy ending is reserved for those European characters who, in the course of the narrative, come to embody the West and its values of progress and improvement. Later westerns critiqued the expansionist narrative privileged in earlier westerns by John Ford and others; perhaps the most sensational of these later revisionary films is Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), based on E. Annie Proulx's 1997 story. The popular western is, like much American cultural production, ambivalent. John Carlos Rowe opens his study of *Literary Culture and US Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (2000) with the observation that if Americans are variously shaped by "a powerful imperial desire and a profound anti-colonial temper" (3) then so too are the literary and cultural texts produced by this ambivalence within the discursive matrix of national identifications.

The West continues to play an important national exceptionalist role, especially in terms of the national imagery through which the US represents itself to itself. Richard Drinnon, in *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building* (1980), traces the genealogy of what he calls John Adams's "messianic nationalism" (76) back to the Puritan massacre of the Pequots and forward to the western conquest or "Indian Wars" and later to US colonial conflicts in the Pacific such as the Philippine-American War. He writes: "With ... a gentle stir the pigments of Indian-hating shaded off into coolie-hating, the Chinese exclusion act (1882) and the 'Yellow Peril' hysteria at the turn of the century" (221). In each case, Drinnon emphasizes, the threat posed by the enemy takes on apocalyptic dimensions. The idea that the US learned colonizing strategies early, and repeatedly used them on both internal or domestic and external or extraterritorial communities that were marked for elimination, is developed by John Carlos Rowe in *Literary Culture and US Imperialism* within the complex situation of a new republic that was populated by a racially and ethnically diverse population making various claims to national rights and liberties. Rowe observes: "Virtually from the moment the original colonies defined themselves as a nation, there was an imperial project to restrict the meaning of the American by demonizing foreigners, in part by identifying them with the 'savagery' ascribed to Native and African Americans" (7). US nationalism and American colonialism are therefore linked not only in the literal historical sense that the New World colonies preceded the US nation but in a more profound sense that Richard Slotkin explores in his trilogy: that later cultural images, identities, and behaviors were established during the first 260 years of European settlement (1600-1860).

Internal colonialism and imperialist foreign policy were confused from the earliest nationalist period, not least because of the continental territorial ambitions of the new nation which were promoted and legitimized by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Rowe explicitly likens the elimination of indigenous peoples to the Holocaust: "Manifest Destiny proved to be our own 'Final Solution' to the 'problem' of native peoples, which is also relatively unique in modern imperialisms: that the purpose of territorial expansion is not to subjugate native peoples for the purposes of exploiting their labor but simply to remove them from useful colonial territory with the ultimate purpose of eliminating them and their lifeways altogether" (10). What does perhaps set US internal colonization apart from foreign policy, or external imperialism, is the relative emphasis upon the acquisition, settlement, control, and possession of land. The domestic expansion of the nation into the western territories of the North American continent was motivated by the acquisition of land, and by the control of commerce



and trade routes that acquisition made possible.

The emphasis upon the West as a place, as territory or land to be conquered, settled, and possessed, is one of the primary characteristics of the "New West Studies." Patricia Nelson Limerick, in the volume she co-edited, *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (1991), provides a virtual manifesto of the new approach. She lists six points at which "new western historians" depart from their predecessors. First is the definition of where the West is located: in the trans-Mississippi geographical region west of the 100th meridian. Second is the rejection of the term "frontier" to describe the process of settlement. Third is the development of an alternative vocabulary comprised of terms such as conquest, colonization, imperialism, exploitation, and expansionism, with a corresponding interest in the diverse communities involved in the process of settlement: women as well as men, indigenous peoples, Hispanic, Asian, African-Americans as well as Europeans, in relations with each other and the natural environment. Fourth is the rejection of any chronological disruption of the history of the West by dividing it into "old" and "new"; the notion of an end to the frontier is rejected and the early history of the western region is seen as continuous with contemporary histories. Fifth is the rejection of the rhetoric of progress and improvement in favor of an approach that recognizes the destructive impact of some aspects of western history. Linked closely to this refusal of optimistic national narratives is the sixth and final point: that new western historians make no claim to a neutral or objective approach to their subject. This landmark collection includes essays by leading scholars of the New West Studies: Richard White, Peggy Pascoe, Brian W. Dippie, and Donald Worster.

Donald E. Worster, one of the best-known of the "new" western environmental historians, issued the following call in his 1985 book, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*:

The West is still supposed, in popular thinking, to be a land of untrammelled freedom, and in some of its corners it may be just that. However, that is not all it is, is not even the more important part of what it is. The American West is also more consistently, and more decisively, a land of authority and restraint, of class and exploitation, and ultimately of imperial power. The time has come to brush away the obscuring mythologies and the old lost ideals and to concentrate on that achieved reality (4).

Writing about the Great Valley of California, he describes the culture and society of the West as based upon a managerial and exploitative, highly technological relationship with nature, what Worster calls "a modern *hydraulic society*" (7): a "techno-economic order imposed for the purpose of mastering a difficult environment" (6), a "coercive, monolithic, and hierarchical system, ruled by a power elite based on ownership of capital and expertise" (7). Worster's argument does not end here. Taking up the image of the West as a colony of the American East, first proposed by Bernard DeVoto in 1934, he presents the West as "a principal seat of the world-circling American Empire" (15) and asks how the imperial West arose out of the desert and what the implications are for the mythology of western democracy and freedom.

The rhetoric of democracy and the practicalities of expansionism were complicated by issues of race; in particular, the contradictory desire to possess western territory without incorporating the people living in those territories into the US nation. How to expand territorially while maintaining European racial purity was a problem taken up, as John Carlos Rowe (2000) explains, by anti-imperialist groups in the mid-nineteenth century who were opposed to imperialism yet overtly racist. "Rather than defending the rights of foreigners against imperialist aggression, most nineteenth-century Americans upheld ideas of 'American' racial purity against the 'inferiority' of such foreigners" (8). Peggy Pascoe takes up the

twinned issues of gender and sexuality in her 1990 study, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*. She examines, through four case studies of female moral reformers, the class and racial assumptions inherent in the myth of the white woman as an agent of civilization in the West. In her most recent book, Pascoe addresses the history of miscegenation laws in the West and elsewhere, to underline relationships among race, gender, sexuality, and class and the naturalizing of these values through ideological practices of white supremacy. Miscegenation and the allied problem of ensuring the "whiteness" of the West focussed anxieties about the racial identities of future generations of American citizens. June Namias, in her study of captivity narratives *White Captives* (1993), points out that it was only from the 1830s that captive women were depicted as sexual victims. Namias suggests that this shift in emphasis arises from well-publicized cases of female captives who chose to stay with their Native husbands rather than return to white society. As Namias argues, "Once the sexual boundary was crossed [by women who took and remained with Indian husbands], a political boundary was crossed as well. The fate of the next American generation, in fact the fate of America's mission on the frontier was at risk" (112). This anxiety is linked to the capacity of women and families to legitimize the white claim to the land. The control of women and their reproductive capacity is intimately linked to the validation of white settlement and the claim to the future control of the land in the interests of white supremacy.. The racial identity of those coming into the new nation was policed by immigration and naturalization laws that controlled the racial profile of the national body politic: from the Naturalization Act of 1790, which set out the terms of citizenship for free white persons of good moral character, to the McCurrnan-Walters Act of 1952.

The first laws to restrict migration by a particular racial group were the Chinese exclusion laws, first introduced in the mid-1870s. As Catherine Lee (2003) cogently explains, the settling of the West in the latter part of the nineteenth century involved contradictory demands: that cheap temporary labor be available for the work of building such infrastructure as the Transcontinental Railway and that permanent settlements be comprised of white families to ensure the continuity of political, economic, and nationalistic ties with the East Coast. Lee's study shows how Chinese prostitutes served both demands by ensuring that Chinese men neither formed families with white women nor produced mixed-race families that would "taint" the national bloodstock (11-16). George Anthony Peffer's study of the 1875 Page Law, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here* (1999), takes its title from the claim made by Judge Lorenzo Sawyer of the US Circuit Court, who asserted that if Chinese men did not bring their women to the US then "... they would never multiply. ... When the Chinaman comes here and don't bring his wife out here, sooner or later he dies like a worn out steam engine; he is simply a machine, and don't leave two or three or half dozen children to fill his place" (108-9). The ideological link between race and gender is clear: to control one requires control of the other. The mixed-race subject, akin to Gloria Anzaldúa's "mestiza," is undesirable as a dangerous blurring of racial categories. Indeed, in her 1987 essay "*La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness*," Anzaldúa describes "a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" as the particular strength of the *mestiza* who "learns to be Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures" (79). Colonialist and white supremacist hegemony mediates Anzaldúa self-representations as variously "American," "Mexican," or "Native"; similarly, the heteronormative imperatives constitutive of those colonialist myths mediate her "queer" lesbian subject position. In her scholarly and creative work alike, Anzaldúa uses the language of empire to contest, from a Chicana perspective, the dominant ideologies of colonialism, juxtaposing the mythology of Manifest Destiny with Mexican and indigenous narratives of dispossession and genocide.

At the time of European contact in the late fifteenth century North America was home to thousands of indigenous tribal communities. What followed was a lengthy process of conquest, genocide, and annexation as European colonial powers established settlements that became the continental United States. David Stannard in his book *American Holocaust* (1993) claims that 100 million indigenous people were subject to genocidal policies as the European conquest of the Americas unfolded; this number of casualties is disputed by critics such as R. J. Rummel who, in *Death by Government* (1994), argues that between 2 and 15 million people died as a consequence of colonization. The end of the Indian Wars is usually marked by the massacre of 300 unarmed Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1876. The Seventh Cavalry, reinforced after their defeat under Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn earlier that year, brought the military conquest of the western tribes to a conclusion. The "old" West Studies assumed that, with the closing of the frontier and the conclusion of the "Indian Wars," "the West" was won and finished. An important dimension of the "new" West Studies is the refusal of this chronology and awareness of the inescapable fact that indigenous tribes did not disappear as the myth of the "Vanishing American" suggested. Not only is the contemporary West peopled by native communities that grow despite the manifold difficulties of poverty and widespread discrimination but scholarly reappraisal of indigenous-white relations since the period of contact emphasises the active agency expressed by indigenous communities in their attempts to engage with and to shape the catastrophic changes that contact and conquest have brought.

The indigenous response to the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which rationalized the often violent appropriation of tribal lands, refuses to situate native people as the passive victims of this ideology of divinely-sanctioned US expansionism. Rather, indigenous writers turned the rhetoric of American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny against the white invaders. Like African-American writers who used the vocabulary of US democracy to denounce the institution of slavery, native writers like Elias Boudinot (Cherokee) and William Apess (Pequot) used the discourse of Manifest Destiny to critique the practices of tribal removal and forced assimilation. Apess's autobiography, *A Son of the Forest* (1829), was first published during the period of the Indian Removal Act (1830). In this and other works, Apess contrasts the Christian rhetoric of "savagery versus civilization" with a history of European atrocities and injustices against the native tribes. He ruthlessly exposes the fact that race forms an impenetrable barrier to equality for all native people; in one of the most affecting passages of his autobiography, Apess spells out his efforts to become what white "civilization" demands; but despite these efforts, including his military service in the War of 1812, his conversion to Christianity, and his ordination as a Methodist minister, still he is treated as a member of an inferior race, a quality he is powerless to change. Indeed, as Reginald Horsman (1981) makes clear in *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism*, by 1850 US expansion was located within a powerful discourse of Anglo-Saxon superiority and inevitable racial destiny. Apess echoes the sentiments of Samson Occum (Mohegan) who, in his "Narrative" (1768), explains his experience of blatant discrimination: "I *must say*, 'I believe it is because I am a poor Indian'. I Can't help that God has made me So; I did not make my self so.-" (947). Apess questions the Christian commitment of white settlers and so subverts the divine sanction for expansion provided by Manifest Destiny: "O thou pretended hypocritical Christian, whoever thou art, to say it was the design of God that we should murder and slay one another because we have the power" (279).

The willingness of some native leaders to cooperate with white demands for assimilation is evident in the disillusionment of Apess and Occum, who finally confront the immovable obstacle of white supremacy. Elias Boudinot, a signatory to the Treaty of Echota (1835), came to the conclusion that only removal offered and promise of Cherokee survival. Boudinot's "An Address to the Whites" (1826) linked the US democratic experiment with the

Manifest Destiny of tribal people, arguing that “on [the Cherokee] destiny hangs the destiny of many nations. If she completes her civilization - then may we hope that all our nations will - then, indeed, may true patriots be encouraged in their efforts to make this world of the West, one continuous abode of enlightened, free, and happy people” (1800). As Michael Paul Rogin observes in *Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (1975), “The Indian was one symbol of divided America. He may have posed a danger to inner harmony and economic growth; he posed no danger to the Union. Guilt and aggression generated American fears of Indian war and slave insurrection; the imagined ‘internecine’ military threats were largely fantastic” (296). Works such as Robert Berkhofer's *The White Man's Indian* (1978) focussed upon the nature of these “fantastic” images. Berkhofer argues that, from the earliest colonial period, Europeans simplified the complex and diverse indigenous communities of North America into a single racial group, “the savage,” and named them by the common term “Indian” in order to solidify this categorization. The most powerful contemporary analysis of “the Indian” is offered by Anishinaabe writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor.

Vizenor's early collection *The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa* (1972) is ironically titled because the “Chippewa” were the object of colonial naming; the people thus named called themselves “Anishinaabeg.” In essays such as “The Sacred Names Were Changed” and “Something the White Man Named” Vizenor explains how “[t]he woodland identity of the people was homogenized in patent histories” (7) and in the imposed name “*indian*”; he describes the ideological freight borne by indigenous people via the word “*indian*,” which “is a heavy burden to the *oshki anishinabe* because white people know more about the *indian* they invented than anyone” (15-16). In Vizenor's work, the term “Indian” (which he always writes in lowercase italics to emphasize the artificiality of the category) is a primary strategy in what he calls the “word wars.” Every time an indigenous person is asked “Are you an Indian?” they are engaged in a discursive conflict over subject positioning within a situation of ongoing colonization. The word wars that are fought in print and celluloid as well as everyday encounters are waged for control over how history is interpreted and disseminated: no white people want to hear the true stories of massacre and genocide that still live on in native memory so mainstream media perpetuate false images of native savagery and white civilization, focussed on the figure of the “*indian*.” Vizenor's work is directed against these images and the colonialist vocabulary that sustains them. The narrator of his story “Sand Creek Survivors” (1981), demands passionately that “We should pull these words down, beat them on altars until the truth is revealed, beat the sweet phrases from the institutions that have disguised the horrors of racism ... drive the word pains and agonies of the heart into the cold. ... We are the victims of these words used to cover the political violence and white horrors in the memories of the tribes. ... Hear these primal screams, the tribes scream with the trees and rivers, from diseases, the massacres and mutilations of the heart. ... racist isolation and the repression of the heart in white schools and institutions” (37).

In his 1994 book, *Manifest Manners*, Vizenor engages the ideology of Manifest Destiny head on. The cover of the first edition features Andy Warhol's silk screen portrait of Russell Means, captioned “This is not an Indian.” Vizenor gestures towards Magritte's painting “This is not a pipe” to underline that this image must not be taken for reality. The “*indian*” is a simulation, in Baudrillard's sense of an image with no external referent. The Indian does not exist in nature but is purely a set of stereotypes and images representing colonialist desires and fantasies. The “manifest manners” of Vizenor's title demand that real living individuals be rendered invisible and mute in favor of the manufactured simulations of the Indian that meet white supremacist notions of “savage authenticity.” The discourse of authenticity sustains the illusion that only “*indians*” are real. A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff (1985) explains: “In Vizenor's view, whites invented ‘Indian’ as a new identity for tribal people in

order to separate them from their ancient tribal traditions. To survive this cultural genocide, tribal people responded by inventing new pan-Indian creeds, ceremonies, and customs that have blinded them and whites to their true tribal heritages. Only through the visions and dreams of tricksters and shamans can both tribal people and whites be led to the truth. Vizenor sees his literary role as that of illuminating both the sham of contemporary 'Indianness' and the power of vision and dream to restore tribal values" (73).

Manifest Destiny, the ideological rationale and legitimation of race war, dispossession, and removal (or what would now be called "ethnic cleansing"), operates as Vizenor so incisively shows through a powerful set of discursive practices but also through everyday gestures and modes of address: "manners." The expansion of the US was made possible through slave labor, genocide, and annexation of western lands held by Mexico, Spain, and thousands of autonomous tribes. To return to the question with which I began: where is the West? and the allied query, when was the West? Studies of US expansion and the myth of Manifest Destiny show us that the West is as much "now" as it was "then." It is both "here" and "there" -- historian Richard White begins his book 1993 *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West* with the claim "The boundaries of the American West are a series of doors pretending to be walls" (3) -- and indeed wherever we encounter the political, economic, and cultural reach of the US Empire. The shift from "Old" to "New" West Studies shows us that attention to the particularities of migration histories (voluntary and coerced), within the critical context of US cultural mythologies, has the capacity to transform the disciplinary paradigm of American Studies by allowing greater understanding of the operations of US imperialism, East and West.

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