Naturalizing Empire: Citizenship, Sovereignty, and Antebellum American Literature

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

in

Literature

by

Adam Charles Lewis

Committee in charge:
Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair
Professor John Blanco
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Lisa Lowe
Professor Rosaura Sánchez
Professor Nayan Shah

2011
The dissertation of Adam Charles Lewis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract of Dissertation</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship, Naturalization, and Narratives of National Identity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovereignty, Recognition, World-System</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons, Connections, and Exceptions of Empire</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antebellum Literary and Print Cultures</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE. Becoming Liberian: Colonization, Commerce,</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Sentiments of Sovereignty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberian Farming and Legitimate Commerce</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentimentalism and Recognition</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Delany, Emigration, and Black Sympathy</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO. Becoming Hawaiian: Historical Romance, Historiography,</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Hawaiian 1848</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debating Naturalization</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefacing the Pacific Historical Romance</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Fenimore Cooper’s Questions of Nationality and Citizenship</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiana and the Spanish Origins of U.S. Empire in Hawai‘i</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian Print Cultures</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE. Becoming Nicaraguan: Sensational Print Cultures</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the Filibuster Public Sphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Filibustering and Firing Squads</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensational Publics of Empire</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualizing the Filibuster Public Sphere</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION: The Imperial Palimpsests of Mark Twain</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1.1</th>
<th>“Nuisances” Going as “Missionaries,” “With Their Own Consent”</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.2</td>
<td>The Message. Plant Coffee</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.3</td>
<td>The Coffee Huller. The Peacemaker For Africa</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Battle of Rivas</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Explosion of the Steamer J. N. Scott Near Serapiqui, San Juan River, Whereby Fifty Filibusters Were Killed and Wounded</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3</td>
<td>General Walker Addressing the Citizens of New Orleans From the Portico of the St. Charles Hotel</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4</td>
<td>Arresting the Steamship “Northern Light”</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.5</td>
<td>Reception Room of General Walker, in the President’s House, City of Granada</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.6</td>
<td>General William Walker, President of Nicaragua</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.7</td>
<td>General Walker Reviewing Troops on the Grand Plaza, Granada, Capital of Nicaragua</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.8</td>
<td>Execution of Ponciano Corral, Minister of War, Nicaragua</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have contributed their support and encouragement throughout this project and deserve sincere thanks. I have been fortunate to work with a very supportive dissertation committee. Shelley Streeby has been a wonderful dissertation director. I appreciate her confidence in what I was trying to accomplish in this dissertation at its earliest formulation and for helping me realize that accomplishment. Her scholarship always continues to teach me something new and has significantly inspired my own. Lisa Lowe and Rosaura Sánchez have both been patient and insightful readers and mentors. Nayan Shah has taught me the necessity of expressing my ideas in person as well as in print. Conversations with Michael Davidson and Jody Blanco have provided insight and motivation to keep reading and writing.

I was very fortunate to receive research support from the Center for Global California Studies (formerly California Cultures in Comparative Perspective), the Bancroft Library, and the UC Center for New Racial Studies. Fellowships from the Department of Literature provided the uninterrupted time necessary to write the large majority of this work.

Friends and colleagues deserve thanks for support that extends well beyond reading and talking about the dissertation. I thank Jeff Gagnon, Joo Ok Kim, Chase Smith, Michelle Stuckey, and DJ Campbell for their encouragement and intellectual engagement at different stages of this project. I thank Benjamin Balthaser in particular for being a careful reader and critic of my work. John Washington’s curiosity in my research has helped me explain my project and led to wonderful conversations about
literature and history. Scott Boehm has been a close friend from the beginning and I am deeply grateful for our conversations during (and about) our time as graduate students at UCSD.

In many ways this project has its roots in the American Studies Department at the University of Minnesota. David Noble and Roderick Ferguson, in particular, have been and continue to be inspiring teachers and mentors: David—for his unpredictable creativity and unconventional teaching; Rod—for his intellectual rigor and ongoing support. Scott Laderman, Carol Miller, and Terry Collins each deserve recognition for the opportunities they opened up for me.

I also thank my entire family for the love and encouragement they have shown me. My father, Bill Lewis, and my mother, Gail Lewis, have both demonstrated unwavering love and support from many miles away. My uncle Chuck has been a role model in more ways that one. I thank him for telling me about American Studies at the U of M. Lastly, I thank Katie Montgomery, an wonderfully sympathetic, inspiring, and supportive partner over the past year. I feel very fortunate that she has become family.
CURRICULUM VITAE

2011  Ph.D. in Literature  
       University of California, San Diego

2011  Teaching Assistant, Dimensions of Culture Program  
       University of California, San Diego

2010  Dissertation Fellow (Quarter Long)  
       Literature Department, University of California, San Diego

2010  Graduate Student Fellow (Summer)  
       Center for New Racial Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

2010  Dissertation Fellow (Quarter Long)  
       Literature Department, University of California, San Diego

2009—2010  Lecturer, U.S. Literature, Department of Literature  
            University of California, San Diego

2009  Graduate Student Fellow (Summer)  
       California Cultures in Comparative University of California, San Diego

2009  Graduate Fellow (Summer)  
       Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

2009  Research Assistant, Department of Literature  
       University of California, San Diego

2007  C.Phil. in Literature  
       University of California, San Diego

2007  M.A. in Literatures in English  
       University of California, San Diego

2003  B.A. in American Studies  
       University of Minnesota

2004—2008  Teaching Assistant, Dimensions of Culture Program  
            University of California, San Diego

2003  Mulford Q. Sibley Senior Thesis Award  
       American Studies Department, University of Minnesota
2003 Editorial Assistant, Voices from the Gaps
   University of Minnesota

2003 Research Assistant, Department of American Studies
   University of Minnesota

2002 Undergraduate Scholar
   American Studies Department, University of Minnesota

2002 Teaching Assistant, General College
   University of Minnesota

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Nineteenth-century American literature
American Studies
Imperialism and empire
Print culture
Comparative race and ethnic studies
Visual culture

PUBLICATIONS

“Citizenship, Nationality, and Naturalizing Empire: The Pacific Historical Romances of James Fenimore Cooper and James Jackson Jarves.” Literature of the Early American Republic (forthcoming, fall 2012).

PAPERS AND CONFERENCES


“Print Cultures and Imperial Citizenship.” Dartmouth Institute on the Futures of American Studies, Hanover, NH, June 2009.


ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Naturalizing Empire: Citizenship, Sovereignty, and Antebellum American Literature

by

Adam Charles Lewis

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair

“Naturalizing Empire” examines processes of U.S. empire-building through a comparative analysis of U.S. American influence in Liberia, Hawai‘i, and Nicaragua in the mid-nineteenth century, focusing on cultural representations of agents of empire assuming or imposing different national identities to gain control of territory and establish networks of trade. I consider how issues of naturalization and sovereignty were bound up within different forms of literary and print culture in order to address the imperial and anti-imperial politics of both canonical and non-canonical literature. This dissertation extends recent scholarship in American literary and cultural studies that
examines forms of imperialism beyond the framework of the nation-state, focusing on actions distinct from (and even antagonistic to) the U.S. state and its official representatives. I address the relationship between antebellum culture and different imperial formations that involve selectively disclaiming U.S. national identity as well as controlling a politically independent territory as a means of configuring the U.S. as an exception to (and exceptional) empire.

Each chapter addresses particular genres of print culture, including the historical romance, sentimentalism, and cultures of sensation. In chapter one I examine sentimental writings about Liberia by Sarah Hale, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Helen Knight. In this chapter I also examine critiques of colonization in African American literature, specifically Martin Delany’s letters, speeches, and fiction. My second chapter focuses on the Pacific historical romances of James Fenimore Cooper and James Jackson Jarves. In contrast to these texts, I also examine the historiography of Native Hawaiian writers David Malo and Samuel Kamakau that challenged the U.S. presence in the Pacific. Finally, chapter three analyzes sensational stories of filibustering in Nicaragua and representations of the filibuster public sphere in the newspaper *El Nicaragüense* as well as *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. Taken as a whole, I suggest literary and other cultural representations of national identities and national boundaries, as well as the development of “American” literary genres, are in fact transnational formations that both facilitate and contest different forms of U.S. empire.
INTRODUCTION

John O’Sullivan’s 1845 essay “Annexation,” published in the United States Magazine and Democratic Review, is well known as the publication where the editor used the phrase “Manifest Destiny” to articulate the belief that the United States had a divinely-ordained mission “to overspread the continent, allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.” The principal focus of the essay is the U.S. annexation of Texas, which for O’Sullivan represented the culmination of natural processes rather than the violence of settler colonialism and territorial expansion. Mexico’s loss of Texas, according to O’Sullivan, was part of “the natural course of events,” and its subsequent annexation to the United States “was not only inevitable, but the most natural…thing in the world.”

Configuring empire-building as a natural process, this essay registers one of the ways in which manifest destiny and other nineteenth-century U.S. imperial formations involved a process of what I am calling “naturalizing empire,” the set of cultural, legal, political, and economic texts, policies, and actions through which settler colonialism and other forms of imperial expansion and control were rendered legitimate, consensual, and inevitable.

“Naturalizing Empire” takes a critical approach to this process, considering different examples of agents of U.S. empire assuming or imposing foreign identities as a means to gain control of a particular territory, establish transnational networks of trade, and manage and control particular racialized populations. While O’Sullivan’s essay

1 John L. O’Sullivan, “Annexation,” United States Magazine and Democratic Review 17 (July 1845): 5. There is some recent scholarship that suggests O’Sullivan is misattributed as the author of this essay and that Jane McManus Storm is in fact the author. See Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 20.
focuses on U.S. expansion across the North American continent, a central claim of this
dissertation is that U.S. empire-building before the Civil War had a much broader reach
throughout the world. This larger geographical context has not always been recognized
in American Studies scholarship, however, in part because of the unconventional forms,
processes, and tactics that characterize the different efforts to establish control and
exercise power in different overseas and hemispheric sites throughout the world. My
main examples attend to this larger cartography of empire and include the colonization
movement and the formation of Liberia in West Africa; U.S. Americans pledging
allegiance to the Hawaiian King to encourage and enact the Māhele, or division of land;
and the filibusters led by William Walker who “became Nicaraguan” as they invaded and
occupied the Central American nation. Critically examining the different strategies and
the global geography of these examples of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. expansion, I seek
to add to recent work in both American and colonial and postcolonial studies that
reconsiders the temporal, spatial, and definitional boundaries of imperial expansion.²

Furthermore, I consider the role of different literary genres and forms of print
culture—including sentimental histories and novels, historical romances, and sensational
fiction, as well as newspapers, published speeches, petitions and histories—in both
facilitating and contesting these different imperial projects. Many of the canonical and
non-canonical forms of literary culture that I examine work to produce and naturalize

² See, for example, Bruce A. Harvey, American Geographics: U.S. National Narratives and the
Representation of the Non-Western World, 1830-1865 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); David
Kazanjian, The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early American
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), Stephanie LeMenager, Manifest and Other Destinies:
Territorial Fictions of the Nineteenth-Century United States (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004),
and Ann Laura Stoler, ed., Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History
different imperial formations while simultaneously insisting these formations are
decidedly not imperial. In particular, I focus on the ways in which genres such as
sentimentalism, the historical romance, and sensational fiction can function to articulate
emergent political and economic ideals of liberalism—including private property and
wage labor, as well as a discourse of rights, a public sphere, and possessive
individualism—as a means of marking these examples of U.S. empire-building as an
exception to other forms of imperial expansion and settler colonialism.\(^3\) Thus, I
explicitly consider how these different genres narrate the process of naturalizing empire
by foregrounding liberal discourses of citizenship, sovereignty, and rights (both economic
and political) as a mode of disaffiliation from the U.S. nation-state. However, I also
attend to different forms of print culture, including published letters and speeches,
petitions, and histories as they formulate and express oppositions and alternatives to these
genres of liberalism working to naturalize empire.

I call this process “naturalizing empire” for three primary reasons. For one, it
explicitly involves the legal form or process of naturalization—of electively,\(^3\)

---

consensually, and at times coercively becoming a citizen or subject of another sovereign state. “Naturalization,” according to Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary*, involved the “act of investing an alien with the rights and privileges of a native subject or citizen.”

Naturalization, shifting formations of citizenship, and national belonging, I argue, are central to understanding U.S. expansion in the mid-nineteenth century. The American Colonization Movement (ACS), in encouraging the “consensual” emigration of black Americans to Liberia, envisioned the formation of Liberian citizens, new men and women secure in both their political and racial identities in the new nation. White Americans supporting this project of colonization imagined these black Americans becoming naturalized Liberians as a way to resolve various contradictions of racial and national identity at home in the United States. In Hawai‘i throughout the 1840s, hundreds of white U.S. Americans took an oath of allegiance to King Kamehameha III, effectively becoming naturalized Hawaiian subjects. They assumed this new national identity principally to oversee the division of land on the islands as well as to ensure their own privileged position to purchase the newly privatized land from their native-born compatriots. And similar to U.S. Americans becoming naturalized Hawaiians, William Walker and many of his fellow filibusters claimed to be naturalized Nicaraguan citizens in order to assume control of the Central American country. As we will see, “becoming Nicaraguan” represented an attempt to distance the filibusters from the U.S. government while simultaneously producing and appealing to a purportedly sympathetic U.S. public.

Taken together, these different examples demonstrate the ways in which U.S. empire-

---

building in the mid-nineteenth-century depended upon the appropriation or imposition of a foreign identity, of becoming a naturalized citizen or subject of a foreign nation. “Naturalizing Empire” considers the centrality of naturalization in the production of new subjects that enabled imperial expansion.

Second, “naturalizing empire” also involves the insistence that the territories and populations under the control of these imperial agents remain independent from the United States. When discussing California in “Annexation,” O’Sullivan momentarily equivocates about the inevitability of U.S. continental dominance. Insisting on the “natural right of self-government” for California to justify its independence from Mexico, he notes that “[w]hether they will then attach themselves to our Union or not, is not to be predicted with any certainty.”5 He then quickly asserts that commercial and technological developments such as the railroad and telegraph will ensure that California will become another united state at some point in the future. Yet in stressing temporary independence and political sovereignty—from a foreign power as well as the United States—he signals another tenet of naturalizing empire examined in this dissertation. That is, in the examples that follow—Liberia and the colonization movement, Hawai‘i and division of land, and filibustering in Nicaragua—there is a strong emphasis on the political independence of these territories from the United States. While eventual annexation of Texas or California may have seemed inevitable for O’Sullivan, this was not the case in the sites considered here. Quite the opposite, in fact. Proponents of empire in Liberia, Hawai‘i, and Nicaragua, as well as their supporters in the United States, all sought U.S. diplomatic recognition of the sovereignty of these different territories.

5 O’Sullivan, “Annexation.”
political entities, a tactic of empire that stands in marked contrast to direct annexation or complete colonial subordination. Naturalizing empire then also names a medium of reconstituting sovereignty, one that relied on liberal fictions of political equality among citizens or subjects, but also among states. As we will see, this emphasis on sovereignty and recognition marks a key feature in the exceptionalist logic of U.S. empire in the decades prior to the Civil War.

Finally, I use the term “naturalizing empire” to mark the ways in which the cultural and political work of naturalization and sovereignty seeks to configure these projects as something other than empire, imperialism, or colonialism. O’Sullivan’s invocation of nature in “Annexation” as the dominant framework of U.S. imperial expansion in the mid-nineteenth century rests on the disavowal of an official policy of colonization by the U.S. state. “If Texas became peopled with an American population,” writes O’Sullivan, “it was by no contrivance of our government.” Further, when he turns his attention from Texas to the increasing number of U.S. squatters and settlers in California, he insists that it has occurred “without agency of our government, without responsibility of our people,” but rather because of “the natural flow of events.” The federal government disclaiming responsibility for settler colonial projects across and beyond the North American continent in the mid-nineteenth century served to represent the United States as an exception among imperial states. This disaffiliation of imperial expansion from the U.S. state represents a central component of naturalizing empire—the ways in which naturalization and sovereignty both served to refute charges that these different forms of expansion represented evidence of the U.S. as an empire. That is, the

---

6 Ibid.
examples of empire addressed in this dissertation are naturalized, or made to seem natural, in part through the espousal of the central tenets of liberal subject and state formation—citizenship and sovereignty—that function as an explicit contrast with conventionally recognized (i.e. European and, especially, British) colonialism. “Naturalizing empire,” then, represents an imperial formation that involves selectively disclaiming U.S. national identity as well as controlling a politically independent territory as a means of configuring the U.S. as an exception to (and exceptional) empire.

**Citizenship, Naturalization, and Narratives of Identity**

The legal act of naturalization implies a process of adopting the citizenship of a particular nation-state. U.S. citizenship, according to James Kettner, takes on “full legal form and force” in the mid-nineteenth century. As Kettner notes, theories of contractual and volitional allegiance were foundational to U.S. citizenship. American colonists, he writes, “took the model of the naturalized subject as their starting point, and they ultimately concluded that all allegiance ought to be considered the result of a contract resting on consent.” Therefore, citizenship—the political and legal embodiment of national identity—assumes a significant place in this dissertation, especially its role in facilitating and obscuring the different imperial formations I consider here. However, it is important to situate the concept of citizenship within the historical context of the antebellum United States. As William J. Novak points out in his discussion of the transformations of U.S. citizenship throughout the nineteenth century, “before Dred Scott

---


8 Ibid., 9.
and the Civil War, citizenship simply did not figure as a particularly significant part of that eminent discussion of American public law.” Citizenship, Novak continues, as “the fundamental constitutional category that marks the free and the unfree is fraught with difficulties in the case of nineteenth-century American public law,” and, I would argue, in the public sphere of print culture as well.\(^9\) Status and membership in specific communities—most notably along lines of race, gender, and class—significantly marked the gradations of freedom that informed social, legal, and political identities and relations in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. The notion of rights ensured through citizenship, in particular, did not necessarily imply a set of protections against coercive state power to ensure a baseline of negative liberty, but rather served to selectively protect the economic and other interests of privileged classes (white, male, land-holders) in the early national and antebellum periods. In other words, citizenship in early America was an identity in formation that by no means automatically guaranteed or protected rights of liberty or equality frequently enunciated in national and imperial discourses I examine here. Rather, it represented an abstract, formal legal category that did not stand in contradiction with the substantive inequalities of racism, patriarchy, and capital accumulation. In fact, in many ways citizenship served to codify and obfuscate these inequalities.

This historical context helps us understand how naturalization and citizenship could be mobilized in the service of empire in the mid-nineteenth century. U.S. Americans in Hawai‘i or Nicaragua insisted on their right to become citizens or subjects

of those nations and demanded an abstract or formal equality with the native-born. However, their status—most frequently as white, male, and from the United States—allowed them to assume privileges and power over and above their new compatriots. Furthermore, white U.S. American supporters of black colonization in Liberia spoke frequently about the formal equality that would exist between (white) U.S. citizens and (black) Liberian citizens. Yet this abstract equality of U.S. and Liberian citizenship was obviously predicated upon the refusal among whites to accept black Americans on equal terms as citizens of the United States. Moreover, while the emphasis on naturalization stresses the centrality of the contract in relation to the political identity of citizenship, the rhetoric of rights, liberty, and equality that emerge across the different examples I examine principally refer to contracts as economic tools of capitalist exchange that facilitate the buying and selling of land and labor.\textsuperscript{10} Simply put, liberal notions of contractually-based citizenship inform a political subjectivity that allowed agents of empire to assume (Hawaiian, Nicaraguan) or impose (Liberian) different national identities while simultaneously maintaining configurations of power structured along lines of race, gender, class, and other markers of social identity in order to accumulate property, organize systems of racialized labor, and establish networks of trade.

Yet it is not U.S. citizenship and naturalization alone that need to be considered here; agents of empire imported or imposed these contractually-based notions of citizenship and allegiance on different national territories and political communities. The 1820 Constitution of the Liberian colony conferred all the “rights and privileges as are

enjoyed by the citizens of the United States” upon all settlers.\textsuperscript{11} When the separate colonies organized as a commonwealth in 1839, the new Constitution delegated rules regarding naturalization to the Legislature, asserting that “[a]ll persons now citizens of any part of the Commonwealth of Liberia shall continue to be so, and all colored persons emigrating from the United States of America…shall be entitled to all the privileges of citizens of Liberia,” a policy carried over into the 1847 constitution of the newly-independent Liberian republic.\textsuperscript{12} In Hawai‘i, a complex hierarchy of social classes—from the maka‘āinana (common people, or people of the land) to ali‘i (noble or chiefly rank)—defined the distribution of rights, duties, and responsibilities. While the U.S. Americans taking the oath to the King publically sought to level this caste system for the ostensible benefit of giving the right to own (and sell) land to the maka‘āinana, these markers of status and membership helped these “naturalized Hawaiians” ensure their own positions of power in controlling political and economic decisions. The maka‘āinana, as we shall see, presented a powerful critique of the naturalization policy allowing foreigners to become Hawaiian subjects, asserting their own definition of independence and national belonging. And while Walker insisted that the Nicaraguan Constitution of 1838 granted him and his men the right to “become Nicaraguans,” Central Americans rejected his interpretation of the naturalization laws of Nicaragua. The Minister plenipotentiary of Guatemala and El Salvador A. I. De Irissari, for instance, in a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Lewis Cass, says of Walker, “The man, whose course in that country was an exclusive one of assassination of the defenders of that country...alone

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 651.
could have alleged his right of citizenship in Nicaragua, and thereby held as dunces all men else on earth.”

What these contexts suggest is that U.S. notions of citizenship were not simply imposed in these contact zones. Rather, different conceptions of national identity and belonging conflicted, coalesced, and were struggled over. Simply put, the formation of U.S. citizenship took shape over the nineteenth century in part through these contexts and struggles of empire.

“Naturalizing Empire” thus engages and extends work in American Studies that explores the relationship between citizenship and empire. In *The Colonizing Trick*, for example, David Kazanjian characterizes what he calls “imperial citizenship” in part as an identity “in motion and in struggle,” constantly negotiating “the often ambivalent, always violent waxing and waning of racial formations.” Reading a passage from Charles Brockden Brown’s *Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist* (1803-1805) wherein the eponymous narrator appropriates and masters the voice of “a Mohock savage” as an allegory for the violence underscoring the Native American assimilation policies of the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century, Kazanjian demonstrates how imperial citizenship involves both a material and representational domination of racialized populations through the arrogation of their identities. Donning the voice, cultural practices, and identity of a racialized other functions as a means to efface the violence of imperial conquest, rationalizing domination by rendering that appropriation

---

as an enlightened act necessary in order to spread the ideals of U.S. culture and civilization. Moreover, as we will see, these shifting racial formations also intersect with specific national formations and national identities, which are also marked by ambivalence and histories of violence. Drawing on Kazanjian’s example, we can say that imperial citizenship exists at a threshold between U.S. territorial expansion and the peoples, lands, and nations it dispossesses and displaces, wherein the imperial citizen performs the identity (both racial and national) of the colonized and dispossessed, though not with any intention of giving up his or her position within the specific configurations of power, but rather as a means to consolidate and legitimate those relations of domination, and in doing so rendering them benign, innocent, legal, and natural.

While the definition of “naturalization” found in Webster’s Dictionary focuses solely on the legal act of becoming a citizen, the related verb “naturalize” has a more capacious definition that proves insightful and instructive here. In addition to granting aliens the rights of citizens, to “naturalize” also meant processes of acclimation, habituation, to make something “familiar by custom and habit.” Thus, to naturalize empire implies not only the assumption of another national identity as a means to claim rights, privileges, and ultimately establish and control foreign territory, but also to make familiar new social structures, customs, and habits as a means to gain and maintain control in those areas, including private property and law; new regimes of wage and slave labor; and new rules and protocols of comportment and behavior defining individuals and social relations. “Naturalization” in relation to imperial U.S. citizenship then represents a

---

15 For an alternative account, see, Philip Deloria, Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
double move, temporarily proclaiming a different national identity to occupy a foreign space and at the same time attempting to transform that foreign space by importing U.S. American people, social customs, and cultural practices structured in class and racial inequality and violence. Simultaneously apart from and a part of the United States, the different examples in “Naturalizing Empire” exemplify this double valence of naturalization and the productive instability and ambiguity of U.S. imperialism.\textsuperscript{16}

Miscegenation represents another facet of identity in relation to naturalizing empire that figures throughout the different literary and cultural texts I examine. Racial mixing—both social and sexual—abetted empire, either as a trope of conquest or as a threat to a homogenous and monolithic national identity that compelled the creation of new colonies to manage that threat. Fictional stories set in Hawai‘i and Nicaragua that include romantic unions between white U.S. men and native women symbolically stage one way these men “became Hawaiian” or “became Nicaraguan.” These marriage plots—what Shelley Streeby terms “international race romances”—naturalize empire by narrating processes of conquest, occupation, and control of foreign territories in terms of romance, desire, and consent rather than coercive force and violence, not to mention the decimation of native populations in places like Hawai‘i that resulted from sexual and other diseases introduced by U.S. and European men. James Jackson Jarves’s historical romance \textit{Kiana: A Tradition of Hawaii} (1857), which I examine in Chapter Two,\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} defines “naturalize” in these multiple ways as well. For one, it means “to admit (a foreigner or immigrant) to the position and rights of citizenship; to invest with the privileges of a native-born subject.” It also means “to make a thing native, common, or fitting; to put (something foreign) on a level with what is native” and “to become fully settled or established in a place or in new surroundings.” See also, Pricilla Wald, “Naturalization,” in Burgett and Hendler, \textit{Keywords for American Cultural Studies} 170-74.
demonstrates how “some authors map a myth of national origin by locating their novels and concerns about racial heterogeneity in the distant past.” However, the failed marriage or disrupted romance stages anxieties and fears about the loss of national and racial identity for white male agents of empire becoming Hawaiian or Nicaraguan through romantic and sexual unions with native women. This loss of national and racial identity also figures centrally in the colonization literature I examine in Chapter One. That is, I trace how this literature reveals the ways in which the rejection of or refusal to recognize miscegenation—of unions, most often coerced and violent, between black women and white men—in United States informs and influences the formation of Liberia and Liberians. Thus, on the one hand “mixed marriages and unions were used in strategies of governance that joined sexual conquest with other forms of domination.” Yet on the other hand, the “merging of blood, which threatens to dissolve difference,” as Deborah Rosenthal observes, “represents a loss or destabilization of identity.” These narratives of interracial unions register the potential threatened loss of self that miscegenation represented.

These articulations of imperial citizenship as a means of naturalizing empire, therefore, produced a number of contradictions, fears, and anxieties—what might be called the uncanny of imperial citizenship. Thus, becoming Nicaraguan, Hawaiian, or Liberian also raised concerns about the instability and potential loss of national, racial,

---

gender, and other social identities that structured and maintained configurations of power.

In *Constituting Americans*, Priscilla Wald addresses “national and personal narratives of identity” that register the anxieties troubling or haunting the formation of national identity.\(^{20}\) According to Wald, “National narratives of identity seek to harness the anxiety surrounding questions of personhood, but what they leave out resurfaces when the experiences of individuals conspicuously fail to conform to the definition of personhood offered in the narrative.”\(^{21}\) There is a discrepancy or disjunction in the formation of national identity – a gap, a space of instability, insecurity, and anxiety about the fixity, stability, or essence of a national self that in turn may raise questions about ostensibly fixed and stable markers of identity and status more broadly.

Similar and related to nation-making, empire-building represents a process that also stresses this space of dislocation, of an anxious estrangement from an emergent liberal ideology of personhood that presumed or presupposed demarcated boundaries of nation, race, gender, and sexuality. According to Amy Kaplan’s very useful definition, imperialism is “a network of power relations that changes over space and time and is riddled with instability, ambiguity, and disorder, rather than a monolithic system of domination.” U.S. imperialism, she continues, “relied on the creation of ambiguous spaces that were not quite foreign nor domestic, and it also created vast deterritorialized arenas in which to exercise military, economic, and cultural power divorced from


\(^{21}\) Ibid., 10.
political annexation.” In the different examples I address, the dominant, self-assured assertions of naturalizing empire—of ostensibly disavowing U.S. national identity and appropriating a foreign identity—betray the permeability of identity and register the anxieties surrounding that loss of self. Thus, in the cultural work of naturalization as a technology of empire, we can also trace the precariousness of such a tactic.

With the colonization movement, for instance, the formation of a new imperial subject—the process of becoming Liberian—does not betray the anxious estrangement of selfhood of black colonists so much as white U.S. Americans promoting their departure from the United States. Whites promoting blacks to become Liberian, I argue, has to do with a desire to establish networks of trade, but also with their anxieties about the instability of racial and sexual boundaries of U.S. national identity. Mixed-race persons in the antebellum United States, as we will see, rupture official narratives of national identity; they figure as an uncanny presence haunting U.S. American identity, and sentimental narratives of colonization represent an effort to purge that (un)familiar presence from the national selfhood. With the moment of Māhele, I argue white U.S. Americans becoming Hawaiian as they take an oath of allegiance to King Kamehameha III represents an imperial assertion of selfhood that entails a loss of U.S. national identity, an uncanny estrangement that accompanies efforts to exercise power over land, people, and resources through a particular appropriation of Hawaiian identity. The Pacific historical romances of James Fenimore Cooper and James Jackson Jarves narrate this tactic of empire while simultaneously engaging its potential implications for U.S.

---

national and white racial identity in particular, as well as liberal subjectivity more generally. As with the situation in Hawai‘i, filibustering represents a similar process of naturalizing empire as U.S. Americans proclaimed themselves “naturalized Nicaraguans.” Yet this strategy is rent with an anxious sense of losing not only a national but a personal or individual selfhood or subjectivity as well. These fears emerge in particular in the sensational fictions set in Nicaragua during Walker’s temporary control of the country that I address in Chapter Three.

**Sovereignty, Recognition, World-System**

In addition to examining the relationship between empire and the liberal subjectivity of citizenship, I also attend to the related relationship between empire and liberal conceptions of modern sovereignty. Similar to citizenship and naturalization, sovereignty and recognition play a central role in different articulations of U.S. empire before the Civil War. Formal equality among sovereign states under the law of nations represents a liberal norm of modern international law dating back to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Independence of the North American colonies from Great Britain, Teemu Ruskola notes, “was premised on the view that not only all men but all states were born to be equal.” Recognition of state sovereignty by other states marked the legitimacy of that claim to formal equality. As the historical sociologist and world-systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein notes, sovereignty in modernity refers on the one hand to the source of authority that justifies the exercise of power within a particular political community or state, while on the other hand it signifies a claim of legitimacy

---

among states within the interstate system, what was frequently referred to in the nineteenth century as “the family of nations.” The legitimacy of a nation’s status as sovereign within the interstate system depends upon the recognition of that claim by other states, the different members of the family of nations.

Extrapolating his theory of recognition and subjectivity to this international order in *The Philosophy of Right* (1821), for example, Hegel writes, “Just as the individual person is not real unless related to others, so the state is not really individual unless related to other states…. [I]t is essential for its completeness that [the state] be recognized by others.” He claims that European states constitute a “family” “by virtue of the universal principle of their legislation, their ethical observances, and their civilization.” Hegel proceeds to cast this system of recognition of states and inclusion in the family of nations in racialized terms, asserting “a nomadic people” exhibit a “lower grade of civilization,” therefore refuting any claim those people constitute a state worthy of recognition. This racist assumption of inferior culture, political organization, and “civilization” served as a central justification for European and Euro-American conquest and colonization. Colonies, according to Wallerstein, are “administrative units that are defined as non-sovereign and fall under the jurisdiction of another state, normally distant from it.” Simply put, in modernity colonies are denied the recognition necessary for

---


participation as formally equal members of the family of nations, a denial rooted in ideologies of racial and cultural difference.

Therefore, when U.S. Americans in Hawai‘i sought to ensure the Kingdom’s independence from England, France, and the United States, when Walker sought (and temporarily gained) diplomatic recognition of his filibuster regime in Nicaragua from the U.S., and when Helen Cross Knight identified Liberia’s ambiguous political identity as “a half-breed, neither a recognized Colony of the United States, nor an independent and recognized State,” they all invoked concepts of sovereignty and recognition to distance and differentiate their imperial ventures from traditional or conventionally-understood definitions of colonization.27 These examples demonstrate how in addition to territorial acquisition and annexation, “American imperialism has also consisted of efforts to impose limits on expansion: to draw lines around what counts as properly ‘national’ territory…and even to circumscribe national power,” according to Cristina Dufy Burnett. In many circumstances, including the ones examined here, “U.S. officials insisted on disclaiming sovereignty, and on denying that such places had become part of the ‘territorial domain’ of the United States.”28 U.S. Americans’ efforts to exercise control in Liberia, Hawai‘i, and Nicaragua throughout the 1840s and 1850s without annexation to the U.S. nation or political subjection as a colonial dependency highlight the various ways in which this emergent conception of a liberal international order facilitated and

cloaked the operations of empire in part through the affirmation of political autonomy and recognition of national sovereignty.

Related to these political and legal concepts that help situate modern U.S. diplomacy as a part of the interdependencies of liberalism and empire is the increasing significance of Liberia, Nicaragua, and Hawai‘i within the expanding global system of trade and commerce. As a political theory, liberalism is structured in relation to a capitalist political economy, an economic system consolidating its global reach during this era. In addition to his characterization of the mid-nineteenth century as the “era of liberal triumph,” Eric Hobsbawm has argued that this period was also the time when “industrial capitalism became a genuine world economy.”

Various U.S. schemes to wrest control of different territories from both rival world powers and local peoples signal different efforts to help consolidate that world economy while at the same time gaining a privileged position within it. Supporters of Liberian colonization imagined that the introduction of wage labor on African farms established by black colonists would have a profound influence on transatlantic trade, as the native West Africans would supposedly voluntarily abandon their participation in the illegal slave trade in favor of agricultural work on farms, supplanting chattel slaves for coffee and sugar as primary exports. Similar to Liberia, the institution of private property held out the possibility for the Hawaiian nation to become an exporter of sugar, with sugar plantations first emerging on the islands in the 1840s and 1850s. With the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850 between the U.S. and Great Britain that ensured any canal built through Nicaragua “may forever be open and free, and the capital invested therein secure,” this Central American country

---

was imagined as the future hub of global commercial routes, linking the economic
geographies of the transatlantic and transpacific in what Marx called “the emporia of
world commerce.” Recognition of national sovereignty, I argue, served as an important
means of establishing these trade routes and commodity chains of the world-system while
skirting the responsibilities (and identity) of a colonial state.

Comparisons, Connections, and Exceptions of Empire

In focusing on the different examples of Liberia and the colonization movement,
Hawai‘i and the privatization of land, and filibustering in Nicaragua, “Naturalizing
Empire” seeks to contribute to cultural and literary studies of U.S. race and empire that
deploy comparative frameworks of analysis. Gretchen Murphy’s work, for example,
“extends and engages recent scholarship on comparative racialization and globalizing
U.S. literary studies” by examining non-state articulations of imperial power and thus the
instability of the U.S. nation as well as the ambiguous positions of different agents and
opponents of empire. Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan, to take another
example, emphasize the politics of imperial comparison to stress “a feature of
colonization that contemporary studies of colonialisms and empires have since lost or
discarded, namely that different notions of a colony and who its members were coexisted,
were contested, and were actively compared.” The different imperial formations they

---

30 Karl Marx, “The Global Consequences of the Discovery of Gold in California,” in The Karl
31 Gretchen Murphy, Shadowing the White Man’s Burden: U.S. Imperialism and the Problem of
32 Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan, “Introduction: Refiguring Imperial Terrains,”
Imperial Formations. Ed. Stoler, McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue. (Santa Fe: School For Advanced
discuss demonstrate “a strikingly broad scope of imperial comparison developed through the exchange of principles, practices, and technologies between empires in their metropolitan regions and far-flung domains.”

“Naturalizing Empire” considers Liberia, Hawai‘i, and Nicaragua as examples of empire-building, attending to both their points of similarity and difference. This comparative framework demonstrates the divergent (though overlapping) forms of imperial expansion and racialization at work in the mid-nineteenth-century United States, the efforts to differentiate U.S. imperial formations from their British and European counterparts, as well as the importance of comparisons and connections in formulating challenges to different practices of empire-building.

The comparative framework I take up is not one imposed upon these historical examples in order to fit contemporary transnational methodologies of American Studies. Connections and comparisons between and among Liberia, Hawai‘i, and Nicaragua, as well as other imperial projects, were being made in the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, for example, the African Repository reported on Daniel Webster speaking approvingly about U.S. recognition of Liberia by rather condescendingly comparing the new African republic to the Hawaiian Kingdom. “I do not see why we should not recognize them [Liberia] as a Government,” Webster said in an 1852 speech, “as we have recognized countries possessing a people inferior in intelligence. The Government of the Sandwich Islands,” he continued, “I take to be less intelligent than that of Liberia.” For Webster, there is no contradiction in acknowledging Liberia or Hawai‘i as recognized members of the “family of nations,” on the one hand, and, on the other, asserting the presumed racial


33 Ibid., 4.
inferiority of those abstractly equal states. This example suggests the ways in which sovereignty and recognition operated to simultaneously affirm and disavow empire on the part of U.S. Americans. Furthermore, in making this comparison Webster acknowledged that Hawai‘i was essentially being ruled by U.S. Americans who had taken the oath of allegiance to Kamehameha III: “They have, it is true, a nominal King, who is a native, but four out of five of the persons composing the Government are foreigners.” This acknowledgement of U.S. Americans who had “become Hawaiian” by taking the oath of allegiance reveals the hierarchies of status and identity that contrasted with the discourse of naturalization and citizenship that emphasized abstract notions of liberty and equality in the service of empire. That is, Webster signals the fact that the rhetoric and reality of citizenship and national belonging were almost always at odds, something proponents of empire did not necessarily see as a contradiction. In comparing and contrasting Liberia and Hawai‘i, Webster demonstrates the ways in which these different imperial projects took shape in relation to each other.

This was not the only connection and comparison being made. In her sentimental history of Liberia, *The New Republic* (1851), Helen Knight compares Liberia to Hawai‘i in terms of their relative “standards of character” according to U.S. missionaries. Though Liberia had yet to reach an acceptable level of “character,” she insisted that is “no reason for withdrawing our sympathies and our confidence, or giving ourselves up to doubts and fears lest Liberia shall prove unworthy of herself. Even the Sandwich Islands, the most

prominent and promising mission ground, have not been without their cavaliers and faultfinders.”

And Harvard Law School professor Simon Greenleaf assisted William Little Lee, his former student, in establishing a new legal system in Hawai‘i in the 1840s. Greenleaf also helped draft the 1847 constitution for Liberia. Furthermore, the filibuster newspaper *El Nicaragüense*, published in Nicaragua, favorably observed the colonization project in Africa, noting that the “territory east of Liberia is almost as large as the United States, which the American Colonization Society now proposes to explore and settle” (27 October 1855). Elsewhere, the paper described Kamehameha IV as “no better than a common loafer,” and expressed hope “to hear of a revolution on the Islands, by any steamer” (23 February 1856). Earlier in the decade there was great concern in Hawai‘i about a rumored filibustering expedition from San Francisco led by Samuel Brennan intent on overthrowing the monarchy. While the principal agents preparing to fend off this potential invasion were naturalized foreigners from the United States and England working on behalf of the Hawaiian government, and thus seeking to protect their own control established the previous decade, this example of potential filibustering in the Pacific Islands along with others briefly alluded to here signal the connections across different imperial projects as well as the significant differences that led to their relative degrees of success or failure.

In addition to these comparisons being made among and across Liberia, Hawai‘i, and Nicaragua, agents of empire also drew distinctions between these particular imperial

35 Knight, *The New Republic* 245.
projects and European empires. This differentiation—between Old and New Worlds—designates a key feature of American exceptionalism. As Stoler and McGranahan observe in their call for comparative studies of empire, “Comparison provided the legitimating grounds for exceptional status, immunity, and exemption from international law—hallmark features of imperial statecrafts.” “Naturalizing Empire” thus addresses the emphasis on these comparisons and contrasts in formulating U.S. expansion as an exception to traditional conceptions of colonialism and empire. This context is crucial for U.S. agents of empire to define (and disavow) imperial projects, and this emerges perhaps most tellingly in repeated references to and debates about “an American colony,” a rhetorical figure that appears in all the different archives I examine. The question as to whether Liberia or Hawai‘i or Nicaragua should officially become “an American colony” produced a great deal of public debate, and was often rejected on the grounds that the U.S. was different from European colonial powers. For instance, in advocating that U.S. Americans take an oath of allegiance to the Hawaiian King in *The Polynesian*, a paper edited by James Jackson Jarves that I address in Chapter Two, John Ricord warned that failing to enforce this naturalization policy would “render the Hawaiian Government to all intents and purposes ‘an American colony;’ a government wielded, advised and directed by American citizens, not by Hawaiian subjects” (19 October 1844). This was an unacceptable situation for Jarves, Ricord, and other naturalized “Hawaiian subjects” who insisted they were not carrying out a colonial project supported by the U.S. state.

---

38 On the metaphor of old and new worlds, see David W. Noble, *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).  
Elsewhere, in a report recommending federal funding for Liberia in order to officially make it “an American colony,” U.S. Representative John Pendleton Kennedy made different colonial comparisons. While differentiating his plan from the “hazards and responsibilities of a system of colonization” similar to European colonial projects, Kennedy envisions a relationship between Liberia and the U.S. similar to the “anomalous” one between “our Government” and “Indian tribes” residing in “the purchased territory of the Union.”\(^{40}\) Moreover, in vying for political recognition, colonization supporters and Liberian representatives emphasized Liberia’s unique history. Liberian Governor Joseph Jenkins Roberts, in an 1846 annual speech, for instance, states, “We have associate the idea, that colonies have always commenced their existence in a state of political subjection to, and dependence on, their mother country: and for that reason, could not be sovereign states, nor exercise the powers of sovereignty till that dependence terminated…. But Liberia was never such a colony: she never was in that state of political dependence; and therefore, needs no such process in order to become a sovereign state.”\(^{41}\) Thus, “an American colony” represents a specter that must be denied or represented as exceptional to produce the fiction of U.S. imperial actors as different from the larger global history and politics of colonialism and empire-building.

Furthermore, in the colonization movement’s advocacy of Liberia, free trade with Africa is also configured as the U.S. solution to the ongoing problems of the slave trade and colonial slave labor in the West Indies, a practice colonizationists attribute to exclusively European powers. Conversely, Walker, in justifying his decision to


reinstitute slavery in Nicaragua, insisted that slavery “must be the rule, not the exception” in the Americas, for if free labor becomes dominant “the history of American society becomes a faint reflex of European systems and prejudices, without contributing any new ideas, any new sentiments, or any new institutions, to the mental and moral wealth of the world.” 42 While the emphasis and advocacy of “legitimate” trade or slave labor differed markedly across these examples, both share a common desire to distinguish U.S. or American economic systems of trade and labor from their European counterparts.

As Murphy notes, moving beyond a focus on the U.S. state as the central framework or agent of imperial power reveals the ways in which both imperial states and colonial dependencies represent internally differentiated, heterogeneous categories, and thus unstable and frequently shifting political and cultural identities and relations. Aligning state and empire ignores other imperial projects distinct from, indeed often antagonistic to, the U.S. state and its official representatives. These distinctions and antagonisms inform the examples selected for comparison in this dissertation. The ACS, for instance, sought funds from federal and state governments to support black American colonization to Liberia, but publically expressed concern and criticism over Kennedy’s and other proposals to officially declare Liberia an “American colony.” In Hawai‘i, U.S. missionaries and merchants who took an oath of allegiance to Kamehameha III in the 1840s promoted Hawaiian sovereignty and independence rather than encouraging the U.S. government to take possession of the islands. While a public debate in Honolulu and Washington over U.S. annexation of Hawai‘i emerged the following decade, it would be another fifty years until the Kingdom was overthrown and Hawai‘i was claimed as a

U.S. territory. And Walker’s filibuster in Nicaragua, as we shall see, undermines any claim of a unified and coherent national policy of imperial expansion. Walker’s occupation of Nicaragua, and filibustering more generally, publically exposed divisions regarding empire and national identity, challenging the federal government’s ostensible representation of popular sovereignty. These particularized forms of U.S. empire speak to the shortcomings or limitations of taking the “United States” as a monolithic, unified, or coherent agent of empire. Thus, while each of these examples stand in a different relation to the U.S. state, the explicit and self-conscious differentiation from U.S. state power demonstrates the complexities of U.S. imperial formations in the mid-nineteenth century and the limitations of focusing exclusively on official advocacy or denunciation of expansion by the U.S. state.

Finally, focusing on state power as the framework of U.S. empire risks ignoring the people and cultures caught up in transnational circuits of empire and their efforts to negotiate, mediate, and resist their marginalization and disenfranchisement. It is important to note that the logic of comparison also played a significant role in contesting these different imperial projects as well. Thus, I consider anti-imperial and anti-racist print cultures as well as interracial solidarities and comparisons that contested these forces of dispossession and marginalization. Native Hawaiian historian Samuel Kamakau, for example, compared the consequences of the Māhele to white U.S. American conquest of Native North Americans, and Native Hawaiian petitioners challenging the naturalization policy situated their struggle within a larger international geography of land, labor, race, and empire. Martin Delany frequently made comparisons and connections across racial difference in his efforts to forge alliances in order to more
effectively combat both racism and imperialism. For example, his novel, *Blake; or, the Huts of America* (1859, 1861-1862), includes an important subplot about U.S. filibustering in Cuba, an assertion of empire Delany imagines will be checked by international, interracial resistance in the novel. Furthermore, an 1855 essay written by Delany entitled “Political Aspect of the Colored People of the United States,” takes a broadly comparative view of the title’s reference to “Colored People of the United States,” considering the global reach of the U.S. well beyond its territorial borders. In addition to various U.S. machinations in Cuba, Haiti, and the Yucatan, he identifies and critiques such specific imperial schemes as “Colonization to Liberia,” the “despicable puerile attempt by the buccaneer Walker” to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, and the threat of Hawaiians “being usurped and swallowed up by the impudent assumption of ‘white superiority’” in an attempt to wrest from them “their own native sovereignty.”

Similar to the Native Hawaiian petitioners, Delany notes the emergence of a color line being drawn up to divide white and nonwhite peoples in and beyond the shifting borders of the United States. In California, for instance, he says, “the colored people are deprived of the right of testimony in the courts,” through laws that not only disenfranchised black Americans, but “many of the native Californians, who were a part of the independent sovereign people under Mexico” as well. Furthermore, since the 1854 California Supreme Court decision in *People v. Hall* ruling that “blacks” ineligible to testify against whites included all nonwhites, “the Chinese” also “stand in the same political position as

---

the black man. He too is degraded to the level of a slave.” What this comparative logic suggests, whether it is being used to challenge different forms of expansion abroad or the overlapping racialized discrimination at home, is that critics at the time like Delany, Kamakau, and many others recognized the similarities at work across these various racial and imperial formations. Calling attention to these connections served as an important means of making sense of these processes of dispossession and imagining the formation of alliances to stand in opposition to them.

Colonized and racialized populations writing back in resistance were imagining and formulating their own comparative frameworks to make sense of, and ultimately challenge, effects of different U.S. imperial and racial formations. However, I seek to avoid romanticizing these examples of national and transnational resistance or interracial solidarities. The sections of “Naturalizing Empire” that attend to the interracial comparisons forged in opposition to empire in writings by Samuel Kamakau and Martin Delany, among others, represent, then, a modest effort to address, as Paul A. Kramer says, “the actual ways that historical actors compared, contrasted, and connected their own and other societies,” while seeking to avoid what he calls in another context “counterhegemony through over-comparison.” As we shall see, African American and Native Hawaiian writers at times reproduced particular logics of nation and empire in their critiques of U.S. settler colonialism and imperial expansion. Therefore, just as there is value in acknowledging the complexity and differentiated articulations of U.S. empire,

\[\text{References}\]

44 Ibid., 282-283.
so too is it important to avoid uncritically presenting and celebrating a monolithic notion of “colonized resistance.”

**Antebellum Literary and Print Cultures**

These processes of naturalizing empire involved much more than simply taking an oath of allegiance to claim a foreign identity or emigrating to a new territory to found a new republic. These actions were mediated, legitimated, and contested across different forms of print culture and particular literary genres. As mentioned above, in addition to journals and newspapers, I examine historical romances, sentimental novels and histories, as well as literary and visual cultures of sensation to suggest that each literary form played a particular role in naturalizing empire. Therefore, because of the centrality of liberal theories of subjects and states in these examples of naturalizing empire, I also consider the ways in which the historical romance, sentimentalism, and illustrated and other newspapers represent cultural or literary genres of liberalism, or cultural forms that give expression to ideas of modern liberal capitalism and their relationship to (or articulation as) empire.

As David Reynolds, Richard Brodhead and Shelley Streeby have each shown, the emergent literary marketplace of the mid-nineteenth century fostered the development and division among literary genres and cultural forms, but at the same time a great degree of overlap and influence was equally prevalent. Canonical authors of the American

---

Renaissance, such as Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne, drew on and adapted from sensational story papers and the “damned mob” of scribbling sentimentalists in attempts to reach a wider readership and secure greater monetary returns from their fictions. Edgar Allan Poe, to take another example, not only made use of the sensational themes of mutiny and cannibalism in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), but borrowed from (and sometimes directly plagiarized) travel narratives and reports from exploring expeditions such as Benjamin Morrell’s 1832 *Narrative of Four Voyages* and J.N. Reynold’s *Address, on the Subject of a Surveying and Exploring Expedition* (1836).

What this generic overlap and borrowing suggests is that the emergent split between high and low cultural production, or fictional and nonfictional narratives, resulted in a good deal of appropriation, poaching, and other forms of cross-cultural exchanges that too easily fall out of view in conventional scholarly constructions of canons, genres, or academic disciplines.

All this is to say that historical romance, sentimentalism, imperial adventure, and illustrated journalism, or any other generic construction demarcating boundaries of literary and print culture are by no means mutually exclusive. Overlaps and borrowings do not imply that all distinctions are false or that attempts to categorize are futile. Identifying and theorizing the cultural work of particular literary genres and cultural formations lies at the heart of my dissertation; thus, I recognize and in fact require those distinctions. Yet attending to the fluidity among genres is equally important in order to understand those particular literary genres and cultural formations. Ultimately, I use the

---

term “print culture” to signify a broad cultural field of production, distribution, and consumption that encompasses these different forms and discourses as well as the relationships, tensions, and affinities that occur between and among them.47

Each chapter considers different literary and cultural genres as they perform particular work in either legitimating or contesting these different imperial projects. In Chapter One, “Becoming Liberian: Colonization, Commerce, and the Sentiments of Sovereignty,” I examine the role of sentimentalism in the discursive production of Liberian citizens and the Liberian state, looking specifically at sentimental histories and novels such as Helen Cross Knight’s, *The New Republic* (1851), Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), and Sarah Hale’s *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton’s Experiments* (1853). This sentimental literature of colonization engages issues of race, miscegenation, and national identity in the U.S. through economic and political discourses of “legitimate” trade and recognition of Liberian sovereignty that forwards a vision of Liberia subject to U.S. economic control. Colonization in Liberia, I argue, represents a “spatial fix” for the contradictions produced by the social relations of race and slavery in the United States. At the same time, I read a broad range of writing by Martin Delany—including published speeches, letters, editorials, and fiction. Throughout these different examples, Delany stakes his claim to the right of black Americans to remain in the Americas rather than “return” to Africa. For Delany, black labor and Native land claims in the Americas pose overlapping challenges to colonizationists’ efforts to naturalize the association of “America” with “white.” Taken together, Delany’s work presents a

powerful critique of the colonization project in Liberia while simultaneously envisioning alternative alliances and investments of black “sympathy,” an implicit rejection of sentimental colonization.

In Chapter Two, “Becoming Hawaiian: Historical Romance, Historiography, and the Hawaiian 1848,” I read the Pacific historical romances of James Fenimore Cooper and James Jackson Jarves, editor of the Hawaiian newspaper The Polynesian. Cooper’s The Crater; or, Vulcan’s Peak: A Tale of the Pacific (1847) and Jarves’s Kiana: A Tradition of Hawaii (1857), I argue, both imaginatively invent histories of the Pacific primarily to justify, but also to interrogate and express concerns about imperial transformations unfolding in the Hawaiian islands in the 1840s. In contrast to these historical romances, I also examine the petitions, letters, and historiography of Native Hawaiians. This archive of Native Hawaiian print culture demonstrates the perceptive and vocal resistance to a naturalization policy granting U.S. Americans who take the oath of allegiance significant power in Hawai‘i to advocate for and oversee the division of land in 1848. Furthermore, Native Hawaiian historians David Malo and Samuel Kamakau both produced historical narratives that reject the assumption that history begins with the arrival of Europeans and Euro-Americans, an assumption that informs both Cooper’s and Jarves’s work.

“Becoming Nicaraguan: Sensational Print Cultures and the Filibuster Public Sphere,” my third and final chapter, addresses the sensational stories, images, and reporting of William Walker’s 1855 filibuster in Nicaragua. I examine the representation of new publics made up of Nicaraguans and the filibusters in El Nicaragüense, a bilingual newspaper published in Nicaragua during the filibuster occupation, Walker’s
memoir, *The War in Nicaragua* (1860), and fiction from U.S. newspapers such as the *Flag of Our Union*. The discursive formation of the filibuster public sphere in these different print cultures, I argue, played a central role in supporting and justifying the claim that Walker and his men “became Nicaraguan” through naturalization. I also consider the coverage of Walker’s filibuster in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, attending in particular to the cultural work of the illustrations in the paper. In addition to the sensational scenes of imperial adventure, *Leslie’s Illustrated* also deployed sentimental tropes and domestic metaphors to represent Walker in Nicaragua, a mixing of cultural forms that envisioned a broad and heterogeneous U.S. public sympathetic to the filibuster. Filibusters and their supporters imagined that these two diverse and divisive publics—in Nicaragua and the United States—were unified through the transnational circulation of these different cultures of print. The filibuster public sphere, I conclude, represents a significant tactic of naturalizing empire that relied on the transnational production, distribution, and consumption of print culture.

Lastly, my conclusion, “The Imperial Palimpsests of Mark Twain,” briefly examines writings by Twain that bear the traces of these different articulations of U.S. empire in the mid-nineteenth century. I look at travel letters written by Twain in the 1860s from Hawai‘i and Nicaragua, as well as his later anti-imperialist tract, *King Leopold’s Soliloquy* (1905), to show how U.S. and European colonialism of the late nineteenth-century simultaneously drew on and disavowed the U.S. imperial formations of the mid-nineteenth century as precedents and models. Through a reading of these imperial palimpsests of Twain, we can see how subsequent U.S. cultural and imperial
history is built upon a dialectic of remembering and forgetting overseas expansion prior to the Civil War.

“Naturalizing Empire” is a comparative critique that sets out to theorize the implications of the common ideas and debates that emerge in very different forms of imperial encounters in West Africa, Central America, and the Pacific. This framework also provides an opportunity to think through the comparative histories of racialization outside of national boundaries that informed the logic of racial difference within the U.S. Through these different examples I hope to show how imperial actions and racial hierarchies are not aberrations or exceptions to U.S. notions of citizenship, sovereignty, and literature, but rather constitutive parts of a liberal ideology that helped facilitate the spread of capitalist economic relations and the consolidation of an international state system. In turn, these different articulations of empire each played a role in defining and delimiting the contours of the U.S. nation. This is not to claim that we can locate the origins of the U.S. as an imperial power in the world by insisting that it began definitively in the mid-nineteenth century. Nor am I seeking to provide a comprehensive account of U.S. empire in the antebellum period. Rather, I am interested in identifying the material traces and imagined formulations of that global ascendancy at an historical moment often understood as preoccupied exclusively with the nation’s manifest destiny of westward territorial expansion and increasing domestic tensions over slavery. I hope to demonstrate that “national” or “domestic” issues, including continental expansionism and slavery, but also popular sovereignty, citizenship, and national literary culture cannot be isolated from the efforts by different groups of U.S. Americans to extend their reach and control throughout these particular parts of the world. Ultimately, I hope this can help
remind us today of the early global ambitions of the United States and the often devastating effects they had on the peoples within this imperial cartography during the mid-nineteenth century, effects that continue to bear heavily on the present.
CHAPTER ONE

Becoming Liberian: Colonization, Commerce, and the Sentiments of Sovereignty

In an article entitled “A glance at ‘Topsey’s’ Home” published in the October 1853 issue of the *African Repository*, the official organ of the American Colonization Society (ACS), the author encourages readers to turn their “anxious gaze” away from Cuba and California and to take an imaginary tour of Liberia. The article surveys the current political status and future economic prospects of the “quiet little Republic” founded as a colony on the west coast of Africa thirty years earlier by the ACS for free and manumitted black Americans to emigrate to “with their consent.” The article provides a concise but significant glimpse into the different ways in which the editors of the *African Repository* imagined domestic, political, and economic success for Liberia in order to praise the philanthropic work of colonization supporters, thereby assuring them that “the fruit of their labors…promises a most plentiful harvest.”  

Exemplifying the cultural work of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) shortly after its publication the previous year, the title of the *African Repository* article invokes one of the many black characters that leave the United States for Africa at the novel’s conclusion. In the novel, Topsey, “an odd and unnecessary addition” to Miss Ophelia’s “well-trained domestic establishment” in New England expresses her “desire” to go to Africa. Once she is “recommended” and “approved” by the white church to do

---

1 “A glance at ‘Topsey’s’ Home,” *The African Repository* 29.10 (October 1853): 311-12. Article II of the founding constitution of the American Colonization Society reads, “The object to which its attention shall be exclusively directed is, to promote and execute a plan for colonizing, with their consent, the free people of color residing in our country, in Africa, or such other place as Congress shall see fit.” Quoted from *Information About Going to Liberia: With Things Which Every Emigrant Ought to Know* (Washington: C. Alexander, 1852) 15.
missionary work, she leaves the United States to teach “the children of her own country.”2 And after emigrating to Liberia, the African Repository article imagines her home as one among many of the “[p]leasant residences” on the St. Paul’s River, inviting the readers to admire the “lawns ornamented with flowers,” “well furnished parlor[s],” and “the plentiful table[s] loaded with luxuries,” all of which indicate that in “her own country” Topsey and other black American settlers no longer represent an “odd and unnecessary addition” to the domestic space of the U.S. nation but have secured their own domestic comforts as they become Liberian.

The article is noteworthy not only for its idealized depiction of the domestic spaces that envision progress and prosperity of the new republic but also for the many other signs that attest to Liberia’s modernity. Before traveling to the countryside to visit Topsey’s home, readers first pass through “the thriving town of Monrovia,” glancing at the government buildings as well as “the English consul” and the “Brazilian ‘chargé d’affaires.’” Pointing out these consular posts, along with the recent recognition “by the Prussian envoy” of the 1847 independence of Liberia from the ACS, testifies to the nation’s growing acceptance amongst the comity of nations, even though the United States had yet to officially recognize the new republic’s sovereignty. The article encourages a change in this policy, reminding U.S. American readers that though “we have not even acknowledged” Liberian independence, it nonetheless represents a nation “which is connected with our destiny.”

After leaving Topsey’s home, readers are invited to “walk over the grounds, hear how many pounds of sugar have been manufactured, how much coffee exported,” indicating that Liberia had not only emerged on the world scene politically, but that it had found a successful place in the “legitimate” trade of the Atlantic world, producing and exporting agricultural commodities such as sugar and coffee. The “plentiful harvest” attributed to the Colonization Society’s purportedly philanthropic concern and interracial benevolence mentioned above takes on a different inflection here in light of the reference to these agricultural products, implicitly acknowledging that it professed not only to cultivate a new nation in order for emigrants to realize a secure racial and national identity, but a population of Liberian citizens devoted to cultivating the products important to the “well-trained domestic establishments” of U.S. homes. Sweeping broadly from fiction to fact, from urban space to the rural village, and from the private sphere of the home to the prosperous farms that place Liberia in the larger global flows of the capitalist world-system, “A glance at ‘Topsey’s Home’ imagines both Liberia and Liberians as secure, prosperous, and happy.

“A glance at ‘Topsey’s Home’ encapsulates a number of significant issues that emerge in colonization literature throughout the nineteenth century that I take up in this chapter. Specifically, I examine the ways in which discourses of colonization imagined the related processes of founding Liberia and becoming Liberian as a particular example of national and racial formations of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire. “Becoming Liberian,” I argue, represents an interrelated process of disaffiliation, of the United States disclaiming its black and mixed-race population within its borders as well as disavowing an explicitly colonial relationship with Liberia. Colonization literature presented
alternative modes of imperial and racial recognition and legitimacy by promoting Liberian citizenship and sovereignty while simultaneously imagining an economic relationship that would link the United States and an independent Liberia through the commodity chains of coffee and other tropical agricultural products. Pamphlets, images, and speeches by prominent colonization supporters such as Francis Scott Key and others that promoted Liberian farming and “legitimate” trade with the United States attempted to call forth these imagined commodity chains of colonization. In addition to this literature of the colonization movement, in this chapter I address the related cultural work of sentimental histories and novels such as Helen Cross Knight’s, *The New Republic* (1851), Harriet Beecher Stowe’s, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), and Sarah Josepha Hale’s 1853 novel *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton’s Experiments*, texts that encouraged both the racial and political recognition of Liberia by the United States. Across these different print cultures of colonization, “becoming Liberian” involves, significantly, not only making Liberians and making Liberia, but also a desire to (re)make the United States and the entire Atlantic world-economy.

Additionally, I conclude this analysis of becoming Liberian by addressing African American critiques of the colonization movement, focusing specifically on the emigration projects of Martin Delany as a different transnational vision of a black state and black subjects, an alternative black nationality that functioned to contest U.S. empire and the presumed racial supremacy of whiteness. Despite the efforts of colonizationists to naturalize their imperial project by cloaking it in the rhetoric of liberalism—emphasizing citizenship and sovereignty, but also political and economic ideologies of freedom and equality—a sophisticated critique of colonization emerged in the United States,
particularly in the print cultures and public meetings of black U.S. Americans. While many black public figures such as Frederick Douglass used their newspaper and public platforms to criticize colonization and demand equal rights for blacks within the United States, others, such as Martin Delany, championed black emigration as an alternative to white-sponsored colonization and assimilation in the U.S. nation. In addition to examining letters and articles Delany wrote for the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* and a brief look at his novel *Blake; or, The Huts of America* (1859, 1861-61), I focus primarily on a speech entitled “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent.” Delany presented “Political Destiny” as the keynote address at the 1854 National Emigration Convention of Colored People, which he helped organize. This meeting challenged not only the ideas of black integration put forward at the “Colored National Convention” convened by Frederick Douglass the year before, as Robert Levine has demonstrated, but also ACS-sponsored meetings such as the 1842 “Convention of the Friends of African Colonization,” where Francis Scott Key and other colonizationists delivered important speeches outlining major ideas and proposals of the colonization movement.³ Therefore, similar to novels such as Hale's *Liberia* or Delany's *Blake*, records from colonization and emigration conventions represent a related archive that demonstrate the transnational contours and connections that served to alternately naturalize or contest "Liberian" and "Liberia" as national and racial formations of U.S. empire in the mid-nineteenth century. Delany’s promotion of emigration, at this convention and elsewhere, serves as an important articulation of black autonomy and

self-determination that stands in direct opposition to the colonization movement and, as we shall see, U.S. imperialism throughout the Americas.

Sentimentalism, in particular, functions here as a cultural genre of liberalism that serves to naturalize the imperial formation of Liberia. As Lori Merish observes in her analysis of gender and commodity culture in the nineteenth-century United States, “sentimental narratives engender feelings of power as well as submission endemic to liberal political culture; they thus instantiate a particular form of liberal political subjection, in which agency and subordination are intertwined.”

Merish usefully illuminates the ways in which sentimentalism—cultural texts and practices imagining emotional identification across difference—serves to both mediate relations within capitalism and form social identities within liberalism. She demonstrates how cultural expressions of sentiment, sympathy, and feelings served to legitimate the processes of capitalist exchange in the development and consolidation of national markets. In doing so, Merish traces the ways in which sentimentalism figures in the formation of gendered and racialized subjects within liberal capitalism in the nineteenth-century United States. Central to the “liberal political subjection” that informs Merish’s theory of sentimentalism is the notion of consent. “[S]entimental narratives,” according to Merish, “enlist a subject’s ‘consent’ to capitalism at the most intimate level, grafting liberal-capitalist social forms onto that subject’s most seemingly private, inalienable desires.”

In relation to the colonization movement, emphasizing the consent of black emigrants to leave the United States for the unfamiliar geography of Africa served to obfuscate the

---

5 Ibid., 33.
configurations of power structuring the colonization project. Proffering it as a consensual, voluntary act of relocation allowed the ACS to counter charges of coercion emanating from black American opponents and abolitionists (see Figure 1.1).^6

Figure 1.1. "'Nuisances' Going as 'Missionaries,' 'With Their Own Consent.'" From the Anti-Slavery Almanac, for 1839 (New Work: Published for the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1838) 29. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

Looking at the ways in which the granting of individual rights that derive in part from the recognition of humanity can function as a form of domination, Saidiya Hartman has demonstrated that within the U.S. “the abased and encumbered individuality of the emancipated resulted largely from the equation of responsibility with blameworthiness, thereby making duty synonymous with punishment.”7 While Hartman’s concern emphasizes the disciplinary role of rights in the temporal or historical shift from slavery to emancipation within the U.S. nation-state, black emigration to Liberia in the antebellum period provides an alternative, spatial or geographical trajectory that also engages discourses of citizenship, freedom, and equality in relation to ongoing structures of domination. Since the liberty, equality, and happiness promised to black Americans hinged upon the supposed exercise of their own free will and individual autonomy in professing to consensually resettle in Africa (and once there to adhere to agricultural labor), Liberia can be read as a subjugated territorial space, one rooted in a white U.S. American desire for a racially homogenous national population of free and equal citizen-subjects. Colonization in Liberia, then, represents a “spatial fix” for the contradictions produced by the social relations of race and slavery in the United States.8 While black settlers would presumably be able to lay claim to these liberal rights in post-independence Liberia (at least according to colonization literature), continued ACS

8 David Harvey discusses colonization and imperial expansion as a “spatial fix” that serves to resolve internal contradictions produced by the social relations of capitalist production. See Harvey, “The Spatial Fix: Hegel, Von Thiinen and Marx,” in *Spaces of Capital: Toward a Critical Geography* (New York, Routledge, 2001).
influence and Liberia’s subordinate economic position in relation to the U.S. and the larger world-system all functioned to circumscribe that commensurate abstract equality. The ideological work of consent in relation to becoming Liberian, then, articulates a racialized constitution of liberal subjectivity, one that conjoins not only independence with subordination for individual black settlers, but also ongoing “consensual” economic ties between the U.S. and Liberia, signaling the relationship of independence and subordination structuring liberal sovereignty in relation to U.S. empire.

The ideology of consent in relation to Liberian sovereignty was also expressed in debates about recognition. Sentimentalism depends upon the possibility of recognition and identification across difference. In the case of Liberia, this recognition extends from the interiorized psychological sphere of individual subjectivities to the geopolitical terrain of sovereign states. Just as consent served to counter charges of coerced deportment of black Americans, recognition in sentimental literature of colonization functioned to repudiate assertions that Liberia was an “American colony,” thereby disclaiming it as a project of U.S. empire. Following Liberian independence from the ACS in 1847, U.S. colonizationists repeatedly called for their federal government to grant official diplomatic recognition of Liberian sovereignty in part to promote and encourage “legitimate” market

---

exchanges between ostensibly equal, independent sovereign nations. Sentimentalism, as we will see, functions to mediate and legitimate the politics of recognition across these subjective, political, and economic terrains. Thus, attending to the discussion and promotion of recognizing Liberia’s sovereignty in the sentimental literature of colonization reveals efforts to articulate the simultaneous formation and regulation of Liberia as a racialized national state. In turn, we must also acknowledge that the discursive production of Liberia is in fact equally, if not more, revealing about the desires of colonizationists themselves to ensure the U.S. as a specifically racialized, white national community. In sum, colonization works not only to produce “Liberia” and “Liberians,” but also the “United States” and “Americans” as a racially delimited expression of national identity.

The work of sentimentalism in naturalizing black Americans as Liberians not only indexes the intersecting national and racial formations of U.S. imperialism, but also the ways in which race, nation, and empire shape and are shaped by gender and sexuality. In particular, narratives of becoming Liberian constructed in colonization discourse contain a particular alignment between equality, liberty, and manhood. Dr. James Lawrence Day, for example, expressed his “agreeable surprise” upon his arrival in Liberia in finding “a people among whom you can recognize scarce a lineament of the American slave. Men here, are men, as you find them in other communities, showing as they do a proper respect for themselves and you; you cannot remember your former prejudices, however strong they may have been, but meet them at once, without reflection, on terms of perfect
equality.”¹⁰ The opposition Day sets up here, between Liberian “men” and “the American slave” is expressed in terms of recognition. His ability to imagine “perfect equality” across racial difference relies specifically on his recognition of Liberian manhood and his inability to recognize any trace of their former condition as American slaves. Day’s recognition of the equality of Liberian manhood also foreshadows the overlapping liberal rhetoric of equality among states that informed arguments encouraging the U.S. recognition of Liberian sovereignty.¹¹

Furthermore, the overlapping discourses of legitimacy and recognition in colonization literature, in relation to both commerce and diplomacy, are expressed through sentimental tropes of family and home. This invocation of the domestic is a central component of sentimentalism. As Elizabeth Barnes writes of the early national literature of sentiment and sympathy, “sociopolitical issues are cast as family dramas, a maneuver that ultimately renders policy an essentially private matter. The conversion of the political into the personal, or the public into the private, is a distinctive trait of sentimentalism.”¹² While I follow Barnes and others in critically mapping this sentimental trajectory from the public to the private in my reading of colonization literature, I am also interested in charting the opposite movement—the ways in which the ostensibly private and personal are configured in the very public terms of markets and

¹¹ On the abstract equality among U.S. and Liberian citizens, one colonization pamphlet states: “The government of the Republic of Liberia may, in every essential particular, be regarded as a miniature representation of the Government of the United States; and the citizens of that Republic enjoy equal privileges with the white citizens of this country.” Information About Going to Liberia: With Things Which Every Emigrant Ought to Know 7, emphasis added.
¹² Elizabeth Barnes, States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 2. Of course, as feminists scholars have taught us, the opposition of the personal and political, the private and the public, is an ideological construction that reinforces gender inequalities constitutive of modern liberalism.
international politics. That is, I suggest that colonization arguments promoting "legitimate" transatlantic commerce and "recognition" of Liberian sovereignty implicitly register the sexual intimacies—most often coerced—between whites and blacks in the United States. The presence of an “illegitimate” mixed-race or mulatto population in the U.S. served to undermine dominant ideas about the stability of racial and sexual boundaries within the nation. Mixed-race peoples literally embodied the instability of those boundaries. The promotion of U.S. trade with Liberia and the recognition of Liberian sovereignty represent efforts by colonizationists to untangle those instabilities by reasserting the fixity of the borders of racial, sexual, and national difference.

“Becoming Liberian” is configured as an avenue (the only avenue) toward racial recognition and legitimacy for black Americans in colonization discourse; in Liberia, mixed-race colonists could embrace blackness and, in turn, that blackness could be safely acknowledged, controlled, and managed at a distance by a white United States.

Reading the cultural work of sentimentalism in this way demonstrates how it is not only a means of representing national political issues in terms of bodies and families, but, conversely, a means of projecting those intimacies of subjectivity and sex onto political and economic discourse. In the case of Liberia and colonization, moreover, that discourse extends beyond national boundaries, configured in terms of a transatlantic political economy and the promotion of an independent, sovereign Liberian state. This context reveals the ways in which national issues of racial identity and race relations took

shape and accrued meaning within transnational circuits of empire. Liberian colonization thus indexes one of the ways in which sentimentalism’s work of “imagining the nation’s body and the national body” was constituted in relation to other nations and colonies and the relations between them. As we shall see, efforts to resolve anxieties of mixed-race sexual intimacy and the consequent ambiguities of racial identity through colonization also overlapped with efforts to resolve ambiguities of U.S. imperial sovereignty in the mid-nineteenth century. Debates about whether Liberia should become an independent state or an official “American colony” prior to its independence from the ACS in 1847 depict Liberian sovereignty as an opportunity to settle uncertainty regarding both racial and political ambiguities of empire. U.S. recognition of that sovereignty, consistently advocated in colonization literature, was presented as a means for the United States to simultaneously proclaim liberal ideals of equality and independence and disclaim its identity as an imperial state. “Legitimate” commerce and recognition of Liberian sovereignty represent tactics of naturalizing empire that attempt to mediate what was illegitimate and unrecognizable both at home (miscegenation) and abroad (state-sanctioned colonialism).

This focus on the sentimental registers of “legitimate” transatlantic commerce and sovereign recognition in relation to becoming Liberian and naturalizing empire also helps us understand the colonization movement as an articulation of U.S. imperialism in a way not usually emphasized in recent American Studies scholarship on African colonization. This scholarship has focused principally on the ways in which Hale’s *Liberia* in

---

particular and the colonization movement more broadly represent an example of U.S. empire in their visions of Liberia an idealized reproduction of the U.S. nation in Africa, one that would serve as a base for missionary work that would spread across Africa.  

Amy Kaplan, for instance, has discussed the way in which Liberia represents colonization as a U.S. imperial formation by envisioning black settlers Christianizing and civilizing native Africans, spreading U.S. American political and religious ideas and institutions across the continent.  

Similarly, David Kazanjian describes the paradoxical situation of ridding the U.S. of its black population while also making that population “abstract bearers of American national form to be sent as global agents of American universality and exemplarity to Africans.”  

Generally, what this scholarship emphasizes is the centrality of political ideals and religious beliefs in framing Liberia as an example of U.S. empire. What I hope to elaborate in what follows, however, is that we should also understand colonization as an articulation of U.S. imperialism not only by the spreading of U.S. American and Christian values through black settlers, but also as an economic satellite producing agricultural goods in demand in the United States. 


16 Kaplan, Anarchy of Empire, 34-42.  

“most plentiful harvest” of colonization would not only be realized in the transformation of Africa as U.S. liberal democracy and Protestant Christianity emanated outward from Liberia across the continent, but would also serve to transform the economies of the Atlantic world, as the agricultural products grown by black settlers and properly disciplined African populations would be shipped to the United States, supplanting the slave trade for the “legitimate” commerce of coffee, sugar, and other products of plantation economies. Simply put, the sentimental literature of colonization demonstrates the entangled political, economic, and normative registers of citizenship and sovereignty within the context of naturalizing empire.

**Liberian Farming and Legitimate Commerce**

Colonization literature emphasizes farming and agricultural development as the surest means of becoming a prosperous Liberian citizen and ensuring an independent Liberian nation that could participate in the commercial world of the Atlantic market. In particular, promotion of agricultural labor in this literature linked the process of becoming Liberian to an idealized fulfillment of black manhood for male colonists. For many black colonists, however, farming represented labor associated with slavery, and many remained reluctant to work the land. Many colonists understood the process of becoming Liberian differently from the ACS, as they established merchant companies that dealt in the importing and exporting among foreign traders, African tribes, and the Liberian market, facilitating collection and distribution networks of trade along the coast. This focus on the merchant trade clearly troubled members of the ACS, who viewed these activities as an unstable and corrupting means of earning a wage. Colonization
literature, by contrast, consistently stresses both the moral and economic legitimacy of farming, embracing Jefferson’s belief that agricultural labor ensured both individual and national virtue. In placing such a strong emphasis on agriculture, colonization supporters attempted to manage the Liberian population, dictating the particular mode of economic activity that would secure a level of comportment and civilization required for acceptance into the family of nations. Only through cultivation of the land, they held, could becoming Liberian truly represent an avenue to independence, a happy domestic life, and legitimacy for the Liberian nation.

This focus on farming also involved a dream of transatlantic commerce between the U.S. and Liberia that would replace African slaves with tropical commodities such as sugar and coffee. The ACS enlisted federal, state, and individual support by repeatedly emphasizing the importance of lawful or “legitimate” commerce in ending the slave trade and the central role Liberia would play in that transition. That is, colonization literature frequently linked Liberian agricultural labor, transatlantic commerce, and the suppression of the slave trade. As the ACS noted in their 1843 annual report, “Every consideration connected with the suppression of the slave trade, and the protection and advancement of our commerce on the African coast…demands that a fostering care should be extended

---

19 As economic historians of Africa have noted, the actual increase of “legitimate” trade in the nineteenth-century may have had the effect of increasing the use of slave labor within Africa. Robin Law, for instance, writes, “To a large degree…directly or indirectly, the growing demand for slaves [in Africa] was a consequence of the growth and transformation of the character of the Atlantic trade.” As the colonization literature linking the suppression of the slave trade to an increasing “legitimate” trade with Liberia indicates, Africans would still do plantation labor to produce coffee and sugar. Instead of the enforced transportation of those laborers to plantations in the Americas, colonizationists envisioned a reverse migration in the “consensual” relocation of black Americans in Africa. See Law, “Introduction.” From Slave Trade to ‘Legitimate’ Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa. Ed. Robin Law (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 7.
by the Government, to the colonies of Liberia.” In this way both commercial trade and colonization stand in opposition to the slave trade. Thus, agricultural labor and “legitimate” commerce in Liberia come to represent freedom in colonization literature through the implicit and explicit contrast with the unfree trade and labor of chattel slavery.

While I consider these economic issues of Liberian labor and Atlantic trade in this section by examining an early farming manual for colonists, images promoting investment in Liberian coffee, and an 1842 national colonization convention organized by Francis Scott Key, I also attend to the particular gendered and familial metaphors that emerge across this set of texts. This focus, I argue, helps explain how extending “fostering care” for and “legitimate” trade with Liberia implicitly acknowledges and attempts to resolve anxieties of interracial conjugal intimacies between white men and black women within the United States (namely, rape of slave women) and the so-called “illegitimate” consequences—mixed-race or mulatto populations that served to undermine dominant constructions of clearly demarcated boundaries of racial difference. “Legitimate” commerce, in particular, contains the trace of the histories of racialized sexual intimacy and violence in the U.S. “Legitimate,” according to Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary, meant, “Lawfully begotten or born; born in wedlock,” whereas, by contrast, “illegitimate” refers to those “Unlawfully begotten; born out of wedlock; spurious.” Both definitions gesture toward the acceptable, socially recognized terms of sexual reproduction, which resonate in discussions of trade and sovereignty throughout

---

colonization movement discourse. As the initial law providing funds for Liberia specified, the President was authorized to ensure “the safe-keeping, support, and removal beyond the United States” not simply “of all such negroes,” but also “mulattoes…as may be so delivered.”21 While “removal beyond the United States” would supposedly reaffirm racial and national borders, the professed care for and proposed commerce with Liberia (“safe-keeping” and “support”) indicates the continued economic and political relations with the U.S., relations expressed in terms of U.S. paternity and Liberian participation in the “family of nations.”

Jehudi Ashmun, ACS agent in Liberia in the 1820s, published a treatise on farming in the new colony that places agricultural labor as the activity ensuring both political liberty and familial happiness for black colonists. Ashmun was an early supporter of colonization and sailed with the first group of colonists to Africa in 1822. Serving as official representative of both the United States and the ACS in Liberia through the 1820s, he is frequently represented in biographies and histories as one of Liberia’s white “fathers.”22 His farming manual, *The Liberia Farmer; or, Colonist’s Guide to Independence and Domestic Comfort* (1826), offers a practical and technical guide to the West African climate and soil, methods of clearing land, planting and rotating various crops, using manure, and other information on how to establish and maintain successful “plantations” in Liberia. All this advice, however, is presented in a


22 On Ashmun as Liberian patriarch, see in particular Ralph Randolph Gurley’s biography of Ashmun, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Late Colonial Agent in Liberia With an Appendix Containing Extracts from His Journal and Other Writings; With a Brief Sketch of the Rev. Lott Carey* (Washington D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1835).
manner that implicitly threatens settlers with loss—loss of freedom, of self-mastery, of family—should they fail to adhere to the protocols laid out in the pamphlet’s instructions and become dependent on either the U.S. or native Africans.23

Ashmun repeatedly refers to the dangers of “dependence” throughout the manual. He illustrates these dangers by focusing on the consequences of working as a mechanic or participating in the costal trade rather than laboring on a farm. Mechanics, he claims, may make good money in Liberia, but then insists they end up spending all of it on clothing and other goods from the U.S. “[I]f you have a family,” Ashmun writes, “you must all suffer for want of the necessaries of life, if you rely on your mechanical labors alone” (64). Buying goods from local tribes may save colonists more money than buying from foreign merchants, but Ashmun encourages colonists to see themselves as better than their neighbors. Trading with them is certainly a possibility, he notes, but then asks, “are you so lost to all sense of shame, as to be willing to depend on a half naked Savage to feed you?” (64). Familial degradation, personal ignominy, and debt are the consequences of these activities, and Ashmun cautions that “[t]rade and day-labor as a mechanic, may then be reckoned as your worst dependence” (65).

While the text repeatedly warns of the various conditions of dependence that will result from relying on trade or manufacturing instead of farming, Ashmun’s guide to independence itself represents a condition of dependence, one that requires very specific economic and social behaviors that, while promising an avenue to political autonomy and domestic well-being, imagines the Liberia farmer becoming dependent upon a U.S.

23 *The Liberia Farmer* is included in the appendix of Gurley’s *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*. Citations parenthetically cited in text will be from this edition.
market for export. As Ashmun instructs, “the cultivation of your rich lands, is the only way you will ever find out to independence, comfort, and wealth” (64, emphasis original). Should colonists fail to adhere to Ashmun’s interpellation of them as farmers (“you are all farmers here”), he implies, they face a future of dependence and impoverishment. Yet focusing on the land “will produce a number of very valuable articles, for which in the United States, millions of money are every year paid away to foreigners,” if only the colonists will tend to it (65). Growing crops, particularly those desired in the U.S. market such as indigo, cotton, and coffee, represents political, economic, and domestic security in *The Liberia Farmer*.

In placing these conditions upon independence for Liberians, Ashmun’s text registers a particular ambiguity regarding the specific position and identity of black settlers, both in relation to the United States as well as Africa. One the one hand, *The Liberia Farmer* represents settlers as no longer “American,” insisting they abandon that identification and embrace their new African environment. On the other hand, it warns against the dangers of associating too closely with native Africans. For example, the text insists, “American crops, and the American modes of tillage, must nearly all be given up” (63). Becoming Liberian involves embracing an identity as “farmer,” but also abandoning certain American agricultural practices. Settlers must pay particular attention to the African climate, soil, and crops rather than assuming crops grown in the U.S. will grow in Liberia. Rice, for example, is cultivated all along the coast by local tribes, and Ashmun encourages his farmers to “[i]mitate them” (72). Yet, as we have seen with Ashmun’s reference to local Africans as “half naked Savage[s],” Africans and their way of life represent a threat to the settlers, signifying danger that they may abandon their
Christian civility and embrace the “primitive” behaviors of their new neighbors. In this way, farming for Ashmun and others in the colonization movement represents a mode for black settlers to naturalize as Liberian, to selectively adapt to their surroundings. Neither American, nor fully African, *The Liberia Farmer* charts a very particular course for colonists to become Liberian in a manner that would be recognized as legitimate by their white supporters in the United States.

When he asserts in *The Liberia Farmer* that “no crop is surer” than coffee for his eponymous subjects to enter the world of Atlantic commercial exchange, Ashmun provides an early reference to a commodity that took on particular significance in colonization discourse over the following decades (78). Ashmun held that “[n]o man should be in Liberia twelve months, without, at least, two acres set with coffee plants” (71). Coffee signified an important crop in Liberia both at home and abroad, as an item for export and a marker of bourgeois domesticity within Liberian homes. “Coffee,” Ashmun instructs, “whether considered a staple of trade, or a valuable article of domestic comfort, demands a large share of your attention” (71). While other agricultural commodities such as sugar and cotton figured in the speculations about Liberia’s economic potential, coffee in particular represented perhaps the greatest hope among colonizationists to elevate Africa, meet the growing demand for the beverage, and, at their most optimistic, transform the entire structure of the Atlantic world-system.

The mid-nineteenth century marked a moment of dramatic increase in the production and consumption of coffee. Transformation of social life and labor,

---

24 For a contemporary fictional reimagining of this loss of “American” identity through African colonization that also raises issues of white paternity, see Caryl Philips, *Crossing the River* (New York: Knopf, 1993).
particularly industrialization and urbanization in England and the United States, created a
greater demand for coffee in both the laboring and owning classes. This explosion in the
consumption of coffee was accompanied by an easing of taxation of the commodity
across Europe, leading to an increase in production and distribution. Discussing this
economic history of coffee, William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik note that
from its very early systematic cultivation coffee was a commodity caught up in processes
of commercial exchange. Almost exclusively an export product, coffee functioned as a
commodity “that sucked peripheral areas into the world economy, especially beginning in
the mid-nineteenth century.”\(^25\) In colonization literature throughout the 1840s and 1850s,
coffee represented a principal avenue through which Liberia would participate in this
world economy, supplying the U.S. in particular with this increasingly popular
commodity.

Focusing on the promotion of coffee cultivation also helps account for the
emphasis on independence and recognition of Liberian sovereignty in colonization
literature. That is, colonizationists hoped that coffee would continue to bind a sovereign
Liberia to the U.S. through a commodity chain of production, distribution, and
consumption.\(^26\) Scholars have noted the fraught economic condition of the American
Colonization Society during the 1840s, suggesting this played a significant role in the

\(^25\) William Gervase Clarence-Smith and Steven Topik, “Introduction.” \textit{The Global Coffee
Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989}. Clarence-Smith and Topik, ed. (New York:

\(^26\) Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, “Commodity Chains: Construct and Research,”
in \textit{Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism}, ed. Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz (Westport:
Praeger, 1994) 17.
decision to grant Liberia independence. Moreover, as we will see, conflicts with Britain over the right of tariff duties in the ACS-run colony also influenced the move to independence. The fantasy, then, of Liberia as a thriving coffee exporter that is no longer a financial burden upon the ACS, but rather a politically independent nation enriching U.S. investors, or the “friends of Liberia,” articulates political independence and economic dependency. Placing the discussions of Liberian sovereignty in this context helps account for the dialectic of dependence and independence that informs Ashmun’s pamphlet on the formation of Liberian subjects as at once autonomous, self-sufficient and subject to the dictates of U.S. and international markets.

Images from a pamphlet published fifty years after Ashmun’s text dramatically illustrate these intersections of colonization and coffee as a commodity chain linking Liberia and the United States. Distributed at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the pamphlet, simply entitled Liberia Coffee, promoted all types of Liberian goods, but focused especially on coffee from a farm owned by George Stockham and Edward S. Morris. Reproducing an advertisement for the Morris Farm from the Liberia Herald, one image encouraged Liberians to “go ahead,” “plant coffee” (Figure 1.2). The advertisement characterizes this message as a “peaceful battle cry [that] must be heard from Ocean to Ocean,” envisioning Liberian coffee competing with South America and, in particular, the coffee produced by slave labor in Cuba and Brazil. In addition to this suggestion that Liberian coffee would serve an economic blow to slave labor in the Americas, the advertisement explicitly promoted the social benefits of the beverage in an

effort to appeal to the more temperance-minded investor, claiming “Coffee may become a substitute for rum.” Thus the pamphlet mediates the morally beneficial role coffee represented on both the geopolitical and individual level; it could serve as an instrument of both global and personal reform.  


The other illustration included in the Liberia Coffee pamphlet also connected the global and the personal, representing coffee as the central nexus of Liberian subjectivity,

---

28 Liberia Coffee (Philadelphia: E. S. Morris, 1887) 17.
U.S.-Liberian relations, and the economic conditions of African modernity. “The Coffee Huller” (Figure 1.3) features modern machinery used in the production of coffee. The image connects different geographies, linking Liberia to the rest of Africa as well as the U.S. market across the Atlantic. Described as “the peacemaker for Africa,” modern coffee cultivation symbolizes an uplifting, or “civilizing,” influence on the continent. The coffee huller, as a signifier of technology facilitating the production of a commodity as well as continental peace, implies a transition throughout Africa, namely the ending of the slave trade and the establishment of thriving plantations that employ native Africans. Yet while its identification as the African peacemaker suggests its continental ramifications, the flags signal the transatlantic context of Liberian coffee linking a peaceful Africa to the United States. The presence of both Liberian and U.S. flags marks the special connection between the two nations, one forged not only through the effort of U.S. Americans in founding the colony of Liberia, but explicitly in economic terms through coffee as a commodity chain. The machine accompanied by the two flags temporally orients the image toward the future rather than the past, indicating the future is one of modern economic exchange and cooperation between the two sovereign republics.

Further, the image represents an idealized vision of Liberian subjectivity, positioning a Liberian citizen as central in negotiating and mediating these spaces. The inclusion of the black man in the image visually embodies the process of becoming Liberian that decades of colonization discourse attempted to call into being. He is well dressed in shirt, vest, and jacket, markers of his “civilized” status that come from his participation in the Liberian coffee industry. Indeed, the figure in the image can be said
to represent the culmination of the very “Liberia farmer” imagined by Ashmun decades earlier and, as we will see shortly, Sarah Hale in her novel, *Liberia*. While the figure in the image resides in Africa and is committed to growing crops suitable to that climate, as Ashmun instructed, he clearly has not abandoned the bourgeois ideals of comportment and civility. Through agricultural labor he is playing a central role in the “civilizing” of Africa while also producing an export commodity desirable in U.S. markets. This representation—of becoming Liberian, of a thriving U.S. transatlantic commerce with Liberia, and subsequent peace for all of Africa—visually condenses a number of intersecting hopes of colonization supporters.
These ideals—of commerce, civilization, and colonization—take on particular resonance at a national Convention of the Friends of the American Colonization Society, held in Washington D.C. in the spring of 1842. Ralph Randolph Gurley, then Secretary of the ACS and editor of the *African Repository*, opened the convention by mapping the boundaries of racial difference in global terms. The convention, he writes, provides an opportunity “to give our best thoughts and energies to advance a scheme of vast
magnitude and deepest interest to our free colored population, to such as may become free, to our national Union, and to Africa; which embraces in its promised beneficence two races of men, and two continents.”

The three principal objectives of the convention and the subsequent memorial submitted to Congress to facilitate this vision of racially-circumscribed continents included securing funding and official support of colonization from both federal and state governments, the promotion of commercial ties between the United States and Africa, and bringing an end to the transatlantic slave trade, an illegal traffic that undermined Gurley’s ideal of a separate and distinct white America and black Africa. A number of men, including former colonial agents and U.S. Senators, among others, delivered speeches over the course of the week promoting colonization and U.S. trade with the West African colonies. But Francis Scot Key was undoubtedly the central figure of the convention, as he wrote the Congressional memorial and delivered the keynote address of the convention on the intersecting themes of “Commerce, Civilization, and Colonization.” Key’s address served as an important touchstone in the colonizationist movement throughout the 1840s. It was constantly referred to and quoted in the pages of the African Repository, demonstrating the significance of the circum-Atlantic commercial world in promoting the Liberian colonization project.

Furthermore, the aim of the 1842 convention to garner federal support initiated debate over the ambiguous relationship between Liberia and the United States, a debate some attempted to resolve by proposing to make Liberia an official U.S. colony whereas others promoted Liberian independence, advocating that Liberia become a sovereign republic. Meeting in the Hall of the House of Representatives, the convention submitted

a memorial to Congress emphasizing “that both as auxiliary and protective to the interests of American commerce on the African coast, and as a means for the extinction of the slave trade, the Colony of Liberia is of incalculable importance, and deserves the vigorous and generous support of this nation.” Following the convention, the House Committee on Commerce issued a report, authored by Representative John Pendleton Kennedy, broadly endorsing the recommendations of the memorial, advocating U.S. financial support and military protection for the ACS-run African colony. Yet in doing so, the Kennedy report highlights and attempts to resolve uncertainties about the specific relationship existing between Liberia and the United States, an uncertainty that resonates and intersects with anxieties about the boundaries of racial identity.

A longtime supporter of colonization, Francis Scott Key delivered a speech that envisioned colonization as mutually beneficial to America, Africa, and the world of Atlantic trade connecting the two continents. Scott died eight months after the convention, and the ACS used his passing as an opportunity to promote the ideas outlined in his speech as a means of honoring his memory. Seeking to gain financial support from Congress for colonization, Key makes an argument about the constitutional authority to fund the Liberian colonies, focusing on their relationship to U.S. commerce and suppressing the slave trade. He asks rhetorically, raising the issue of U.S. imperial sovereignty: “what can Congress have to do with these colonies? Where our Government has no sovereignty or jurisdiction?” In answering his questions, he acknowledges that the Constitution does not authorize “[f]oreign conquest and dominion,” but that the U.S. has

a responsibility “to protect” Liberia. “Protection” serves as the exception distinguishing U.S. colonization schemes from other colonial formations that entail “conquest and dominion.” This distinction, an implicit differentiation from the imperial projects of other nations, represents one means of naturalizing empire, disclaiming the role of the imperial state through a comparative logic that casts the U.S. as the exception. And Key elaborates on this distinction by emphasizing the affections and protection defining this colonial relationship in terms of the natural affinities of families. 31

Along with U.S. commerce, colonization of black Americans is central in the redemption of a feminized Africa, promotion of African manhood, and humanizing of the entire Atlantic world. The slave trade continues to degrade Africa according to Key, and he encourages his listeners to remember, “she is still an awful sufferer.” Instead of the violent exportation of human beings—something Africa is held entirely responsible for—Key follows Ashmun in encouraging the cultivation of the land. Not only would colonization and farming redeem a feminized Africa of “her wrongs,” but it would also serve to encourage black men, in both Africa and the U.S., to embrace black manhood that agricultural labor supposedly affords. Black Americans becoming Liberian represents the ideal means of effecting these transformations for Key. Extending his gendered metaphor of a feminine Africa, Key figures black Americans as her diasporic children. “Africa will take to her bleeding bosom her long lost children,” he says, “and

they shall wipe away her tears of agony—break off all her chains—enlighten her
darkness, and the days of her abasement shall be ended.”32

Additionally, the “boundless prospects of this legitimate African commerce” with
other nations is configured as members of a peaceful family gathering together to instruct
and uplift each other through enlightened commercial exchange. This “legitimate”
commerce clearly stands in direct opposition to the “abomination” of the illegal slave
trade. The time has come for this family of nations to invite Africa to join them,
according to Key. In order for Africa to “be brought back into the family of nations,” he
proclaims, “instead of offering their wretched and plundered brethren in exchange for the
commodities of other climes,” Africans should focus on “the rich productions of their
own soil, to invite the trade of all nations to their shore.” Through this “lawful and
humanizing commerce,” says Key, “the African is rising from his degradation to his true
rank and condition as a man and rejoices in the labors and pursuits of a peaceful and
happy life” (emphasis added). Africa now represents a place for “distant nations to meet
together, as the members of a common family, in the interchanges of a peaceful and
civilizing commerce.”33

The actual memorial submitted to Congress following the convention
consolidated a number of the issues developed by Key linking colonization and legitimate
commerce to the suppression of the slave trade.34 In doing so, it enacts temporal and
spatial displacements that shift the critique of slavery and the slave trade away from the

32 Ibid., 217.
33 Ibid., 204-206.
34 While five men signed the memorial—F. S. Key, E. Whittlesey, R. R. Gurley, H. Lindsly, and
H. L. Ellsworth—authorship is attributed to Key throughout the African Repository.
U.S. nation while at the same time proffering resolutions to U.S. culpability for participation in those very practices, specifically through legitimate trade with Africa. Accounting for the system of slave labor in the United States, for instance, the memorial claims “this evil was not one of choice, but forced upon our country, in times of darkness, and when under the dominion of another government,” referring to British colonial rule.  

This historical elision is supplemented by emphasizing the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, with no mention of the violence and injustice of slave labor within the United States and its participation in the trade.  

Also similar to Key’s speech, the memorialists deploy metaphors of sex and gender, figuring their account of the Atlantic world in terms of an interracial family drama. Africa is presented as a woman violated by the slave trade, a system that “debases and desolates her.” With the force of U.S. and British naval squadrons proving unsuccessful in protecting Africa from this continued debasement, the memorial insists that “legitimate” commerce represents the only means for Africa’s redemption. In place of inefficient military force, the memorialists propose that the United States and Britain should instead “visit her coast in concert, open all avenues and facilities to a peaceful and profitable intercourse…and present to her people a commerce that shall enrich and civilize her, in the place of that which now desolates and debases her.” The surest means of developing these peaceful commercial relations with Africa is through

---

36 Ibid., 117.  
37 For first-hand accounts U.S. naval efforts to suppress the slave trade along the African coast, see Horatio Bridge, Journal of an African Cruiser; Comprising Sketches of the Canaries, the Cape de Verds, Liberia, Madeira, Sierra Leone, and Other Places of Interest on the West Coast of Africa. By an Officer of the U.S. Navy. Edited by Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York & London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845); Andrew H. Foote, Africa and the American Flag (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854).
support of the colonization movement and Liberia, “the infant…settlements upon the
coast.”  

While the memorial clearly disavows U.S. responsibility for the slave trade as
well as slavery in the nation, representing Liberia as “the infant” implicitly functions to
configure it as the child of a violated African mother and, by implication, a (white) U.S.
father. Transatlantic commercial relations facilitated through the acknowledged “infant”
settlement are represented as the proper, acceptable form of “intercourse” between the
U.S. and Africa that would ultimately curtail and rectify the violations of the slave trade.
The memorial, then, promotes legitimate commerce and the opening of an African market
in terms of proper, consensual relations between fathers, mothers, and children; familial
metaphors serve to illustrate an imagined transformation of the economic world of the
Atlantic. However, I suggest we can additionally read this very public statement of
political and economic policy as an analogue for violent interracial intimacies within the
United States. The connotations invoking racialized sexual violence in the memorial, that
is, are not simply metaphors characterizing the effects of the slave trade, but also register
a prevalent reality in the antebellum United States. Supporting colonization (here
through the cultivation of commercial relations) served as a means of ridding the U.S.
nation of a population that testified to that violence. This dialectic of public and private,
of political and personal, in terms of race, sex, and violence, significantly informs
colonization discourse, from public meetings, congressional reports, and especially
sentimental histories and novels.

_________________

119.
The Congressional Report responding to the memorial, written by John Pendleton Kennedy, then Chairman of the Congressional Committee of Commerce, both encouraged and concerned the “friends of colonization.” While he did not elaborate on the familial metaphors of the memorial, he raised an important question about the proper political relationship the U.S. should have with Liberia, which, as we will see shortly in the sentimental literature of colonization, becomes entangled with racialized sexual violence within the U.S. Kennedy, a Whig representative in the House from Maryland in the early 1840s, later went on to serve as Secretary of the Navy under President Fillmore. In addition to his political career, Kennedy was also a noted literary author of such southern plantation romances as *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (1832) and *Horse-Shoe Robinson* (1835). In his report on the memorial, Kennedy affirmed the impossibility of recognizing a place for free blacks within the U.S. nation but yet acknowledged the necessity of the U.S. government to provide “sympathy” to this class of “dependents.” Liberia, Kennedy writes, represents a “safe and prosperous home to that portion of our population, who…are still entitled, as dependents upon our guardianship, to our sympathy and support.” Yet Kennedy expresses uncertainty when he moves from the subject of the impossibility of black freedom within the nation to the political form that sympathy should take. Taking up the “question of the political relations which these colonies are to hold with our government,” he endorses federally funding colonization “without assuming all the hazards and responsibilities of a system of colonization.” Financial support represents one aspect of the “duty” of the United States to “take such steps towards the recognition of our appropriate relations to these communities.” However, for Kennedy, recognition does not mean a move toward
Liberian sovereignty and independence. Rather, it means possibly acknowledging Liberia as “an American colony.”

While raising the prospect of “an American colony” may seem to contradict Kennedy’s earlier rejection of “a system of colonization,” along with its attendant responsibilities, I would suggest this proposal, and the larger debate about Liberia’s political status in which it takes place, registers the ambiguities of U.S. imperial formations in the mid-nineteenth century that compared, distanced, and exempted U.S. assertions of empire from more conventional colonial projects. That is, Kennedy can acknowledge and promote the existence of “an American colony” and simultaneously distinguish it from a “system of colonization” because of a comparative logic that distinguishes the United States from dominant characterizations of European and British colonialism. As Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan observe in their discussion of colonial comparisons, “comparison provided the legitimating grounds for exceptional status, immunity, and exemption from international law—hallmark features of imperial statecrafts.”

Kennedy himself notes this exceptional status by emphasizing the “anomalous” character of U.S. empire in relation to Native Americans. “The idea of an American colony is not a new one,” he writes, “We have establishments of this nature, though somewhat anomalous in the character of their dependence upon our Government, in Indian tribes which have been placed beyond the limits of the States on the purchased

39 Ibid., 112-113.
As we will see, this ambiguity of U.S. imperial sovereignty, and the racialized figures that serve to express that ambiguity, continued after Liberia gained its independence from the ACS in 1847. Sentimental literature of colonization, in particular, took up this issue, and in doing so participated in the cultural work of naturalizing empire.

**Sentimentalism and Recognition**

The cultural work of sentimentalism depends upon recognition—acknowledgement of another’s interiority, their emotional subjectivity. Expressed in different relationships—of the mother for the child, the moral reformer for the exploited laborer or the suffering slave—sentimentalism presumes an emotional equivalence that can potentially reify difference imaginatively bridged through shared feelings and reinforce the configurations of power embedded in these various relationships, as many theorists of sentimentalism have demonstrated. This emphasis on emotion in colonization discourse, however, extends from the level of individual subjectivity to the geopolitical terrain of states. Sentimentalism functions to mediate and legitimate the politics of recognition on these different, overlapping terrains. In doing so, I contend, sentimental arguments encouraging the U.S. to recognize Liberian sovereignty serve to

---


naturalizes the fictions of equality that inform the real and imagined commodity chains that continue to bind a sovereign Liberia to the United States as an exporter of agricultural commodities such as coffee. The economic relationship is repeatedly figured in the sentimental literature of colonization through the emotive grammar of families and feelings, conditioning the character of a sovereign Liberia and its relationship with the United States through affective bonds. Of course, as we have seen in the discussion of “legitimate” commerce of coffee and other tropical goods replacing the slave trade, the imagined connections between these sentimental subjects plays a constituent role in these interrelated national and racial formations. Thus, attending to the discussion and promotion of recognizing Liberia’s sovereignty in the sentimental literature of colonization reveals efforts to narrate the simultaneous formation and regulation of Liberia as a racialized national community.

Helen Cross Knight published her sentimental history of Liberia, *The New Republic*, anonymously under the auspices of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society in 1851. Covering the formation of the American Colonization Society, the founding of the Liberian colony, and the political and social developments over its thirty-year history, *The New Republic* concludes with a call for the United States to “give her a just and honorable recognition among the sovereignties of the world” (247, emphasis original). The text recounts the history of colonization and Liberia in sentimental terms, presenting a narrative of benevolence wherein the ACS selflessly establishes and cultivates the

---

43 Helen Cross Knight, *The New Republic* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath Society, 1851). Citations from the book will be from this edition. While Knight published over twenty books during her lifetime, very little biographical information has been written about her. She was born in 1814 and died in 1906. The majority of her writing is juvenile and religious literature.
Liberian colony and encourages Liberian subjects, a process that culminates in the maturation of both state and subjects as Liberia moves from colony to republic and Liberians move from colonial subjects to national citizens. The process also takes up an explicitly racial aspect, asserting Liberia’s identity as an unambiguously black republic made up of black citizens, exemplifying the ways in which “becoming Liberian” represents a specifically national and racial formation of U.S. empire. Furthermore, this interrelated process of state and subject formation charted in this sentimental history, as with other examples of colonization discourse, situates farming as central to this ideology of development. The production and export of tropical agriculture provides an avenue not only to the realization of independence and equality for the nascent republic of farmers, but also to familial happiness and personal fulfillment. Thus, as we shall see, Knight’s *The New Republic* represents an example of sentimental colonization discourse foregrounding agricultural production and exchange in the Atlantic market as a condition for the realization of freedom and equality for Liberian subjects.

Knight’s *The New Republic* can be characterized as a sentimental history particularly because of the narrative’s emphasis on emotions and feelings, domestic images, and the familial metaphors that characterize the relationship between the ACS and the Liberian colony. In a typical passage describing Ashmun’s departure from Liberia, for example, Knight writes, “He had nourished it and brought it up; it had rebelled against him, yet he loved it with a father’s love—and now, as he beheld it, a mere speck in the distant horizon, his heart bled for the love he bore it, and he wept in believing he should behold it no more forever” (92). Amplifying his own description of his role as colonial administrator as one of “friend” to the colony and black colonists, this
passage situates the relationship between representatives of the ACS and the Liberian colony in terms of racialized paternalism, a white father encouraging and nourishing—indeed, loving—his “child.” This paternal metaphor is central to the way in which Knight narrates the development of Liberia from an infantilized, dependent colony to mature, independent republic. Ashmun is figured here as the father of the black colony (his “child”), one who acknowledges and recognizes a powerful emotional bond with Liberia, holding it in his heart and weeping at their separation. These key sentimental tropes—tears, hearts, familial love—perform the cultural work of legitimating the project of colonization to the readers of The New Republic. Further, they lay the groundwork for maintaining a relationship between the U.S. and Liberia after the latter became an independent republic. The representation of the deep, affective connection of a nurturing parent also bolsters colonization efforts to get the U.S. to recognize Liberian sovereignty; safely removed from the bounds of the nation, so the emotive logic goes, black emigrants in a developed, mature Liberia can be claimed by U.S. citizens as their offspring. Yet these sentimental configurations of paternal metaphors and recognition through love and tears, as well as idealized depictions of happy Liberian families and homes, I suggest, function to naturalize the neocolonial relationship imagined for Liberia in this sentimental literature of colonization.

As with so much colonization discourse, The New Republic participates in the efforts to encourage black emigrants to take up farming, defining the process of becoming Liberian as one involving a commitment to cultivating the land and producing agricultural commodities for export. Cultivating the land, according to Knight, represents the surest means to emotional well-being and familial happiness, of a completely realized
normative subject. And similar to other colonization literature emphasizing farming, *The New Republic* betrays an anxiety about black emigrants’ refusal to work the land in their new home, an anxiety that Liberians will not make “proper” use of the new-found freedom and independence the ACS has “benevolently” assured for them. For example, Knight writes that “Many forget that the soil is the true source of wealth and comfort.” Should Liberians want “to maintain themselves as a free people and to have a permanent home, they must cultivate it” (212). Later, Knight links this connection between farming and domestic stability to the condition of recognition as the key to reminding Liberians to look to the land for their wealth and happiness. In light of Liberia’s “recognized sovereignty among the civilized nations of the world,” she says in a condensed articulation of the overlapping registers of comportment, commerce, and Liberian subject and state formation, “[g]ardens and plantations heretofore neglected, or receiving comparatively little hearty labor, are now improved with great industry and careful attention. Every man seems to bear about him a renewed sense of responsibility. The dignity of free citizenship is upon him” (241-242). Recognition—of Liberian sovereignty as well as black manhood—is dependent upon Liberians’ attention to the land.

*The New Republic* recounts the diplomatic conflicts between Liberia and Great Britain that contributed to Liberia’s independence from the ACS in 1847, a crisis triggered by the private colony’s indeterminate political identity and ambiguous relationship with the United States. After being informed by U.S. Secretary of State Abel Parker that Liberia was “not established under the authority of our government,” British ships trading on the West African coast refused to pay Liberian tariff duties (222). Liberian colonial authorities nevertheless seized property from an English vessel to
satisfy harbor dues. The British navy retaliated by seizing a Liberian ship, claiming it was being used in the slave trade. The conflict over taxation and trade, according to Knight, impressed upon the ACS the need to make “a change as would enable the Liberian Government to make treaties with foreign powers” in order to resolve the equivocal status of Liberian sovereignty as a colony funded and operated by a private philanthropic organization (225).

Liberia’s “present position,” she continues, “was like that of a half-breed, neither a recognized Colony of the United States, nor an independent and recognized State” (225-226). Configuring this precarious political status through the ambiguously racialized figure of “the half-breed,” Knight aligns the need for a recognized political “State” with a clearly defined racial subjectivity. That is to say, Knight’s deployment of the figure of “the half-breed” serves as a threatening political and racial indeterminacy that serves as a counter to an idealized, fully-constituted black Liberia and, by implication, white United States that motivated the colonization movement. The “half-breed” conjures up histories of racial mixing, of miscegenation and sexual contact (both consensual and coerced) between blacks and whites in the United States. An independent Liberia would not only allow it to make treaties and trade with European states “based upon the perfect equality of…nations,” but also represents a fantasy among white colonizationists in the U.S. such as Knight of clearly demarcated racial and national boundaries (240). Simply put, a sovereign Liberian republic, according to Knight, resolves the white anxiety of racial mixing as it emblematizes the desire for a racially segregated future.
Outlining what they term “mixed-blood epistemologies,” Monika Kaup and Deborah J. Rosenthal discuss the ways in which traditional racial epistemology “has excluded the possibility that ‘half-breeds’ and ‘mulattos,’ as lesser humans…can be agents of knowledge.”\(^{44}\) Within this traditional epistemology, they continue, the figure of the half-breed thus “embodies epistemological uncertainty about racial identity. At the same time, unlike women or, say, blacks, some mixed-race people can ‘pass,’ and thus assume authority under a false guise.”\(^{45}\) Colonization literature represents that traditional epistemology in calling up and attempting to negate racial subjectivity that poses a threat to established boundaries of identity. The fact that mixed-race people can “pass” as white poses a clear challenge to the racial order of things that this traditional epistemology represents and reinforces. As Kaup and Rosenthal state, the figure of the half-breed “embodies epistemological uncertainty about racial identity,” an issue emphasized and resolved through colonization in Knight’s history as well as the conclusion of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, as we will see shortly.\(^{46}\) Thus, I suggest the sentimental literature of colonization posits Liberia as a site for the realization and codification of black subjectivity as a means to resolve the epistemological instability posed by “half-breeds.” In addition, as Knight’s particular invocation of the “half-breed” indicates, in this sentimental literature of colonization we can also trace the extension and overlapping of this epistemological uncertainty from racial to political formations in relation to U.S. empire. Recognition—of Liberian sovereignty and black subjectivity—


\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
functions as the negation of the “half-breed” and, by implication, the conditions of possibility in which “half-breeds” would continue to trouble white fantasies of U.S. racial purity and homogeneity.

For colonization supporters encouraging the federal government to diplomatically recognize the Liberian republic, domestic metaphors of family and paternity to describe the relationship between the United States and Liberia implicitly call up histories of miscegenation and denied white paternity—the “half-breed” metaphorically invoked in Knight’s call for recognition of Liberian sovereignty. Just as white U.S. men were unable to acknowledge their non-white children, the U.S. was unable to diplomatically recognize the Liberian republic. But colonization supporters such as Knight paradoxically presented recognition of Liberian sovereignty as a solution to this public disavowal of paternity by geographically and politically severing that familial connection, removing them from the national home. As Knight writes at the conclusion of her book:

Liberia is the child of our own institutions, bearing our likeness, breathing our spirit, and bestowing our privileges. Can we do otherwise than bid her God-speed? She may sometimes lag, sometimes lack, sometimes be evil spoken of; but shall we not love her still? ... may this American Republic stretch out its own strong arm, and with honest pride and fearless independence, give her a just and honorable recognition among the sovereignties of the world.” (247, emphasis original)

Liberia, the “child” of the United States, no longer marked by its racially and politically ambiguous status as “a half-breed,” can be safely acknowledged given its independence and separation from the U.S. An independent black Liberia would facilitate removal of mixed-race and black peoples from the U.S., increasing the number of black Americans “becoming Liberian,” which in turn would create a safe distance for white U.S.
Americans to take credit for and benefit from the Liberian republic and Liberian citizens as their “children.” While this discourse of family is used symbolically here, it implicitly and inadvertently registers the literal unacknowledged, disavowed, and violent mixed-race unions in the United States; becoming Liberian signaled a way in which the colonization movement sought to deal with the consequences of those unions.

A brief turn to the conclusion of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* further illustrates and clarifies efforts in colonization literature to use Liberian sovereignty to resolve these overlapping racial and political ambiguities. Stowe’s novel, published a year after Knight’s sentimental history, uses a letter written by the character George Harris to advocate black emigration to Liberia. Particularly interesting in this letter is the alignment of Harris’s assertion of a black racial identity with the assertion of Liberian sovereignty. Harris opens his letter expressing confusion over his “future course,” one that involves two intersecting aspects of his identity—racial and national. The letter in effect works through and resolves that confusion as Harris rejects a racially ambiguous status passing as a white man in the United States in favor of embracing and asserting a fully realized black subjectivity aligned with a black nationality. Recounting his mixed-race identity—what Knight would identify as his status as a “half-breed”—Harris insists that his “sympathies are not for [his] father’s race, but for [his] mother’s” (440). His white father, refusing to recognize him as a human being, but rather “no more than a fine dog or horse,” symbolizes the denied paternity of enslaved, escaped, and free mixed-race populations in the United States. Harris’s black mother, by contrast, loved him as “a *child.*” Though he never saw her, let alone knew her, being separated from her in infancy at a slave auction, he “know[s] it by [his] own heart,” that she continued to
love him, a recognition of humanity mediated through the emotive grammar of sentiment. Lamenting the “sufferings,” “distresses,” and “struggles” of his mother, as well as his wife and sister, Harris asserts his resolve to identify wholly as black: “It is with the oppressed, enslaved African race that I cast my lot” (440). In having Harris identifying with the “African race,” deliberately embracing a black subjectivity, Stowe resolves the ambiguity of Harris’s racial identity as a “half-breed.”

Significantly, Stowe situates this individual assertion of racial self-definition within a discussion of colonization that grafts racial identity onto nationality and sovereignty. Stowe implicitly aligns race and nation when Harris says he has “no wish to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them” (440). “American” here stands in for white, reinforcing the presumed racial homogeneity of the United States fueling the colonization movement as well as the anxiety over the position of racially ambiguous people such as Harris within the national boundaries of the U.S. Liberia, in contrast, offers a black, or “African nationality,” that provides a space for “a tangible, separate existence” wherein Harris and other black emigrants from the U.S. could embrace a black identity, one articulated and recognized through the nation form and citizenship (440). At the time of Stowe’s writing Liberia had become a republic, no longer, as Knight said, in a political “position like that of a half-breed, neither a recognized Colony of the United States, nor an independent and recognized State,” as Knight said. Stowe, through Harris, celebrates the resolution of this political ambiguity, informing readers that “this republic has, at last, become an acknowledged nation on the face of the earth.” Only in leaving the United States for Liberia will Harris have an opportunity to fully realize his black identity and advocate for his race as a representative of his (racial) nation among “the
Becoming Liberian for George Harris, simply put, involves the related processes of subject and state formation, which naturalize the link between racial and national identity.

Furthermore, Harris’s process of rejecting his position as a “half-breed” and becoming Liberian is an act of self-assertion, one that legitimizes the ideology of consent that informed the colonization movement. That is, voluntarily embracing his blackness and deciding to emigrate to Liberia positions him as an autonomous individual willfully making these decisions entirely of his own volition. This emphasis on individual consent underscores the emphasis placed on giving free blacks the choice to leave the U.S. for Liberia in colonization discourse. Becoming Liberian would allow these consenting black emigrants “to form part of a nation,” says Harris, “which will have a voice in the councils of nations, and then we can speak,” which aligns consensual emigration with racial recognition. Only through consensual emigration, Stowe implies, will others recognize a black identity and black nationality; only then will they be able to exercise their rights as black subjects in a sovereign state.

Harris, however, does not enact this transformation of becoming Liberian in individual isolation. His wife and family are crucial aspects of embracing his “African nationality.” Interestingly, Harris’s status as a “half-breed” requires the influences of femininity and domesticity for him to settle as a black subject. “[F]ull half the blood in my veins,” Harris writes, “is the hot and hasty Saxon,” a biological destiny supposedly infusing him with vigor and restlessness. Eliza, his wife, serves as a necessary counter to this biological drive, functioning as a domesticating influence that supersedes blood. Eliza’s “gentler spirit ever restores me,” says Harris, “and keeps before my eyes
the Christian calling and mission of our race” (442). This domestic influence is accompanied by an individual desire to work the land of his new nation, to labor as a farmer. Liberia represents “a field of work,” for Harris and his fellow emigrants, one that requires them “to work with both hands,—to work hard” (443).

Sarah Hale’s novel, Liberia, develops and unifies a number of the issues of farming, legitimate commerce, racial and political recognition, and assertions of black masculinity that run throughout writings by Ashmun, Key, Knight, Stowe, and others.47 While Amy Kaplan claims that Liberia can “be read as the untold story of Stowe’s novel, beginning where she concludes, with former black slaves immigrating to Africa,” it is important to note that the first half of Hale’s novel takes place within the United States.48 Liberia begins on the Virginia plantation of the Peyton family amidst a rumored slave uprising in the county while the young family patriarch, Charles, has taken ill. When the slaves on the Peyton plantation loyally escort the sick Mr. Peyton and his family to the neighboring town to keep them safe from rebellious slaves, he resolves to offer them their independence. He sets out on a series of “experiments” in black freedom that drives the subsequent narrative. The first experiment involves the establishment of a communal farm nearby the plantation. While Nathan and Keziah, Mr. Peyton’s most hard-working ex-slaves, initially thrive in their commitment to cultivating the land, the farm ends up in debt within a few years because of their more “indolent” black neighbors who refuse to work. The second experiment moves from a rural to an urban setting to test the possibilities for black freedom in the northern United States. Ben, Mr. Peyton’s

48 Kaplan, Anarchy of Empire 37.
coachman, and his wife Clara, refuse to work on the farm, initially choosing to remain in slavery. After Clara’s devoted service during an epidemic convinces Mr. Peyton she has earned her freedom, however, he consents to their moving north to Philadelphia. Here they experience a degree of success, but white northern racial violence, Clara’s undisciplined spending habits, and illness that costs Ben his job all combine to leave them impoverished and destitute. Mr. Peyton also visit former slaves in a black community in Canada before he fortuitously finds himself in Washington D.C. at the inaugural meeting of the American Colonization Society. The despairing situation of the Canadian settlement convinces Mr. Peyton of “the crushing superiority of the white man” on the entire continent and that while there is still hope for black freedom it is clearly “not in America” (127). Liberia, then, becomes the focus of Mr. Peyton’s interest, a final experiment for Nathan, Keziah, Ben and Clara. By the novel’s conclusion they all voluntarily emigrate to Africa, committing themselves to the cultivation of the land as part of their naturalization process of becoming Liberian.

Hale situates her novel within the sentiments of colonial exceptionalism structuring so much of the literature promoting the project of African colonization in the preface, asking the reader, “What other nation can point to a colony planted from such pure motives of charity; nurtured by the counsels and exertion of its noblest, wisest, and most self-denying statesmen and philanthropists; and sustained, from its feeble commencement up to a period of self-reliance and independence, from a pure love of justice and humanity?” (iv). Here the colonization movement in the U.S. is distinguished from the colonial projects of other global powers specifically through the language of benevolence, familial intimacies, and affection—the “pure motives of charity,” the
“nurtur[ing]” efforts of its supporters, the disavowal of self-interest and personal gain, emphasizing the “pure love” of both abstract liberal theory (“justice”) and a universalized conception of “humanity” transcending racial difference. Interestingly, the bearers of these sentimental feelings are men in the public sphere, those “self-denying statesmen and philanthropists” such as Ashmun and Key who founded and directed the American Colonization Society. This emphasis on male public figures in the opening pages of Hale’s novel frames the relationship between the ACS and Liberia in terms of racialized paternity, exhibiting sentimental manhood alongside the purportedly private sentimental novels and histories supporting colonization written by women such as Hale, Knight, and Stowe. Hale, of course, does not insinuate in the least that Mr. Peyton is the biological father of any of his slaves. However, his concern for their well-being and the interest he takes in their success after their emancipation positions him as their symbolic father, a patriarchal role that sets him to experiment with different possible avenues to recognition and legitimacy—political, economic, and social—for his ex-slaves.

Similar to George Harris in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, characters in *Liberia* articulate the process of becoming Liberian as a specifically gendered subject formation. Hale’s novel focuses in particular on colonization in Liberia as a means for black American men to fully realize their manhood, an expression of gender identity unavailable to them in the United States. Fixing on colonization as the solution to his failed experiments at emancipation, for example, Mr. Peyton “became convinced that the great problem which had occupied so much of his thoughts was at last solved, and that in Africa the African

---

might be allowed to grow to his full stature—*to become a man*” (179, emphasis added).

Becoming a man through colonization represents the gendered logic of empire; in the narrative black men—enslaved and free—will be forever emasculated should they remain in the U.S., unable to compete with their white male counterparts and failing to ensure the comfort and happiness of their wives and children. Explicitly contrasting this aberrant racialized manhood with the fulfillment of masculinity’s normative ideals through colonization, Hale quotes a speech by the Reverend J.B. Durbin echoing Mr. Peyton’s ideas. Durbin says, “I say, then, knowing as I do the positions and capabilities of the colored man in America, he can not attain to the functions and enjoyments of a man among us.” With their “manly hope” thwarted in the United States, Durbin continues, “transport[ing] these people to Africa…has shown that there they become men, and show themselves to be men. After large opportunities, and long and patient observation, I am persuaded that nowhere else but in Africa is the African *a man*” (226-227, emphasis original).

*Liberia* condenses the recognition of Liberian sovereignty and black male subjectivity most clearly in a scene where Mr. Peyton meets Joseph Roberts, the President of Liberia during a visit to the United States “on business connected with his adopted country” (186). A social gathering is scheduled one evening for men in the U.S. to meet with President Roberts and discuss the project of colonization and the current state of affairs in Liberia. Arriving late to this social affair, Mr. Peyton enters to find all the white men conversing together while President Roberts stands alone by himself. These white men, while introduced to Roberts by their host, immediately exhibit an “intolerable feeling of awkwardness” in how to interact with this black man. While these
white men proclaimed to be “ardent friend[s] to the colored race,” and even held “liberal and ultra views with regard to their rights and capacities,” they nonetheless remain incapable of carrying on a conversation with the visiting president. Mr. Peyton finds this state of things rather humorous because to him Roberts above all others represents a black man “whose appearance and manners showed him to be a gentleman—a man of tired bravery, fidelity, and uprightness,” yet the others “appear unconscious of his presence” (192). Unconcerned with what the others may think, Mr. Peyton strikes up a conversation with President Roberts because, as he later tells his wife, “Mr. Roberts is a fair specimen of a Liberian,” and he is interested to find out about progress in Liberia (194). That is, he both acknowledges Roberts as an individual (a man) and recognizes him as a representative of Liberia. Soon, the other white men join the conversation and Roberts finds himself the center of attention, recognized as a man among men. While Mr. Peyton expresses his disappointment that President Roberts had to leave the U.S. “without having obtained a formal recognition of the independence of his adopted country,” the scene stages the recognition of Roberts’s (black male) subjectivity first by Mr. Peyton and then the other white men as a means of advocating for the United States to grant that formal recognition of Liberian sovereignty.

While Roberts is represented as already a “Liberian” and a “man,” the process of becoming Liberian as a realization of manhood is charted in the novel through the character of Ben. Ben is initially described as “a bright mulatto, and a man full of energy and ambition,” but he is emasculated early in the narrative through his inability to express his own ideas and opinions, simply repeating what Mr. Peyton or his wife Clara tells him instead. When Mr. Peyton explains to Ben that the farm he has set up for his slaves will
serve as an avenue to freedom, Ben responds, “Yes, Mas’r Charles, I told Clary so; and she said it didn’t make no difference to speak of—a nigger’s nothing but a nigger, whether he is free or not” (53). This response can be read as a representation of the broader ideology of failed black masculinity in the U.S. that underscored arguments for Liberian colonization. For one, Ben informs Clara about Mr. Peyton’s initial experiment in emancipation; he does not articulate his own understanding of and desire for freedom and independence. Further, he rejects Mr. Peyton’s proposal because of his wife’s pessimistic view of thwarted black subjectivity and opportunity in the U.S. We never learn of Ben’s own opinion about the farm experiment or possibilities for black freedom more generally. Conveying the ideas of others—his master and his wife—rather than expressing his own, in this exchange Ben represents an unrealized gendered and racialized subjectivity; he is a black man without “manly hope.”

While Ben does gain some measure of success working as a coachman after Mr. Peyton consents to him and Clara moving to Philadelphia, this stability is undermined when he falls ill and loses his job. Ben takes to drinking to cope with his loss and his family becomes severely impoverished and they lose an infant child before coming under the care of white missionaries. While their condition improves with this charitable benevolence, Ben internalizes the view of his wife that he expressed earlier to Mr. Peyton: “I’ve tried my best, and I ain’t any thing but a nigger, and never shall be” (110). Again, the identity of “nigger” that Ben comes to accept signals not only the internalization of racial inferiority, but also an emasculated identity, as he cannot protect and provide for his wife and children in a city and a nation unable and unwilling to treat blacks on terms of equality.
Becoming Liberian, of course, is held out as the ideal means through which Ben can come to realize a fully constituted black manhood. Informed of Ben and Clara’s troubles in Philadelphia, Mr. Peyton and his wife attempt to convince their former slaves that becoming Liberian represents individual, familial, and social stability. Mrs. Peyton, for example, expresses her hope that her husband could “induce Ben to go” to Liberia, convinced that if he “could only get his ambition aroused once more, he would make a valuable citizen of that new country” (194). After making the transatlantic voyage with his family and spending several months learning about the prosperous opportunities in farming from Keziah and Nathan, Ben embraces the privileges and responsibilities of becoming a valuable Liberian citizen. She writes:

Ben experienced in his own spirit the invigorating effects of the moral atmosphere of Liberia. His ambition once more aroused, and his energy called into exercise by objects worthy of it, he…set himself so vigorously to work clearing and cultivating his farm, that eight months after he landed at Monrovia, he sent word to Mr. Peyton…that “he was living of his own, enjoying vegetables of his own raising, and that he and his family had never been in better health or spirits, and that he was already beginning to feel proud of being called a Liberian. (228)

Hale narrates Ben’s naturalization here (“being called a Liberian”) not as a formal legal process, but rather as one defined through the gendered discourse of agricultural labor. Not only will he be able to grow his own food and provide for his family as a Liberian, but Hale goes on to explicitly suggest Ben will begin to grow goods such as coffee for export to the United States just like other colonists such as Keziah and Nathan.

Similar to Ben, the narrative of Nathan also maps the self-realization of black manhood onto the process of becoming Liberian. As Nathan tells Ben, “the first moment I stepped my foot on Liberia, I felt like a different man” (219). This new manhood for
Nathan is defined sentimentally in part through his role as familial patriarch, for in Liberia he is “able to bring up a family of children where they need not be ashamed of their color, and where their feelings as well as their rights are respected” (219). Nathan’s familial security and patriarchal control (not to mention his new command of standard English) stands in explicit contrast to the early experiment of the communal farm, where he continually found his children’s morals corrupted by listless neighbors. Back on the communal farm, he lamented to Keziah, “we can’t keep ’em from ’sociating with de oders; and dey larn such mighty bad tricks and words” (67). Nathan aligns the morality of his family and his own racial and gender subjectivity with private property, expressing desire for “a farm to ourselves” as the ideal means to cultivate proper values in his children.

Yet it is not exclusively as family patriarch that Nathan symbolizes the link between Liberian citizenship and black manhood; his success growing coffee on his own farm marks the recognition in the narrative that black male subjectivity can only be realized in Liberia. Indeed, based on Hale’s account of Nathan and his coffee plantation, one could imagine him as the figure standing in front of the coffee huller, the “peace-maker for Africa,” in the image promoting U.S. commercial investment in Liberian coffee addressed earlier. Before Nathan informs Ben about the security of rights and feelings for his children in Liberia, Keziah takes Ben on a tour of her farm, pointing out the different crops she has successfully grown, acquainting him with the numerous possibilities for economic success open to an industrious farmer in Liberia. She brings him to a section of her farm where she grows ginger, telling Ben, “We raise a great deal of it, and make two or three hundred dollars a year by it.” “But,” she continues, “coffee
is, I think, what we shall find the most profitable…. Nathan planted five acres in coffee about six years ago, and last year he made six hundred dollars by them” (213). Ben continues to ask about growing coffee and Keziah goes to great lengths to explain the process of cultivating the trees, assuring Ben it is a most profitable enterprise even though it takes a number of years before producing a prosperous yield. In Hale’s novel, Liberia holds out promises not only of securing the political rights and responsibilities of citizenship, but also ample opportunity for economic prosperity for those hard-working Liberians and their families who will grow products in high demand in the industrializing zones of the world-system.

This reference to coffee cultivation in *Liberia* serves a number of different functions that resonate and intersect with the earlier discussion of the central place of coffee in colonization literature. For one, it can be read as an appeal to white American readers to invest in coffee production in Liberia, a common theme running throughout ACS literature as well as the letters written by black Liberian settlers included in the Appendix of Hale’s novel. One of the letters assures the reader that with “the aid of capital (and where are we to expect it from rather than the United States?), arrow-root, ginger, cocoa, coffee, sugar, and other products can be successfully raised here in large quantities, and exported to the United States, so as to create a competition in the market” (263). This emphasis on investment of U.S. capital in agricultural export products registers Liberia’s emergent place as dependent nation within the larger capitalist world-system. England, France, and Prussia may have formally recognized Liberia’s sovereignty, yet, like the articulation of individual rights with continued subordination, national independence can also function as a means of economic control. In fact,
Liberia’s independence in 1847, something strongly encouraged by the ACS, had less to do with establishing a republic to secure the political rights of its citizens than the economic pressures of that world-system, as Britain continually refused to pay custom duties to a colony set up by an organization run by private U.S. citizens. The right to legitimately impose those duties on British merchant ships trading in Liberian ports was a driving force for Liberia to become a sovereign and independent state, not the individual natural rights secured through citizenship in an independent republic. Independence may have given them some leverage against British and other European encroachments upon Liberian territory, but it also signals the larger economic forces shaping political contours of the black republic. The continual call for capital investment from the U.S. also reveals the limitations of national independence, laying bare the economic dependence of the ostensibly self-reliant, industrious coffee farmers such as Nathan in Liberia.

Moreover, it is important to consider how the reference to Nathan’s coffee plantation and the emphasis on agricultural exports figure in relation to the individual rights of freedom, liberty, and equality promised to black Americans upon their so-called consensual expatriation to Liberia. Discussing the emergence of liberal notions of freedom that began to define some aspects of ACS colonization in the U.S. by the 1820s, John Saillant writes that liberal freedom “makes commercial interests and individual rights universal and leaves other parts of human existence to be signifiers of ethnicity.”

Black freedom in Liberia within this context meant the right to trade and engage in transatlantic commerce as well as securing those rights endowed to them by virtue of their Liberian citizenship. Another letter included in Liberia’s Appendix speaks to this

articulation of free individuals and free trade when it states, “This is a great country for men and women who love liberty, and who love themselves, for money can be made here” (273). Love of liberty here gets enfolded within the rhetoric of earning and economic prosperity, signifying the conjunction of natural rights with commerce and trade that defines the ideology of liberal freedom. While the opportunity for black American emigrants to earn money to support themselves and their families that the writer of this letter praises should certainly not be dismissed or discounted given the severely circumscribed economic opportunities for free blacks in the United States, it is important to remain attentive to the larger forces defining and delimiting those liberties such as the necessity of U.S. American capital and the subordinated position being forged for Liberia within the larger capitalist world-system. Saillant points out the limitations in the ideology of liberal freedom in early nineteenth century U.S., explaining that “‘free’ came to describe a great variety of Americans and just by describing them all at once to obscure the way that a new commercial system worked well for some of them, but not for others” (275). Just as liberal freedom obscured inequalities between citizens within the national boundaries of the U.S., the political and economic freedoms for black settlers enshrined in Liberia works to obscure the emergent local social hierarchies taking shape within the new republic between black American settlers and local African populations as well as the dependent role for Liberia in the larger global economy.

Lastly, the emphasis on coffee and commerce found in Liberia serves to transform the local African population, an influence that would in turn emanate out beyond the nation’s boundaries, performing a humanizing transformation of the world-

51 Ibid.
system through trade in coffee, sugar, and other agricultural goods sought by Key and others at the 1842 colonization convention. Native African participation in the slave trade is figured as a major problem in the novel, serving as the primary source of hostility between the tribal populations and the black American settlers and their ACS agents, as the colonists continually frustrate the trade in slaves by securing more territory along the coast. Hale emphasizes Christianity’s influence in helping to bring an end to this native complicity in trafficking in humans. However, in the novel it is also Liberia’s dependent position through agricultural exports that provides an ideal opportunity to train the native African population in proper commercial behaviors, teaching them to participate in the “wholesome branches of industry” instead of the slave trade (230). Hierarchies between the natives and black American settlers within the nation take shape as a result, something registered in Liberia when Keziah informs Ben she hardly performs any physical labor because of the abundance of native workers who are “glad to help” on her farm for a very cheap wage (217).

This reorientation of the west coast economy of Africa, according to Hale’s theory of colonization, will exert a sentimental influence felt the world over, as she insists the native Africans will willingly give up their participation in the slave trade in order to engage in consensual wage labor on settler plantations. The “gentle control” of black American influence through the enlistment of the native population to work the fields in order to produce crops such as coffee for the markets of Europe and America, according to Hale, will help end the transatlantic traffic in humans “more surely and effectually than by all the armaments of England or America” (229). The “gentle control” secured through proper training in both domestic and agricultural labor will have a much greater
impact in ending the slave trade than any military force. The consensual deportation of black Americans from the national domestic sphere of the U.S. will not only benefit the black colonists becoming Liberian, the native West African population employed by them, and white Americans relieved of the “burden” of black and mulatto Americans, but also the world economy, benignantly—“gently”—transforming the world market by offering agricultural products necessary to any well-ordered domestic sphere in place of chattel slaves.

**Martin Delany, Emigration, and Black Sympathy**

“Liberia is not an Independent Republic,” Martin Delany emphatically declares in his 1852 book *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. “[I]n fact,” he continues, *it is not* an independent nation at all; but a poor miserable mockery—a burlesque on a government—a pitiful dependency on the American Colonizationists.52 This concluding section examines Delany’s critique of colonization in Liberia, in particular, and his analysis of the imperial logic of citizenship and sovereignty underscoring the colonization movement more generally. In addition, I consider Delany’s formulation of interracial solidarity as part of his proposal for black emigration in the Americas. He implicitly linked this hemispheric solidarity to his contestation of colonization in *Condition*, insisting that Liberia originated in “a deep laid scheme of the slaveholders of the country, to exterminate the free colored people of the American continent” (204). Throughout the late 1840s and into the 1850s Delany was a

consistent critic of Liberia, exposing the conditions of dependence and subjection to white U.S. interests that shaped the formation of Liberian citizenship and Liberian sovereignty. Delany’s contributions to the antebellum black press, including articles from the *North Star*, an African American newspaper he edited with Frederick Douglass, and letters published in *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, explicitly challenge efforts to send black Americans across the Atlantic to Liberia. Further, these writings call on African Americans to reject sentimental professions of white “sympathy” which, as we have seen, frequently operate in the service of colonization. In marked contrast to Liberian colonization, Delany counters the alignment of the United States with whiteness not simply by advocating black integration with whites in the nation, like Douglass and others, but rather by laying a claim for black and other people of color to the entire American hemisphere. He sought out, for example, “the much needed organization of intermediate communication between all of the colored races on the Western Continent.” “Without it,” he believed, blacks in the U.S. “may hope for little; with it we may expect much.”

This interracial, hemispheric communication underscored various proposals for black emigration in the Americas. Emigration, Delany held, “strictly is neither domestic nor foreign, but a policy which belongs to both aspects of our political advancement.”

To develop these lines of communication, I argue that Delany proposes an alternative

---


55 Ibid.
politics of sympathy, one that reorients African Americans away from white sympathy aligned with both Liberian colonization and assimilation in the U.S., looking instead toward communities of color in the Americas similarly subjected to white racial violence. Throughout his letters and editorials in the African American press, his novel *Blake; or the Huts of America*, and his keynote speech from the 1854 National Emigration Convention of Colored Men, Delany envisions both political and affective alliances in particular between African Americans and Native Americans to insist that these different communities of color in fact have a greater right to the Americas than white Euro-Americans. Thus, while we can read Delany’s project of black emigration in the Americas as an expression of racial nationalism, as many have, I suggest that it is one formulated within the context of interracial alliances that stand in explicit opposition to both transatlantic and hemispheric assertions of U.S. empire. Delany, simply put, sets out to denaturalize the Euro-American presence in the Americas. Taken together, black emigration in the Americas and interracial sympathetic solidarity articulate a cultural politics of disaffiliation for black Americans from both U.S. and Liberian identity in order to contest racial ideologies underwriting multiple form of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. imperialism, including African colonization and hemispheric expansion.

Delany first notes Liberia’s independence from the ACS in an 1848 letter to Frederick Douglass published in the *North Star* as part of his “Western Tour” of the

---


northern free states. While expressing optimism at the possibility of what an independent republic of Liberia may represent, he nonetheless remains skeptical because of the ongoing relation of the new republic with the ACS. Identifying Liberia as “the creature of Colonization,” Delany commends the new independence, “that is, provided she is determined to exist without a master and overseer,” suggesting that political independence does not automatically negate conditions of servitude.58 The figures of the master and overseer situate the colonization movement as a “creature” that functions to strengthen slavery in the U.S. and secure racialized labor in Africa. That connection—the metaphorical relation between master and slave to characterize the ACS and Liberia—represents the central limitation of colonization for Delany, even after Liberian independence. That is, while the formal structures of enslavement or colonial dependency may no longer hold, the residual effects of those social and political relations may continue to shape the present. For Delany, severing this connection that retains racialized subordination even after “independence” or “emancipation” centrally informs his political project of emigration, one that, as we shall see, leads him to envision alternative connections across racial difference to criticize both whiteness and empire.

Further discussing Liberian independence in the same North Star letter to Douglass, Delany writes that now “she is lauded to the skies as an evidence of the capacity of the colored man for self-government” (77). Here, however, those who laud all that an independent Liberia represents are white U.S. Americans, “our quasi philanthropists” (78). Delany encourages black readers of the paper to turn away from

58 Letter to Frederick Douglass, North Star, 4 February 1848. Martín R. Delany: A Documentary Reader 77. Further citations from this letter will be from this edition.
white colonizationists and other so-called “philanthropists” to formulate their own opinions on black self-government. “The proud little Republic of Hayti,” Delany writes, “has for the last fifty years fully demonstrated this truth,” though whites celebrating Liberian independence “are so far-sighted, that this fact is too near and apparent to come within reach of their vision” (78). The inability, or unwillingness, of many white U.S. Americans to acknowledge Haiti as a representative example of black autonomy signals for Delany their desire to take credit for and maintain control over black “self-government,” a figurative relation that maintains them in the role of “overseer.” The turn to Haiti marks for Delany not only an effort to forge a collective black identity in the Americas that crosses national boundaries linking Haitians and black U.S. Americans, but serves as one component of a larger effort to identify and forge connections with other communities of color throughout the hemisphere also subjected to U.S. imperial violence.

Delany continues to work toward a reorientation away from white philanthropists and toward communities of color in the Americas in other North Star articles. In doing so he invokes the notion of black “sympathy” to point up the limitations of white sentimental benevolence. While he consistently publicly denounced the American Colonization Society, he was careful to draw a distinction between the ACS and the black colonists leaving the U.S. to become Liberians. In an 1849 article from the North Star entitled “Liberia,” for example, Delany insists “we have no sympathy with the degrading, expatriating, insolent, slaveholding scheme of American Colonization, but look upon Liberia, in its present state, as having thwarted the design of the original schemers.”

His refusal of “sympathy” with the ACS here is a crucial formulation that will continue to develop in later work. Essentially, the repeated assertion that blacks in the U.S. have “no sympathy” with white colonizationists represents a radical refusal of the latter’s efforts to sentimentally identify with the former through shared emotion. Delany identifies an extension of racialized inequality in white professions of sympathy and consequently remains skeptical of the political and racial recognition articulated through sentimental discourse. For Delany, “sympathy” requires a shared, or at least commensurate, experience.

Further, sentimental professions of white sympathy that lack any genuine recognition of the condition of blacks in the U.S. rob them of both literary and political self-representation. Thus, for example, in an 1853 letter to Frederick Douglass he repeatedly accuses Harriet Beecher Stowe of failing to express sympathy when confronted with any future for blacks outside of Liberian colonization. Particularly offensive to Delany is Stowe’s dismissal of Haiti. He asks Douglass, “is it any evidence that she has any sympathy” for “the African race at all; when…she sneers at Hayti—the only truly free and independent civilized black nation as such, or colored if you please, on the face of the earth—at the same time holding up the little dependent colonization settlement of Liberia in high estimation?”

60 Tellingly, Delany elaborates on his suspicion of working in alliance with whites, of trusting their public professions of sympathy, by relating “an old American story” to Douglass about a Native American and a white man out hunting together. The story involves the two men hunting turkeys and buzzards.

60 Letter to Frederick Douglass. Frederick Douglass’ Paper, 6 May 1853. Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader 232.
They agree to divide the birds equally, with the white hunter doing the counting, or “being the teller.” When it comes time to divide their game, the white hunter says, “turkey for me, and buzzard for you—buzzard for you, and turkey for me.” The Indian becomes understandably frustrated at this racialized equivalence, and Delany identifies with (indeed, is in sympathy with) the Native American, telling Douglass, “I feel somewhat as the Indian did; I am growing weary of receiving the buzzard as our share, while our tellers [i.e. Stowe] get all the turkeys.”

Delany imaginatively develops his call to reorient the recipients of black sympathy away from white colonizationists and toward Native Americans in his novel *Blake*. After escaping from the Mississippi plantation of Colonel Stephen Franks when his wife Maggie is sold and sent to Cuba, the eponymous hero travels the U.S. South coordinating a slave uprising before travelling to Africa on a slave ship and then reuniting with Maggie in Cuba to prepare for the inter-American insurrection. On his covert travels in the U.S., Blake heads west to Texas and then up to Indian Territory for an “Advent Among the Indians.” Blake’s visit to the Choctaws sets the stage for an explicit contrast between the possibilities and implications of black and white sympathy for Native Americans. Upon arriving in the Choctaw community Blake meets with Mr. Culver, the elder chief, but is continually interrupted by Dr. Donald. The doctor, we are told, is a white man who married into the tribe solely for his wife’s “wealth and a home.”

Dr. Donald represents the selfish motivations of white men in interracial unions with Indian women. Property serves as the primary interest rather than emotional ideals

---

61 Ibid., 235.
of affection and love. With this white character, Delany exposes the work of interracial romance and marriage in the service of empire that we will see at work in the following chapters.

This critique of white-Indian unions contrasts, albeit somewhat awkwardly, with the black-Indian unions Mr. Culver praises in his conversation with Blake. It is an awkward celebration for the fact that Blake is confronted with the reality that the Choctaws also hold black slaves. When Blake asks Mr. Culver how it is he can be a slaveholder, the chief responds by marking a difference between whites and Indians and their relationship to black slaves. “Indian,” Mr. Culver says, “work side by side with black man, eat with him, drink with him, rest with him and both lay down in shade together; white man even won’t let you talk! In our Nation Indian and black all marry together” (86). Culver attempts to downplay the condition of enslavement for blacks by pointing to the shared labor and sociality of the slaves and their Indian masters. Elaborating on the interracial marriage between blacks and Indians when he talks approvingly of the Seminole Wars, Culver states that the “squaws of the great men among the Indians in Florida were black women, and the squaws of the black men were Indian women. You see the vine that winds around and holds us together. Don’t cut it, but let it grow till bimeby, it git so stout and strong, with many, very many little branches attached, that you can’t separate them” (87). This speech assures Blake of the chief’s interracial sympathy and he imparts his plan for black revolution in the hopes of forming an alliance despite the fact that the Choctaw Nation was “the only instance in which his seclusions were held with the master instead of the slave” (87).
Delany’s focus on the black-Indian alliance of the Seminole Wars expressed through the particular metaphor of the vine reorients similar calls for interracial sympathy and solidarity by African Americans. For example, in his 1848 essay “The Past and the Present Condition and the Destiny of the Colored Race,” Henry Highland Garnet asserts that “[t]he Red men of North America are retreating from the approach of the white man. They have fallen like trees on the ground in which they first took root, and on the soil which their foliage once shaded.” Black Americans, or “the Colored race,” Garnet continues, “although they have been transplanted in a foreign land, have clung to and grown with their [white] oppressors, as the wild ivy entwines around the trees of the forest, nor can they be torn thence.”63 As Robert Levine notes of this “organicist metaphor,” Garnet (who died in Liberia) envisions a relationship between blacks and whites that extends “to the point of mutual dependency, even ‘love’.”64 I would suggest that the “vine” between blacks and Indians (one formed in anti-imperial resistance, no less) articulated by Delany in Blake functions as an intertextual revision of Garnet’s “wild ivy” linking black and white. Far from the disappeared and disappearing race as Garnet represents them in his racial triangulation, Native Americans for Delany represent living communities struggling, like black Americans, to cope with and resist dispossession and exploitation. Simply put, for Delany Native Americans, in contrast to the majority of whites, are worthy subjects of black sympathy. They are subject to comparable struggles and therefore the possibility exists for genuine emotional

64 Levine, Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity 67.
identification and understanding that may in turn lead to alliances and solidarity in resistance to the racial violence of empire.

Delany’s keynote address at the 1854 National Emigration Convention of Colored Men, “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent,” articulates his vision of black emigration, a project that looks to other communities of color in the Americas with whom his black nation could align its sympathy and solidarity in opposition to U.S. empire. But in formulating that project, Delany first moves through an incisive analysis of the ways in which citizenship and sovereignty operate in the process of naturalizing empire. That is, he identifies the function of rights and liberal subject and state formation in facilitating imperial expansion, dispossession of racialized populations, and ideologies of white supremacy. Thus, emigration for Delany represents a vision of self-determination that rejects white efforts to extend rights to blacks and other communities of color in a manner that would perpetuate racial subordination. Extending rights, according to Delany in this speech, potentially re-inscribes an imperial logic of race, resulting in the ongoing exploitation of people of color and the potential erasure of cultural and racial identities through enforced assimilation. Emigration, what Delany proposes as his own “sovereign remedy” to white racism and imperial expansion, acknowledges that blacks in the United States are not the only ones subject to these assertions of power. Rather, I suggest we can read emigration in part as an effort to recognize commonalities amongst non-white populations. In doing so, Delany develops his call for blacks to reject the proffered bonds of white sympathy and instead to form alternative interracial alliances that will contest the processes of naturalizing empire.
“Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent” opens with a genealogy of U.S. citizenship to warn listeners about the racially circumscribed conditions necessary to fully exercise the rights and privileges of this political identity. Delany identifies gradations of national identity that function to manage racial and other hierarchies within the United States. He cautions African Americans about the social, economic, and political exclusions that potentially accompany inclusion in the U.S. nation through citizenship. Delany’s critical analysis of citizenship, then, represents one example of what Devon W. Carbado identifies as a process of “racial naturalization.” According to Carbado, naturalization in the United States is not simply a formal or legal procedure by which one becomes a citizen, but also “a social process that produces American racial identities.” Critiquing the assumption that inclusion implies equality and, conversely, that exclusion necessarily implies inequality, Carbado critically interrogates the ways in which both legal and quotidian—de jure and de facto—forms of racial naturalization produce “inclusionary forms of exclusion” (46). Thus, Delany’s concerns about the potential racial subordination that the extension of U.S. citizenship to blacks embodies anticipates Carbado’s assertion that race “determines the kind of American citizenship status one occupies,” not to mention the “insular” U.S. American identities that fall outside of the category of citizen, such as slave (49). While Delany expressed suspicion about colonization and the process of “becoming Liberian” as a perpetuation and extension of white power over blacks, he was also acutely aware of the similar configurations of power involved in “becoming American” for blacks through

U.S. citizenship. Both U.S. and Liberian citizenship represented processes of racial naturalization that denied black autonomy and self-rule, leading him to formulate alternative expressions of national and racial identity and, as we have seen, alternative alliances and solidarities in an effort to denaturalize the ideologies of racial subordination underwriting the supposedly manifest destiny of U.S. global expansion.

Tracing the identity of “citizen” in U.S. political culture back to the Roman republic, in “Political Destiny” Delany notes the dichotomy between citizens, on the one hand, and aliens, foreigners, and enemies, on the other, distinctions that marked the boundaries of identity in Rome and modern nations. Modern liberal citizenship, according to Delany, has its etymological roots in the Roman “Cives Ingenui,” or freeborn citizen, an identity defined primarily in opposition to these categories of noncitizen, those outside of or antagonistic to the national community. However, Delany goes on to complicate this dichotomy, noting that it obscures the internally differentiated identity of Roman citizen. “The Romans, from a national pride,” Delany observes, “to distinguish their inhabitants from those of other countries, termed them all ‘citizens,’ but consequently, were under the necessity of specifying four classes of citizens.” One class, for example, could vote, but only for Cives Ingenui, while another, the “supplicating citizen,” sought out sympathy from the privileged through their continual “moaning, complaining, or crying for aid or succor” (246). Thus, while “citizen”

---

66 Carbado also traces the process of racial naturalization back to Roman law via Agamben’s discussion of the figure of homo sacer to theorize his notion of “bare life.” Carbado writes, “Implicit in Agamben’s conception of bare life is the notion that inclusion can be a social vehicle for exclusion and that inclusive exclusions can have constitutive power” (“Racial Naturalization” 46). Thus, while Delany does not explicitly mention homo sacer when discussing hierarchies of Roman identities, he articulates a similar process of inclusive exclusion.

67 Delany, “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent.” Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader 246. Citations from the speech will be from this edition.
presumes stability and equality in opposition to the “alien” and other noncitizen subjects, it does not preclude inequalities and difference of status within its purview.

Delany takes this explication of citizenship and applies it to the situation of formal U.S. citizenship. In particular, he warns African Americans about the “false impression…that the privilege of voting constitutes, or necessarily embodies, the rights of citizenship” (246). Extending suffrage to blacks in the United States without the possibility of blacks themselves being elected to positions of power, Delany argues, simply reinscribes their subordinate position while obfuscating that subordination through the potential extension of suffrage. “To have the ‘right of suffrage,’” he says, “is simply to have the privilege…of giving our approbation to that which our rulers may do, without the privilege…of doing the same thing” (247). The proposed extension of rights and privileges, of the inclusive exclusions of citizenship, represents “the true secret of the power which holds in peaceable subjection, all the oppressed in every part of the world” (247). Delany deploys this genealogy of citizenship, then, to make an incisive critique of the subjection contained within the inclusion of citizenship in the nineteenth-century United States.

While “Political Destiny” does not take up Liberian colonization explicitly, Delany’s emphasis on emigration in the Americas functions as a direct rejection of that scheme. As he notes, one of the principal aims of the address is “to induce every black and colored person to remain on this continent, unshaken and unmoved” (268). However, Delany does take up the imperial logic of sovereignty and recognition in a way that sheds light on the debates among the colonizationists about U.S. recognition of the Liberian republic. In his survey of the political conditions of people of color throughout
the Americas, he remarks on the United States government “knowingly designing to
effect a recognition of the independence of the Dominican Republic, while disparagingly
refusing to recognize the independence of the Haytian nation” (271). Insisting that
Dominicans and Haitians are similar in all but language, Delany implies the only reason
to recognize one nation and not the other lies in the self-interest of the U.S. While he
does not elaborate on this point in “Political Destiny,” he does return to it one year later
in his follow-up report to the National Emigration Convention, “Political Aspect of the
Colored People of the United States.” There he continues his critique of the expanding
U.S. imperial cartography throughout the Americas and the Pacific, commenting on such
U.S. schemes as annexing Hawai‘i, Chinese disenfranchisement in both California and
Cuba, as well as filibustering in Central America. Delany’s mapping of empire also
includes a “deep seated scheme” in the United States “for the invasion of Hayti,”
primarily through attempts to establish a naval base in the Dominican Republic. While
a military station did not materialize in the Dominican Republic in the 1850s and the U.S.
did not officially recognize that country until 1860, Delany nonetheless identifies the
alignment of diplomatic recognition with U.S. expansion. He notes one of the ways in
which U.S. power and control can operate through the affirmation of independence, the
very logic underscoring calls to recognize Liberian sovereignty and establish commercial
relations with the independent republic.

In addition, “Political Destiny” also addresses the political and economic
expediency for colonial powers to grant independence to their colonies. Canada seemed

68 Delany, “Political Aspect of the Colored People of the United States.” Martin R. Delany: A
Documentary Reader 286.
to represent an ideal sight of emigration for African Americans, but Delany worried that it would soon get its independence from Great Britain, leaving it, along with its black inhabitants, threatened with incorporation into the United States. He writes of an indisputable predicate in political economy, that any province as an independent State, is more profitable in a commercial consideration to a country, than when depending as one of its colonies. As a child to the parent, or an apprentice to his master, so is a colony to a State. And as the man who enters into business is to the manufacturer and importer, so is the colony which becomes an independent State, to the country from which it recedes. (276)

While Delany here is explicitly discussing the possible relationship that will define Canada and the Great Britain in the future, his “predicate” of political economy can be usefully extended to characterize the relationship between the U.S. and an independent Liberia envisioned by colonizationists. As we have seen, calls for the U.S. to recognize Liberian sovereignty were inextricably bound up within the “commercial considerations” of transatlantic trade; when forced to decide whether Liberia should be an independent republic or an “American colony,” the former represented the “more profitable” option, one that also allowed the U.S. to further disclaim its role as an imperial state. And while Delany claims this neocolonial logic rests purely on a “commercial consideration” expressed in the language of political economy, he also deploys metaphors of family to formulate his critique of this condition of independence. Thus, for Delany the recognition of independence and sovereignty does not automatically imply a measure of autonomy or genuine equality among nations. Rather, similar to the hierarchies encoded within the individual political identity of citizenship, sovereignty and recognition can function to perpetuate and further inequalities among states. In “Political Destiny” Delany identifies and criticizes the ways in which both citizenship and sovereignty can
serve to legitimate and cloak the operations of imperial expansion, or how they function to naturalize empire.

“Political Destiny” also develops Delany’s assertion that blacks have “no sympathy” with whites that he first formulated in his *North Star* articles, and that they must shift their affective alliances toward people of color in the Americas. To arrive at this conclusion, he insists on the inefficacy of attempting to identify with whites and the necessity of working with communities of color throughout the hemisphere. He writes, for example, of white “[f]riends…anxious for our elevation,” who “have for years been erroneously urging us to lose our identity as a distinct race, declaring that we are the same as other people” (251). For sympathetic white friends, elevation involves a rejection of black racial identity; it means compromising a sense of self and acting “the same” as the presumably white “other people.” Additionally, while these white “friends” encourage black assimilation, they simultaneously “propagat[e] the doctrine in favor of a *universal Anglo-Saxon predominance*,” an articulation of sameness and difference, of equality and hierarchy, that will only work to perpetuate black subservience to whites (251). For Delany, identifying with whites implies the loss of a genuinely autonomous black subjectivity. Even Liberia, which colonizationists hold up as a symbol of black racial pride, restricts the autonomous development of black racial identity as it defines its fulfillment in terms of the fantasies of white proponents of colonization in the U.S. Here Delany rejects black identification with whites, insisting on the impossibility of the recognition of real equality given the current conditions of race and power shaping the relations between races, both within and outside the United States.
Moreover, these concerns about the negation of racial identity extend beyond the issue of black and white in the United States or the U.S. and Liberia. Delany counters the threatened loss of racial identity and the assumption of white racial superiority by calling on people of color throughout the globe to acknowledge and embrace their common cause in resisting European and Euro-American colonial expansion. “The blacks and colored races” must recognize the truth that the “great issue…upon which must be disputed the world’s destiny, will be a question of black and white; and every individual will be called upon for his identity with one or the other.” Here “black” for Delany encompasses South Asians, Pacific Islanders, Africans, and Native Americans—“four-sixth of all the population of the world”—that must work together to resist “so many encroachments of the white upon the rights of the colored races” (252). In calling “every individual” to take a stand regarding their racial identity, Delany anticipates Du Bois’ diagnosis of “the problem of the color line,” extending this particularly twentieth-century problem back into its earlier nineteenth-century global formation. As Gretchen Murphy and others have observed, Du Bois’ global conception of the color line represents a “process of strategically forming and re-forming color lines in light of shifting alliances, interests, and fantasies of world power,” and the same could be said for Delany’s own conceptualization of racial identity and alliance.69

Delany creatively maps this “great issue” of racial affiliation in hemispheric terms to stake a claim for African Americans within the Americas, one that he believes far

outweighs similar territorial claims of Europeans and Euro-Americans. Delany favored the West Indies, Central and South America as ideal for black emigration, a transnational political cartography he envisions as “but one country—relatively considered—as part of this, the Western Continent” (255). In embracing this hemispheric context, Delany not only rejects the colonizationist assumption that black Americans properly belonged in Africa, but also the ideology of Manifest Destiny that projects U.S. continental expansion as both providentially sanctioned and historically inevitable. He does, however, fall back upon rhetoric that echoes notions of manifest destiny. When discussing emigration to the Caribbean, for instance, Delany notes, with particular literary flourish, “This is a fixed fact in the zodiac of the political heavens, that the blacks and colored people are the stars which must ever most conspicuously twinkle in the firmament of this division of the Western Hemisphere” (258). While Delany was prone to such mystical pronouncements that have led some to see him championing his own unique imperial vision, by no means is it commensurate with the rhetoric of racial superiority (and consequent racial violence) that informed dominant U.S. imperial formations.

Moreover, Delany based this “fixed fact” that seems to naturalize his claim on the long history of African labor in the Americas, beginning in the early sixteenth century. In this history, Delany accounts for the presence of Africans in the Caribbean as early as 1502 and then points out the contemporaneous arrival of Pilgrims in Plymouth and African slaves in New Bedford in

70 Robert S. Levine compares Delany’s proposal for black emigration to Nicaragua at the end of *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* to William Walker’s filibuster of that Central American country, claiming “a colonizing, or imperial, desire guides his Central American vision, one not so very different from that of the filibuster William Walker.” Levine, *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity* 63. See also, Jake Mattox, “Alternative Imperialism in the Age of Manifest Destiny.” (Ph.D. Thesis: University of California, San Diego, 2007), particularly Chapter 4.
1620. Over the course of this early history, Delany notes the African contributions to European colonies throughout the hemisphere, particularly in clearing and cultivating land. The geographical contours of this history underscore Delany’s “claims of the black race, not only to the tropical regions and *Southern temperate zone* of this hemisphere, but to the whole Continent, North as well as South” (258).

Further, he entwines this history of African labor with a history of the decimation of indigenous populations beginning with the arrival of Columbus on Hispaniola, acknowledging that it is not African Americans alone, but rather a broader conception of “the blacks and colored people” that can lay claim to a legitimate right to the hemisphere. He observes that Africans were first brought to Hispaniola only after enforced labor led to the massive eradication of the native peoples. “The Indian and the African were enslaved together,” Delany writes of this moment, “when the Indian sunk, the African stood” (258). This shared experience of enslavement spans more than two centuries and serves as the condition of possibility for genuine cross-racial sympathy for Delany. While he saw white sympathy predicated upon either the negation of an autonomous black racial subjectivity or the reinforcement of black subordination, Delany envisioned black sympathy with Native Americans as a form of interracial solidarity that stands in opposition to dominant racial hierarchies. Foreshadowing his section from *Blake* set in Indian Territory, for example, he speaks of black and Native American solidarity in his account of New World history and the right of “blacks and colored people” to the Americas, insisting “we are identical as the subjects of American wrongs, outrages, and oppression; and therefore one in interest.” “We sympathize with him,” Delany continues, because both African and Native Americans have shared “in the degradation of American
bondage” (262). In tracing that sympathy to origins he locates in Hispaniola, Delany again implicitly returns to Haiti as a symbolic site—of exploitation of racialized land and labor as well as resistance to those exploitations of empire, resistance that has hemispheric and global repercussions.

In sum, for Delany white sympathy and colonization to Liberia represent a transatlantic extension of “American bondage,” whereas sympathetic alliances among people of color in the Americas recognize the interconnected histories of that bondage and mark an effort to forge alternative articulations of racial (inter)subjectivity and sovereignty. As we shall see in the next chapter, native Hawaiian intellectuals also made global, comparative connections to critique similar processes of naturalization and imperial citizenship, racialization, and dispossession of land. Delany’s speech and writings, then, signal the broader efforts to diagnose and resist the political and cultural work of naturalizing U.S. empire in the mid-nineteenth century.
CHAPTER TWO

Becoming Hawaiian: Historical Romance, Historiography, and the Hawaiian 1848

In late 1858 and into the early months of 1859, Herman Melville went on a lecture tour, sharing with audiences his experiences in the Pacific in the early 1840s. In his “South Seas” lecture, Melville revisited many themes from his early fiction, particularly his forceful (albeit contradictory) critique of Western missionaries and traders imposing Christianity and capitalism throughout the Pacific in the name of “civilization.”¹ In the lecture, Melville also discussed U.S. Americans in the Pacific who were not attempting to transform native cultures and societies, but who had themselves been transformed by those cultures. Recounting a stop at a small island after five months aboard ship, for example, Melville claims, “there, in that remote island, among its sixty or seventy lazy inhabitants, we found an American, settled down for life and to all appearances fully naturalized.”² In the story Melville tells, the man had abandoned his life as a professor of moral philosophy in order to live “apart from the walks of restless ambition” (419). Melville himself claims to have entertained thoughts of remaining on the Marquesas Islands with the Taipi, with whom he had lived for a few weeks in 1841, but ultimately decided against it, accepting the scorn of his native hosts for refusing their efforts to tattoo him. “I stoutly resisted,” he says, “the importunities of the native artists to be naturalized by marks on my face as from a gridiron” (419). Getting tattooed represented

¹ The scholarship on Melville and imperialism in the Pacific is rather large. For two recent examples, see Jill Barnum, Wyn Kelley, and Christopher Sten, eds., “Whole Oceans Away”: Melville and the Pacific (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007) and Paul Lyons, American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination (New York: Routledge, 2006).

a rite of initiation, an act that would effectively transform Melville into a naturalized member of the Taipi community. In these contexts of the Pacific world, becoming “naturalized” for Melville signifies a transformation of identity, one that moves from the individual self of western modernity to the ostensibly primitive life that is at once romanticized (as a life without labor) and looked upon with horror (through the indelible permanency of facial tattoos). In either instance, naturalization represents a process of cultural assimilation that, for good or ill, removes one from the economic and social prerogatives of the “civilization” rapidly encroaching upon cultures throughout the Pacific.

This, however, was not the only way in which naturalization figured in mid-nineteenth-century U.S. encounters with Pacific Island cultures and societies. For instance, in Hawai‘i throughout the 1840s hundreds of foreigners, particularly U.S. Americans, became naturalized Hawaiian subjects by taking an oath of allegiance to Kamehameha III, the ruling Hawaiian King. In doing so, many came to occupy important positions within the government, effectively transforming the internal political and economic structure of the state, changes they assured the King were necessary to maintain the nation’s independence and secure recognition of its formal equality amongst the so-called family of nations. Kamehameha III accepted this concept of volitional or contractual allegiance for varied reasons: he generally believed these naturalized foreigners were working with the best interests of the Hawaiian people in mind, that foreigners possessed the necessary knowledge of international law to negotiate the interstate system, and because he felt the oath of allegiance would make foreigners beholden to the Hawaiian government, curtailing the extraterritorial jurisdiction that U.S.
American, British, and French residents on the islands all claimed exempted them from local law. According to these naturalized foreigners, intervening in and reconstituting the internal sovereignty of Hawai‘i (that is, the relationship existing between Hawaiian rulers and the common Hawaiian citizens) was necessary to protect the external sovereignty of the state from more explicitly or recognizably imperial tactics such as enforced treaties or outright occupation—very real threats to the nation in the middle of the decade as France had already imposed an extortionist treaty upon Hawai‘i in 1839 and Great Britain had usurped Hawaiian sovereignty for five months in 1843. Rather than a marker of cultural assimilation, as Melville imagines, naturalization in this context invokes a western legal concept dealing with the relationships among subjects, states, and the law of nations that specifically served U.S. imperial interests while at the same time allowing the U.S. state and its citizens to disavow any imperial actions on the islands. In this chapter I examine how naturalization in particular, and the liberal fictions of political equality and economic liberty more generally, functioned as part of the exceptionalist logic of U.S. empire, a logic rhetorically structured in opposition to traditional definitions of empire and colonialism at work not only in Hawai‘i but, as we have seen, in Liberia and, as we will soon see, in Nicaragua.

One of the major objectives of the naturalized foreigners was to allow Hawaiian citizens (and later all foreigners regardless of their citizenship) to secure private title to land. They sought to convince the chiefs that private property would not only serve as a

---

testament to the level of civilization required to maintain their independence, but that it would also effectively check the massive decrease in the native population that resulted from the introduction of foreigners and foreign diseases. Allowing the makaʻāinana (common people, or people of the land) to hold private property, so the argument went, would serve as the necessary incentive to work hard, which in turn would curtail the social and sexual behaviors that missionaries and naturalized government officials believed were responsible for native illness and death. Naturalizing as Hawaiian subjects functioned as a way to naturalize the enclosure of land, an act that would purportedly serve as a testament to Hawaiʻi’s commitment to liberty, equality, and the rule of law that would result in economic, political, and biological security. Thus, the division of Hawaiian land into private property in 1848, known as the Māhele (division), is intimately linked to issues of naturalization and citizenship, as U.S. Americans (and British, to a lesser extent) naturalized as Hawaiian citizens and orchestrated the change in land policy from inside the government. Unsurprisingly, the division of land that further incorporated Hawaiʻi into the capitalist world-system did not benefit the Hawaiian people, but alienated them from the land, “freeing” them to engage in wage labor on the rapidly-expanding plantation system, to leave the islands altogether and seek opportunity elsewhere, or to fashion alternative strategies for survival in the face of such dramatic change and stark demographic loss.⁴

⁴ In writing about primitive accumulation, Marx notes the significance of those moments “when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their subsistence, and hurled onto the labor-market as free, unprotected and rightless proletarians. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the basis of the whole process.” He continues to note this process of primitive accumulation operates differently across time and place, though his subsequent discussion of colonization does not explicitly consider the production of racialized difference in legitimating that process within these different temporal and spatial registers. Capital, Volume I (New York: Penguin, 1990) 876.
These rather bleak options for Native Hawaiians, however, did not go uncontested. Concerns about exploitation and exile that resulted from allowing foreigners to become naturalized Hawaiians and the subsequent division of land figure prominently in writings by Native Hawaiians in the nineteenth century. For example, a series of petitions submitted to the government by the makaʻāinana, along with historiography by Hawaiian intellectuals, embody both political and literary forms of print culture that articulate alternative visions of Hawaiʻi’s position and future in the modern world-system. Through this work we can trace the emergence of a specifically anti-colonial national consciousness taking shape in Hawaiʻi, one attuned to colonial violence throughout the world. Engaging issues of naturalization, sovereignty, and history, Hawaiian petitions and historiography represent print cultures of resistance that pose multiple challenges to the imperial logic of naturalization. While Noenoe Silva stresses the importance of reading the Hawaiian language archive in the original Hawaiian to formulate a genealogy of resistance to U.S. empire on the islands, a powerful critique of foreigners taking the oath of allegiance and privatization of land can be gleaned from translated writing. No doubt attention to the Hawaiian-language archive would reveal additional insights. However, the translated condition of the texts I examine, while subject to a particular discursive violence, as Silva notes, also speaks to and reflects larger issues of mediation and negotiation that Hawaiians faced in the mid-nineteenth century. That is, forms of print culture, along with missionary education and western law, signal the different articulations of “strategic accommodation” that Silva identifies as a tactic of resistance that attends to the international context of their own particular racialized dispossession of land and division of labor. The Hawaiian 1848,
then, also captures and highlights the emergence of Hawaiian opposition through print culture and, as we shall see, speaks to the formation of a comparative consciousness of indigeneity in formulating resistance to white settler colonialism.

Melville notes this process of division and dispossession in his “South Seas” lecture, observing, “the result of civilization, at the Sandwich Islands and elsewhere, is found productive to the civilizers, and destructive to the civilizees. It is said to be compensation—a very philosophical word; but it appears to be very much on the principle of the old game, ‘You lose, I win’: good philosophy for the winner” (420). Here Melville lays bare the self-interest underlying the purportedly benevolent actions of the naturalized foreigners, demonstrating how the moral and political values they sought to codify principally served their own economic gain. Melville’s ironic observation on “civilization” as a form of reimbursement for the violence of imperial expansion provides an important reminder of the production and proliferation of exceptions and privileges that accompanied the naturalization of foreigners in Hawai‘i and the Māhele. That is, while naturalized foreigners promoted the transformations to private property as a form of “emancipation” or “liberation” from traditional hierarchies of Hawaiian society, clearly new configurations of political, economic, and social power emerged after the Māhele that placed them in a privileged positions, or what Melville simply calls “the winner[s].” Naturalized foreigners emphasized “civilization” as the adherence to particular forms of law and property as well as a set of social and moral behaviors, practices, and modes of comportment requisite for Hawaiians to become recognized subjects of modernity. Yet their assumption of racial superiority—as a marker of who could fully inhabit, confer, impose, or deny “civilization”—helped justify their position
as “exceptional” Hawaiian subjects, as we shall see in the newspaper articles and historical romances I address below. This history, then, demonstrates an imperial formation that produces “both…new zones of exclusion and new sites of—and social groups with—privileged exemption.” The Hawaiian 1848 testifies to the ways in which claims of allegiance to another sovereign state functioned as part of the exceptional logic of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire in the Pacific and elsewhere, a logic that legitimated the dispossession of land and the decimation of populations.

In identifying this process of naturalization and the resulting division of land as the “Hawaiian 1848,” I am situating this discussion within American Studies scholarship that has drawn on and developed the “American 1848” as a periodizing concept coined by Michael Rogin. From Rogin to Eric Lott, José David Saldívar and Shelley Streeby, the American 1848 has provided a productive framework for thinking about racial and class formations in relation to continental and hemispheric U.S. imperial expansion. Raising suggestive questions about the geographical scope of this historical moment, Saldívar writes, “What might happen if we viewed 1848 not merely as an episode in the violent history of the borderlands of Nuestra América? What if U.S. imperialism were displaced from its location in a national imaginary to its proto empire rule in the Américas and the rest of the world?” Hawaiʻi’s transformations through the work of the naturalized foreigners in the 1840s represents one of many locations throughout “the rest

---

7 Saldívar 177.
of the world” that, along with the Américas, moves beyond the domestic space of the nation or the contested space of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and which can help us broaden our understanding of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire. The Hawaiian 1848 requires us to attend to the similarities and differences regarding race and labor, citizenship and sovereignty as we map out different imperial formations and cultures of displacement effected both at home and abroad in the American 1848. This is not to claim that 1848 marks the beginning of U.S. imperial activity in Hawai‘i, but it does signal an important flashpoint in a longer genealogy that begins well before the overthrow of the Kingdom at the end of the century. The Hawaiian 1848, in short, articulates concepts of citizenship, naturalization, and sovereignty as they work to disavow histories and geographies of race, labor, and empire.

This chapter traces the different processes of naturalizing empire by focusing on the moment of the Māhele that officially began in 1848. Central to this process, I suggest, is the naturalization of U.S. Americans as Hawaiian citizens and other efforts at becoming Hawaiian, such as marrying Native women that accompanied the simultaneous efforts to institute a division of land into privately held property throughout the Islands. These transformations—of identity and land—were intricately bound up or embedded within different cultures of print, including newspapers and periodicals, literary genres such as the historical romance, and legal documents ranging from national constitutions to the quotidian texts of individual contracts. I look specifically at The Polynesian, the

---

“official” newspaper of the Hawaiian government edited by James Jackson Jarves, and
the *Sandwich Islands News*, an opposition paper edited and published by Jarves’ former
business associate Peter Allan Brinsmade, in order to trace debates over Hawaiian
naturalization, or the “oath of allegiance” to the Hawaiian King. I then focus on what I
call the Pacific historical romance as a literary genre of liberalism that engaged and
justified multiple strategies of naturalizing empire, focusing on Jarves’s novel *Kiana: A
Tradition of Hawaii* (1857) and James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *The Crater; or Vulcan’s
Peak. A Tale of the Pacific*, published a decade earlier in 1847. The literary form of the
Pacific historical romance, I argue, emerges in the context of the mid-nineteenth-century
Pacific world to express and mediate desires and anxieties over the particular politics of
empire-building that emphasized disaffiliation with U.S. national identity and
disassociation from the U.S. political community. Both novels produce romanticized
histories that embed “white” foreigners in the Pacific world in ways that uncannily
resonate with processes of dispossession unfolding in Hawai‘i at the moment of the
*Māhele*.

Referring to Honolulu in his “South Seas” lecture, Melville positively observes
the “modern progress in the publication there of newspapers,” though he notes with a
sense of disappointment that he has “often found them to be conducted by Americans,
English, or French” instead of the Hawaiians themselves (419). In identifying the print
cultures publishing and circulating amongst the foreign populations on the Hawaiian
Islands, he gestures toward a crucial archive wherein the claims to and contestations over
naturalization and citizenship during the *Māhele* played out. Yet Melville’s
disappointment in the absence of a Native Hawaiian presence in the public sphere of print
culture is not exactly warranted, as they consistently wrote and published articles, histories, and petitions that circulated in both the English- and Hawaiian-language press. Thus, I also consider contestations to imperial policies of naturalization and land division by analyzing local efforts of Hawaiians to use print culture to denaturalize the process of U.S. empire in the Pacific, including the division of land and the introduction of foreign diseases as well as becoming Hawaiian through the oath of allegiance. Here I focus on petitions circulated by Native Hawaiians challenging different processes of naturalization in addition to writing by Hawaiian intellectuals David Malo and Samuel Kamakau. Malo and Kamakau, both students at the missionary school at Lāhaināluna, were at the forefront of an emergent Hawaiian-language press, a medium they utilized to contest the policies being advocated in *The Polynesian* and the *Sandwich Islands News* in addition to the Pacific histories produced in the romances of Jarves and Cooper. This anti-imperial and anti-racist challenge is situated within different forms of print culture—petitions, letters, genealogies, and histories. In this section I consider these forms, and the significance of print more broadly, as a field of resistance, suggesting that we can read in their works of Hawaiian historiography both a critique of liberal citizenship and an archive of alternative conceptualizations of identity, community, and sovereignty.

In reading newspapers published in Hawai‘i, Pacific historical romances, and Native Hawaiian petitions and histories, I seek here to expand the boundaries of print culture to consider both non-canonical writers and non-canonical literary forms produced outside U.S. national borders as important sites of cultural and political analysis. Moreover, while I present a history of U.S. imperial activity in Hawai‘i fifty years prior to the 1893 overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani, examining Native Hawaiian participation
in these debates also highlights native resistance to that history, an important lineage for scholars and activists engaged in contemporary Hawaiian struggles for indigenous rights and sovereignty. In considering these alternative forms of print culture, I read these texts as performing a particular cultural work in legitimating and contesting U.S. empire and revealing the role of print cultures circulating in the public sphere of the Hawaiian 1848.

**Debating Naturalization**

*The Polynesian*, the official newspaper of the Hawaiian government edited by the U.S. American James Jackson Jarves, attempted to legitimate the process of naturalization to Native Hawaiians and foreign residents primarily as a necessary step in maintaining Hawaiian sovereignty. Writing under the name of “Ligamen” in a series of letters published in the newspaper in 1844 and 1845, for instance, John Ricord (a U.S. American lawyer who had taken the oath of allegiance) made the argument in favor of the right of naturalization by reviewing political theories of allegiance in the history of international law. Responding to the proposal that foreigners be allowed “all the privileges of Hawaiian subjects—[to] admit them to all the abstract rights of natives, and bestow upon them the offices of trust, profit, and honor in the country—without requiring them to renounce their allegiance abroad and swear fealty to His Majesty,” Ligamen claims this would undermine the security of Hawaiian independence. No other modern nation, he insisted, allowed aliens rights and privileges equal to its subjects or citizens,

---

9 For an account of the contemporary indigenous rights movement in Hawai‘i, see Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993).
and it would therefore be foolish for Hawai‘i to do so, as it would render meaningless the relationship between sovereign and subject. The national identity of subject or citizen, according to Ligamen, needs to be defined in opposition to that of the alien; without the latter the former lose their legal, social, and cultural force in relation to the nation-state.  

Jarves also weighed in on the oath of allegiance and in doing so sets up a clear opposition between colonization and naturalization in an editorial written for The Polynesian. Given the increased presence of U.S. Americans on the Islands and, more specifically, in advisory positions to the King, the oath of allegiance ostensibly served to quell concerns and accusations that they sought to make Hawai‘i a U.S. colony. Thus, for example, in a Polynesian editorial from 1845 Jarves takes up the accusation made by “foreign powers” that the government, “though ostensibly Hawaiian, was really American, and the country would become a bona-fide American colony.” Given the “plausibility” of this accusation that what Jarves and others were doing looked suspiciously like the actions of colonizers, and that Hawai‘i was beginning to resemble an “American colony,” Jarves insists the U.S. Americans advising the King were the first to recognize and reconcile this issue. “Actuated by a desire to put themselves in a situation the most favorable for the real interests of this young nation,” he continues, “they proposed the adoption of the oath of allegiance, and showed their own sincerity by being the first to make themselves Hawaiians.” Becoming Hawaiian through naturalization, then, functions as testament to the ostensibly benevolent motives of the foreigners willing to take the oath. It signifies the ultimate commitment to Hawai‘i’s development and

10 The Polynesian, 19 October 1944, 89-90. The series of letters in The Polynesian on allegiance and naturalization written by “Ligamen” begin in July 1844 and end in October 1844.  
11 The Polynesian, 18 January 1845, 142. Emphasis added.
independence as a modern nation, clearly a striking contrast to subordinated colonial dependency.

Aligning the oath of allegiance with Hawaiian sovereignty, Jarves disavows colonial ambitions rooted in self-interest; their willingness to “make themselves Hawaiians” severs them from the U.S. nation and, in turn, serves to refute charges of U.S. imperial expansion. In a process that overlaps with imperial strategies in the formation and promotion of Liberia and in the filibustering in Nicaragua the following decade, naturalization here occupies an important place in the logic of American exceptionalism by allowing U.S. citizens to control the decisions of a foreign government and acquire vast tracts of land without officially claiming an “American colony.” Mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire works here by insisting on maintaining Hawaiian sovereignty and securing its recognition within the family of modern nation-states by instituting contractual allegiance and demanding national independence, not only from the threats posed by European world powers such as the French and the British, but from U.S. imperialism itself. The key here is the ways in which citizenship and sovereignty profess to offer protections against the encroachments of empire. Legal acts of belonging—of both naturalized subjects to the nation and of the sovereign state within the comity of nations—hold out the prospect of ensuring political sovereignty while simultaneously incorporating Hawaiians into the racial and economic hierarchies of an empire that is paradoxically a part of and apart from the United States.

Yet elsewhere Jarves expressed existential angst when describing his own personal act of naturalization to become a Hawaiian subject as an ironic loss not only of his native nationality but a complete loss of self. In order to assume his position as
Director of Government Printing, Jarves took the oath of allegiance to Kamehameha III on 4 July 1844. The following week *The Polynesian* ran a brief report on a “Mysterious Disappearance” that satirized his process of becoming Hawaiian. “On the afternoon of the 4th,” the newspaper reports, “a young American was seen going down toward the seaside. The last that was observed of him was near evening; he was near one of the wharves. — Since then he has not been found.” For Jarves, renouncing his native born citizenship through the oath of allegiance prompted him to imagine the complete “disappearance” of his entire being, a simultaneous loss of his corporeal as well as national self. The “Mysterious Disappearance” is intended to be humorous, yet that humor betrays a particular anxiety about the meaning and implications of taking the Hawaiian oath of allegiance, of becoming Hawaiian. While naturalization functioned as a legal pretense for U.S. Americans to gain power in Hawai‘i and elsewhere, it also produced uncertainties about the presumed coherence not only of national identity but also of notions of the autonomous, possessive individual. As we shall see, Jarves engages and attempts to resolve some of these uncertainties in *Kiana*.

In addition to positing naturalization in opposition to colonization, U.S. Americans advising the King and Chiefs also invoked a discourse of bondage and emancipation when discussing the division of land, representing private property as the ultimate expression of freedom. For example, when discussing the *Māhele*, William Little Lee, Chief Justice of the Hawaiian court and later President of the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society, wondered aloud in a speech whether “the great Mass of your Nation

---

Lee believed their ignorance would leave them in a state of bondage should they “spurn this proffered freedom.” Yet if the Hawaiian Chiefs saw fit to follow through with the land division, “emancipation” and “freedom” would not only be assured for the Hawaiian people but for the Hawaiian nation as well. Lee continues, “I do most sincerely believe, that this great measure, by raising the Hawaiian Nation, from a state of hereditary servitude, to that of a free & independent right in the soil they cultivate, will promote industry and agriculture, check depopulation, and ultimately prove the Salvation of Your People.”

From “hereditary servitude” to “free[dom] & independen[ce],” the Māhele represents for Lee the culmination of liberal progress, national development, and economic advancement signaling the Hawaiian nation’s entry into modernity. Yet, while the Māhele signified a moment of emancipation, freedom, and security for Lee and others, for many Native Hawaiians it portended a future of empire, bondage, and diaspora, as we shall see.

However, not all foreigners on the islands approved of taking the oath of allegiance and they refused to renounce their native citizenship, which many brazenly asserted made them exempt from Hawaiian law. But this did not preclude these foreigners from offering alternatives to the oath of allegiance that would demonstrate their respect for the Kingdom and ensure a privileged position to gain access to land. The most strident critics of the oath of allegiance voiced their opinion in the Sandwich Islands News, Brinsmade’s opposition paper attacking any restrictions on trade and any governmental infringement on foreigners residing on the Islands. One 1846 editorial from this paper discussing marriage laws highlights the intersections of citizenship and

13 Quoted in Kame'eleihiwa, Native Land and Foreign Desires 215.
belonging in relation to race and empire. Taking as its subject the Hawaiian law requiring that “in matrimonial alliance between a foreigner and a native born woman, that the foreigner shall become a naturalized subject,” the *Sandwich Islands News* article invokes a discourse of racial hierarchy to posit natural law over against the law of nations. Calling attention to purportedly immutable laws of natural progress regarding “the advancement of civilization in the perfection of social and domestic order and happiness, [that] has been consequent upon the improvement of the race in physical capabilities and character,” the article insists men must recognize that “all civil enactments which run counter in their requirements to such a paramount law of nature are wrong, both in conception and execution.” Expanding on the notion of “the improvement of the race,” the anonymous author draws on an example from the most basic rules of husbandry, that “in reference to flocks and herds…the inferior should be elevated by admixture of blood and breed with the superior.” The same logic applies for humans; “there is no good reason,” the article continues, “why men should not become reconciled to that economy of the Creator’s administration evinced in a similar law of improvement.” Foreigners marrying Native women, so the argument runs, would intermix weak native blood with that of the strong “Caucasian” blood of foreigners, thus providing biological health and social improvement throughout the Islands; to do so would be simply to obey the laws of nature rather than the national, “artificial” laws regarding naturalization.\(^\text{14}\) These advocates of marriage to Native women thus propose

\(^{14}\) “Sandwich Islands Laws and Treaties,” *Sandwich Islands News*, 16 September 1846.
an alternative tactic of empire, a “strateg[y] of governance,” according to Ann Laura Stoler, “that joined sexual conquest with other forms of domination.”

While *The Polynesian* and the *Sandwich Islands News* disagreed on the means—the oath of allegiance or the unrestricted right of marriage—the two divided groups of foreigners sought the same ends—acquiring property. For the advocates of the right of foreigners to marry Native women without being required to take the oath of allegiance, naturalization represented an arbitrary legal fiction that failed to inspire foreigners’ commitment to their families and fealty for the government or to sever the ties to the countries of their nativity, the main justifications for the Hawaiian policy and the central tenets underscoring the contractually-based logic of liberal citizenship. According to the *Sandwich Islands News*, rather than a pledge to the government, providing foreign men who marry native women with “the means of acquiring a fixed and productive property” would secure “a cordial allegiance” to their Hawaiian families and the Hawaiian nation. While they differed in their positions regarding citizenship and naturalization, foreign supporters and critics of the oath of allegiance agreed in their advocacy of dividing the land in order to get foreigners to adhere to the law. Again, in the print cultures of the foreign communities living on the Islands, becoming a part of Hawaiian society—whether legally through naturalization or socially through marriage and family—ultimately involved the major transformation of that society into one that accepted liberal autonomy, the rule of law, and private property.

---

Prefacing the Pacific Historical Romance

The historical romances of Cooper and Jarves emerge at the exact moment of these debates over naturalization, marriage, and land leading up to the Māhele addressed in *The Polynesian* and *Sandwich Islands News*. Cooper published his novel in 1847, and while *Kiana* was not published as a book in the United States until 1857, an earlier version was published serially in *The Polynesian* in 1841. Both narratives very clearly address issues of identity, community, and land that were of central importance in Hawai‘i in the mid-1840s, though both situate these issues well into distant invented historical pasts. The historical settings of these romances serve as narrative devices that facilitate the projection of imperial fantasy while simultaneously expressing imperial anxiety. In effect, the historical setting functions to bolster U.S. expansion in the Pacific, though each novel betrays reservations and worries regarding the degree and scope of that expansion.

The prefaces of both *Kiana* and *The Crater* articulate a theory of the historical romance that links this literary form to the politics of empire in the Pacific. In doing so, each prefatory statement reveals the cultural work of this genre in naturalizing empire. For one, both emphasize the condition of possibility as a crucial link between history and romance. As Nathaniel Hawthorne indicates in his well-known distinction between the romance and the novel from his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), romance, in contrast to the novel, is not bound to the “probable and ordinary,” though it is not wholly dissociated from “the possible.”¹⁶ The possible represents a state of historical contingency, what may have been or may be, though not known for certain.

Cooper and Jarves both insist on the possibility that their stories of the Pacific actually happened, though each remains historically unverifiable. Jarves, for instance, asks of Spanish ships supposedly lost on an exploring expedition in the sixteenth century, “Why may not one of these be the vessel that was wrecked on Hawaii?” Yet after formulating this theory of early Spanish contact, he insists that “[t]o absolutely identify the white strangers of Hawaii with the missing ships of Cortez, is not now possible.”\(^\text{17}\) Cooper sets up his narrative in a similar way, telling the reader “that everything related here might be just as true as Cook’s voyages themselves.” He abstracts from this to claim more generally that “[s]omething is established when the possibility of any hypothetical point is placed beyond dispute.”\(^\text{18}\) However, Cooper concluded his preface by proclaiming the recent deaths of the central protagonists, thus placing the narrative beyond the realm of historical authentication. Their position outside historic, geographic, or scientific discourses allows for the imaginative displacement of contemporary issues into a possible historical past. As Cooper himself writes, “much as is now known of the globe, a great deal still remains to be told, and we do not see why the ‘inquiring mind’ should not seek for information in our pages, as well as in some that are ushered in to public notice by a flourish of literary trumpets, that are blown by presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries of various learned bodies” (3). In effect, the insistence on the possible truth of each narrative’s events stresses the \textit{historical} aspect whereas the assertion that each story

\(^{17}\) James Jackson Jarves, \textit{Kiana: A Tradition of Hawaii} (Boston: J. Munroe, 1857) 7. Subsequent references to this text will be from this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text. 

\(^{18}\) James Fenimore Cooper, \textit{The Crater; or, Vulcan’s Peak. A Tale of the Pacific} (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962) 4. Subsequent references to this text will be from this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.
exists beyond the reach of the discursive regimes of history and geography emphasizes the *romance* side of historical romance.

It is precisely between history and romance, I suggest, that each narrative naturalizes empire by projecting the imperial politics of naturalization into a historical past, imaginatively figuring Hawai‘i in particular and the Pacific more generally as already influenced and occupied by white foreigners. As Stephanie LeMenager observes, “the typical desire of historical romance [is] to displace contemporary acts of conquest into a deep past.”¹⁹ In the Pacific historical romances I address, this has the effect of rendering the transformations taking place in Hawai‘i at the behest of the naturalized foreigners as the logical, inevitable, indeed *natural* extension and continuation of historical progress. So, while *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* asserted in their review of *Kiana* that Jarves’s romance “treats only of the past of the Sandwich Islands,” forming “a striking contrast to the present time,” Jarves himself questions that historical discontinuity in his preface, writing that “fiction has become the channel by which the topics most in the thought of the age…reach most readily the popular mind” (8).²⁰ This connection between “the topics” of Hawai‘i in the 1840s and the romanticized past is also acknowledged by Cooper in his preface when he refers to “Oahu, and a vast number of other places, that are now constantly alluded to, even in the daily journals” (3). Here Cooper explicitly situates Hawai‘i in U.S. print culture to open his historical

---


romance about colonization in the Pacific, one that parallels and expresses concerns about the politics and particular strategies of U.S. empire in Hawai‘i when he was writing *The Crater*.

Moreover, this ideological work of the historical romance—imagining a possible past to justify an imperial present—functions in a way similar to the ideological work of liberal subject formation that informs political theories of naturalization and volitional allegiance. In his reading of the origins of liberalism in seventeenth-century England, C. B. Macpherson identifies the ways in which political theorists such as Hobbes and Locke constructed their ideas about man in the state of nature by abstracting the social relations of contemporary market society and projecting them into an immemorial past.  

Speaking to and elaborating on this historical projection in her discussion of the juridical formation of the liberal subject, Judith Butler writes, “In effect, the law produces and then conceals the notion of ‘a subject before the law’ in order to invoke that discursive formation as a naturalized foundational premise that subsequently legitimates that law’s own regulatory hegemony.”  

For Butler, as for Macpherson, modern liberal configurations of power—including private property as well as heteronormative regimes of gender and sexuality—rest upon their existence in a possible, though unverifiable, past. The Pacific historical romances of Jarves and Cooper perform an analogous process of production and concealment, locating white settler subjects in narratives of Pacific history and then proclaiming them outside the historical record as a means of justifying

colonization. In this way we can read the historical romance as a cultural genre of liberalism that brings into relief the romantic aspects of the foundational metaphors of liberal political theory. Indeed, the process of naturalization taking place in Hawai‘i demonstrates one site where these cultural and political genres of liberalism overlap. As Macpherson observes, naturalizing market society through the state of nature produces and legitimates a possessive individual, one imbued with the natural rights of autonomy and proprietorial notions of the self. It is that very possessive subjectivity that informs the theory of citizenship as a political identity that can be adopted or alienated through naturalization or renunciation, the very theory being debated in the pages of The Polynesian and the Sandwich Islands News and allegorized in various ways in the Pacific historical romance.

Lastly, the prefaces of these Pacific historical romances highlight the cultural work of naturalizing empire by explicitly calling attention to the historical context of the narratives, or rather the specificity of their historical depth. Cooper situates his historical projection within the bounds of U.S. history. That is, though The Crater takes place in the Pacific and concerns a colony struggling to define its political identity and its relation to the United States, the narrative exists within the framework of an established U.S. national history of commercial expansion, set roughly fifty years in the past at the close of the eighteenth century. Jarves, however, displaces conquest into a far deeper past, going three hundred years further back in time than Cooper, setting his story in the early sixteenth century. In doing so, Jarves enacts a further displacement that requires him to shift from an emphasis on national history to racial identity, focusing on “white” Spaniards in the sixteenth century to legitimate the contemporary conquest of “white”
U.S. Americans in the middle of the nineteenth, the assumption of racial superiority structuring the privileged exception addressed earlier. Thus, whereas Cooper projects his romance back within a U.S. (trans)national past, Jarves projects into a racially-defined, “white” imperial past that encompasses and links Spanish and U.S. American. This shift from U.S. American to Spanish as the white protagonists of Jarves’s romance represents one of many instabilities and anxieties that riddle these Pacific historical romances as they both engage the contested racial politics of whiteness in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. Jarves’ romance attempts to shore up and consolidate racial and gender identities amidst a narrative that continually undermines the stability of racial, sexual, historical, and other social categories of identity and status. *The Crater* is also a narrative fraught with racial instability, as the colony founded on the racialized labor of Pacific Natives (“Kannakas”) undermines its utopian ambitions. Further, the “question of citizenship” and the “question of nationality” also emerge in Cooper’s romance as central issues that trouble uncomplicated projections of empire into a romantic history. It is these two vexed questions from Cooper’s story, as we shall see, that bring the contemporary imperial politics of naturalization explicitly back into focus in a way that reveals the anxieties and instability of naturalization as a mid-nineteenth century U.S. imperial formation.

**Cooper’s Questions of Nationality and Citizenship**

A shipwreck on an unfamiliar Pacific island serves as the opening plot device for *The Crater*. Set at the close of the eighteenth century, the novel tells the story of Mark Woolston, the son of a doctor from Pennsylvania and a young officer on board the
**Rancocus**, a commercial ship owned by Philadelphia Quakers that plied its trade throughout the commercial markets of both the Atlantic and the Pacific. At home from one of his first voyages, Mark secretly elopes with Bridget Yardley, his sister’s close friend and the daughter of “his father’s most formidable professional competitor” (12). After their marriage, the **Rancocus** embarks on a voyage to the Pacific islands in search of sandalwood and bêche-de-mer, commodities they will then trade for tea in the Canton market. In the Pacific, the ship is caught up on a reef in the middle of the night, and the entire crew is lost except for Mark and Bob Betts, an old salt and revolutionary war veteran who served as a witness at Mark and Bridget’s marriage. Confined to a desolate stretch of land and a nearby mountain crater with the **Rancocus** moored among the rocks of the reef, Mark and Betts are forced to “‘Robinson Crusoe it,’ for a few years at least,” as the latter says, so they set out to harvest guano and seaweed in order to grow fruits and vegetables and make use of goods stowed on the ship intended for trade (63).

The two are very successful in their agricultural efforts. Yet Betts is carried out to sea in a dinghy on one of his runs to gather seaweed, leaving Mark alone in his tropical gardens. There is a great earthquake on the island during this period of solitude, resulting in a dramatically improved transformation of the landscape of both the reef and the crater. The old sailor eventually returns after living among the natives of a neighboring group of islands, crossing the isthmus at Panama, and then sailing back to the United States. However, instead of coming to rescue Mark, he returns with Bridget, Mark’s sister Anne and her husband, Betts’s new wife Martha, and three slaves from Bridget’s family, along with a few other settlers. Thus, the story continues to follow the development of “their little colony”: they form a government with Mark elected
governor-for-life, they establish regular trade in sandalwood with nearby islanders and later a thriving whaling industry, and the colony grows through the selective incorporation of new settlers from the United States and native, or “Kannaka,” laborers (200). Yet after engaging in wars against hostile “Kannakas” and defending themselves against pirates, the colony begins to suffer from internal dissension as new settlers arrive and profess allegiance to the colony, but then begin to agitate for change in their newly-established newspaper, the Crater Truth-Teller. Stirring up foment about “‘the people’ and their rights,” the newly-arrived settlers get themselves elected to government positions, forcing Mark and Betts, the “original” inhabitants, along with their families, to leave the community they founded and return to the United States (435). The ex-governor later returns to the colony, only to discover another earthquake has occurred in his absence, causing the reef and the crater to become submerged in the ocean, along with all of the colony’s settlers, a natural disaster that marks the failure of the colonial project.

The issues of late-eighteenth-century international commerce form the immediate historical backdrop for Cooper’s novel of the mid-nineteenth-century Pacific. Cooper acknowledges that, like the national boundaries of the early republic, the Atlantic world is not a discrete unit but in fact is connected to Asia and the Pacific markets through elaborate networks of trade and commerce. The Rancocus, owned by a Quaker merchant in Philadelphia named Friend Abraham White, a “speculating philanthropist,” sets out for its fated voyage from Philadelphia to engage in the colonial economies of the Atlantic world before moving into the Pacific (298). “The voyage,” as Cooper states, “was not

23 While it is not completely clear how many years pass over the course of the novel, Mark Woolston was born in 1777 and set out on his first voyage at sixteen, in 1793. As Cooper writes, “The commerce of America, in 1793, was already flourishing.” The Crater 11.
direct to Canton… but the ship took a cargo of sugar to Amsterdam, and thence went to London, where she got a freight for Cadiz” (16). Remaining in the European trade to monopolize on the disruptions caused by the French Revolution “until a certain sum of Spanish dollars could be collected,” only then would the ship set off for the Pacific, trading for Sandalwood throughout the islands, and furs from the Pacific Northwest, ultimately bound for Canton to obtain tea, like coffee a highly desired and lucrative commodity throughout Europe and England (17).

This route of the *Rancocus* suggests the interrelationship between Atlantic and Pacific world-systems; sugar undoubtedly from a European colony in the Caribbean to the Netherlands, a former financial power, to a Spanish port to collect capital reserves before moving into the trade networks of the Pacific, the *Rancocus* marks the intersecting economies of the Pacific and the Atlantic. Thus, before Cooper’s better-known protagonist Natty Bumppo wandered out into the prairies of Nebraska to die among the Pawnees, Mark Woolston was participating in trade throughout the Pacific and engaging in settler colonialism in the Pacific Islands. This signifies that along with the continental frontier, the ocean also represents an important site of commerce and colonization for the early U.S. republic. Rather than a mere conceit of historical romance, I read this historical setting as suggestive of the global dimensions of capitalist trade at the end of the eighteenth century, inviting a reconsideration of both the spatial and temporal dimensions of U.S. national narratives of westward expansion and the Pacific as a specifically twentieth-century geography of U.S. empire-building.

Aside from the immediate historical context of the late-eighteenth-century capitalist world-system, the novel compresses geological and social temporalities in order
to chart a “proper” course of empire that warns against particular excesses of liberalism—popular sovereignty, formal equality, and a free press—that were being debated in both the United States and Hawai‘i as Cooper was writing this romance. While scholarship on *The Crater* generally reads the novel as an allegory expressing Cooper’s critique of U.S. society, the setting and a remarkable number of events in the narrative warrant reading it in relation to political developments in Hawai‘i during the time Cooper wrote and published the book. Cooper relied on Charles Wilkes’s *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* (1844) when writing *The Crater*, as well as the “daily journals” in the U.S. discussing Hawai‘i and other Pacific locations, as he notes in his Preface (3). In effect, Cooper imagines the emergence of settler colonialism as an ideal imperial formation in an effort to naturalize the U.S. presence in the Pacific. However, that utopian settler-colony is undone and ultimately destroyed as the result of increasing numbers of U.S. Americans arriving on the island, taking an oath of allegiance to the colonial government, and using their new status as citizens to transform the community to their own economic and political advantage. In an uncanny parallel to the process of dispossession that occurred during the Māhele in Hawai‘i, the original settlers essentially become the “natives” that subsequently get displaced by

---


unacceptable newcomers from the U.S. who become naturalized subjects of the colony, with the notable exception that the original inhabitants are white settlers rather than indigenous peoples. Fomenting this unrest occurs explicitly through the freedom of the press, which leads to the overthrow of Mark Woolston as governor-for-life, and this “original” inhabitant of the island leaves the colony with his family to return to the United States. However, coming back the following year, he finds the islands have disappeared, except for the topmost part of the crater.

In *The Crater*, one of the important and most explicit ways in which the romance functions to naturalize empire is through the establishment of a colony that remains independent from the United States. The colonists on the islands come to realize the necessity of “the establishment of some sort of government and authority, which they should all solemnly swear to support” (221). Later, when the colonists recover sailors from the *Rancocus* being held captive by Waaly, the hostile native chief, they are presented with the option of staying in the colony or returning to the U.S. For those who choose to remain, they are required to swear an oath of allegiance to the colony, an act in which, Cooper writes, “the question of citizenship was decided” (285). The new arrivals effectively leave the U.S. and establish their own government, thereby implicitly renouncing their identities as U.S. citizens (or, at least, suppressing that political identity for the time being). Mark and others come to identify the colony as “home” and no longer express any political or social affinity with the United States. Many do return for the purposes of trade, thereby signifying the commercial relationship between the U.S. and this newly established independent political entity. The political philosophy governing the colony is very similar to the U.S. and they establish a number of
“American” ideologies (private property, homes and buildings, gendered and racialized divisions of labor). And they take Native “Kannaka” children to train them to admire these ideas and practices, though the children are only to be used as laborers, echoing the racial hierarchies of civilization and status in formation in Hawai‘i. The romance thus allegorizes imperial transformations occurring in the Pacific, specifically in Hawai‘i. Establishing independent political communities instead of colonies or dependencies; maintaining political sovereignty and autonomy instead of annexing conquered territories; and educating Native populations and exploiting their land and labor—these are key components of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire-building.

However, this requirement of the oath of allegiance in the end subverts the authority of Mark and the other so-called original settlers in the colony. Paralleling the process of dispossession unfolding in Hawai‘i in the 1840s, in the narrative the newcomers from the United States who become naturalized subjects of the colony begin to agitate for political change, making arguments about rights, equality, and the popular sovereignty of “the people” that challenge Mark’s authority as “governor-for-life.” “The word ‘people,’” Cooper writes, “was in everybody’s mouth, as if the colonists themselves had made those lovely islands, endowed them with fertility, and rendered them what they were now fast becoming – scenes of the most exquisite rural beauty, as well as granaries of abundance” (429). Cultivating the islands, endowing them with fertility, however, is exactly what Woolston did throughout the first half of the narrative; he and Betts produced this state of nature through their own labor, thus granting them a privileged right to the land and its resources, according to Cooper. Mark, furthermore, is wary about the consequences of the public discussion of rights and popular sovereignty. Thus,
while other scholars see Mark as implicated in Cooper’s critique of colonial arrogance, I see him making an important distinction between the “original colonists”—Mark and Betts—and the newly arrived naturalized “Craterinos.” He does place some responsibility for the colony’s demise on the protagonist’s decisions, but Cooper ascribes the chief factors of the downfall to the new arrivals. Deciding “the question of citizenship” through the oath of allegiance, then, leads to the displacement of the purportedly original occupants of the islands (Mark, Betts, their families), though Cooper’s novel reconfigures original occupants of Pacific Islands, replacing indigenous peoples with white settler colonists.

Cooper singles out the press in particular as one of the principal reasons for the emergent political agitation for rights and equality amongst the newly naturalized subjects. Shortly after the Pirate War, which I address below, fifty new colonists arrived, among whom, “[u]nhappily,” was “a printer, a lawyer,” and preachers from different denominations (430). Situating his discussion of the power of the press in the historical context of the narrative—at the close of the eighteenth century—Cooper notes that many assumed something stated in print “was far more likely to be true than one made orally,” though he claims that in fact the opposite is more often the case because of the anonymity provided by the press (433). This emphasis on the power of print and the anonymity of authorship in the early U.S. republic highlights what Michael Warner identifies as the impersonality of the republican public sphere of print culture. Printed discourse in the eighteenth-century U.S. public sphere, says Warner, “takes on a specially legitimate

---

26 On Mark and Bridget’s participation in the demise of the colony, see Philbrick, Zuck, and Suzuki.
meaning, because it is categorically differentiated from personal modes of sociability. Mechanical duplication equals publishing precisely as public political discourse is impersonal.”  

It is this impersonality, this anonymity, that Cooper stresses as the danger the publication of the Crater Truth-Teller brings to the colony, creating conditions for the dissemination of lies and slander that cannot be accounted for and that, in “the age of which we are writing,” most people identified as the legitimate and legitimating mode of political discourse (430).

The Crater-Truth Teller “took up the cause of human rights, endeavoring to transfer the power of the state from the public departments to its own printing office,” highlighting a tension between the press and the state in representing “the people,” something I address in greater detail in the next chapter (432). In doing so the colonists, or what the paper pronounces as “the people,” came to see themselves as oppressed by the colonial government and Woolston in his role as governor-for-life. “It was surprising,” Cooper writes with irony, “how little the people really knew of the oppression under which they laboured, until this stranger came amongst them to enlighten their understandings” (432). Aligning the press with rights of the people in order to manipulate the colonists for personal gain, Cooper’s narrative reflects on and implicitly criticizes the similar events unfolding in Hawai‘i as Jarves and others took the oath of allegiance to Kamehameha III and used The Polynesian to promote the rights of liberty and property for the Hawaiian populace, both native-born and naturalized. This does not, however, situate Cooper as a critic of U.S. imperial expansion or the particular

---

politics of disaffiliation that inform U.S. empire in Hawai‘i and elsewhere; rather, it represents one of Cooper’s many literary treatments of the possibilities and pitfalls of different forms of U.S. expansion, what Stephanie LeMenager discusses as the United States’ manifest and other destinies.\(^{28}\)

In warning about the dangers of naturalization and the press as potentially undermining the stability of political communities, Cooper implicitly articulates a belief in establishing qualifications for national belonging and civic participation. He elaborates on this belief through the narrative of Bob Betts as a self-made man. Betts, as we have seen, is a common sailor stranded with Woolston. When he was blown away from the crater during a storm, leaving Mark alone on the island, he eventually found his way to a group of islands inhabited by natives familiar with white men and “exceedingly mild and just” (190). Betts “formed a great intimacy with the chief, exchanging names and rubbing noses with him,” in a manner, as we will see shortly, that directly parallels a scene in Jarves’s novel (191). This chief was called Betto after the exchange, and Bob was referred to as Ooroony by the natives.”\(^{29}\) After his return to the colony, he initially serves on the governing council. Yet he voluntarily decides to resign when he recognizes he has not attained the necessary level of success and respectability to occupy such a position of civic responsibility. Betts, despite his familiarity with the islands and his equal “right” with Woolston to the land because of their original occupation and shared labor in developing it, felt “that he was out of place in such a body [the governing

\(^{28}\) LeMenager, *Manifest and OtherDestinies*.

\(^{29}\) Lyons, in his discussion of this passage, notes that the exchange of names among Pacific Islanders and white explorers was a fairly common trope in the nineteenth-century American Pacific archive. *American Pacificism* 68.
council], among men more or less of education, and of habits so much superior and more refined than his own,” expressing what Alexander Saxton has called the “politics of deference” so prevalent throughout Cooper’s fiction (356). When he informs Woolston about his resignation from the council, the governor accepts it without hesitation, reflecting, “Self-made men, he well knew, were sometimes very useful; but he also knew that they must first be made” (356).

Upon his resignation, Betts contributes his labor and skill to the colony, focusing primarily on trade with neighboring islanders. Exchanging various implements of labor such as fish hooks and axes for coconuts and sandalwood, Betts accrues a degree of wealth that allows him to purchase a newly-constructed whaling ship, inaugurating a new industry for the colony that makes him abundantly wealthy. While he does not resume his position on the governing council, Betts becomes a well-respected member of the community and plays a key role in the economic development of the colony. Betts’s process of subject formation can thus be read as an allegory for Cooper’s ideas about the conditions of civic participation. Embodying the ideology of the self-made man, Betts must rise to a particular station of wealth and respectability and find his proper role in the community. As Cooper reflects, via Woolston, men must “first be made” before they can exercise or maximize their full use, realize their full potential. However, this social mobility is conditioned and facilitated by racial exclusions, as the “Kannakas” in the colony do not have similar opportunities for advancement, and Betts exploits their skills as laborers to enrich himself in his whaling venture. Betts’s self is in fact made in and

---

through the work of these natives, though the latter is not recognized in the formation of this possessive individual. This narrative, then, telescopes the relation between the emergence of the liberal individual and the condition of racialized labor, a relation defining the contours of modernity.

Just as the “question of citizenship” creates problems for the colony as new arrivals professing an oath of allegiance begin to trouble the community, the “question of nationality” also continually vexes the colony when it is confronted with the external political and economic realities of the world-system it simultaneously seeks to avoid and profit from. Throughout the text, Cooper gestures toward a new national formation taking place on the crater amongst the colonists. Aside from the political organization with Mark as governor-for-life and the governing council formed to make decisions regarding policies for the colony, a sense of national belonging also takes shape throughout the course of the novel. Whereas the former could be said to imagine the development of a state, through governing policies and institutions, the latter conforms to the tenets of nationalism and nation formation. For instance, children of the colonists born on the islands are referred to as “natives,” pure “Craterinos,” signaling the emergence of a community identity that has yet to be fully named or officially acknowledged by the settlers themselves or outsiders (371).31 It has yet to be fully realized, I suggest, because the “question of nationality” repeatedly comes up, though it is never directly addressed or resolved (367, 392). Many of the ships in the colony are registered as U.S. ships and every one of the settlers (excluding the “Kannaka” laborers)  

is from the United States, but the settlement is very explicitly not a U.S. colony. In fact, it is extremely important to the governor and everyone on the islands that people in the U.S. do not know about the colony, lest unwanted (unworthy) U.S. citizens should attempt to join the group or the U.S. government should try to interfere with their utopian political and economic organization. The settlement on the islands then is neither a colony of the United States nor a sovereign nation-state in its own right.

*The Crater* ends with an attack on the colony by pirates, led to the unmapped islands by Waaly, the hostile Native chief. In staging an encounter between pirates and the colonists, *The Crater* highlights and attempts to resolve some of the anxieties and contradictions of U.S. empire in relation to national identity in the mid-nineteenth century, ambiguities of identity that figure prominently in the process of naturalizing empire. For one, the large presence of Native laborers in the colony raises a fear that they will use the opportunity of a pirate attack to revolt against the white settler colonists. Cooper writes, “the number of these Kannakas was a cause of serious embarrassment with the governor, when he came to reflect on his strength, and on the means of employing it” (403). The Natives familiar with the colony and the geography of the island posed an internal threat, such that the governor “found himself completely at fault where to look for his enemy” (410). While the white settlers are incorporated into the colony through an oath of allegiance or the rewards of individual industry of colonists like Betts, the Natives from the neighboring island group (not to mention the black slaves brought from the U.S. to the colony) are naturalized exclusively as racialized labor. Cooper writes of Mark’s natural ability to manage the “Kannakas.” The employment of a large numbers of Natives as laborers without the rights or privileges assumed by the
white colonists, however, creates anxieties and uncertainties that threaten to undermine the unity, strength, and ultimately, the racial and political identity of the colony, bringing the issues of naturalization and racialized labor to a head.

Further, this instability regarding the strength of the colony’s identity shifts from a racial to a political context, as the colonists and the pirates both effectively constitute stateless groups, communities operating in the absence of a national or political form recognized by others. This uncertainty of national identity comes to an uncanny head in the encounter between Mark and the pirate admiral. Upon sighting the ships heading toward the islands, Mark and his wife remain uncertain as to the identity and purpose of the unfamiliar ships. Suspecting they may be part of an exploring expedition, they fear—as the Hawaiians and naturalized foreigners in Hawai‘i did—they will be taken advantage of by European powers. Cooper writes, “As yet, the colony had got on very well, without having the question of nationality called into the account,” but without national accountability, “there was much reason to fear that the ruthless policy of the strong would, in the event of a discovery, make it share the usual fortunes of the weak” (392). After concluding the ships are indeed pirates, Woolston has a confrontation with the admiral. The pirate leader asks, “To what nation does your colony belong?” Not having an answer for the pirates, Woolston responds with a similar question, “What are the vessels which have anchored in our waters, and under what flag do they sail?” (417). The pirate and the colonist find themselves at a standstill, each confronted with a demand to account for their national identity, an account that each will not, or cannot, answer.

This encounter highlights a moment of uneasy recognition in which Mark realizes that “the question of nationality” has to be resolved for the colony to distinguish it from
the pirates, who by the nineteenth century were defined as stateless persons, as Janice
Thomson has insightfully discussed in her work on sovereignty and nonstate violence in
early modernity. Mark’s colony, simply put, has to “belong” to a nation, or be a
sovereign nation itself, a realization that comes into stark relief in the confrontation with
pirates. Without an unambiguous and clear answer to that continually nagging question
of nationality, the colony exists within a zone of political indeterminacy that also includes
nationally and racially differentiated communities of pirates and freebooters. While they
may have their own governing structures, internal order and rules, and indeed the ability
to trade commodities—whale oil, sandalwood, etc.—in a global market, the colony exists
as an undefined or unrecognized political entity within the interstate system; it lacks
political legitimacy in a way similar to the pirates confronting them. This encounter,
then, registers another unsustainable tactic of empire, according to Cooper.

Just as an earthquake had caused the islands to emerge following Mark’s efforts
to cultivate the barren strip of volcanic land after his arrival (virtue and labor rewarded by
nature), an earthquake causes the islands to sink back below the ocean’s surface when
“civilization” tipped over into corruption (vice and sloth punished by nature). The tip of
the crater serves as the anchor of this development and destruction, and the natural
disaster, along with the questions of citizenship and nationality, marks Cooper’s
ambivalence about U.S. empire-building. Read as an imperial allegory, the ending
suggests that certain tactics of U.S. empire in the mid-nineteenth century will fail.
However, this does not imply Cooper wholly rejected U.S. imperial expansion; rather,

The *Crater* represents a working out of alternative forms of expansion and colonization to speculate on their possible implications and consequences. This historical romance, then, invents a past to test the possibilities and pitfalls of United States empire-building in the present and the future.

*Kiana and the Spanish Origins of U.S. Empire in Hawai‘i*

The plot of *Kiana* begins with a Spanish ship lost in the Pacific after being sent by Cortéz to explore the coast of California shortly after the conquest of Mexico. On board the ship is the captain, Juan Alvirez, his sister Beatriz, Olmedo the Catholic priest, and Tolta, an Aztec “captive,” along with a score of unnamed Spanish seamen. Out of food and water, carried far out into the open sea, and increasingly desperate, the crew resolves to sail west in hopes of encountering uncharted lands as their only chance at survival. Their numbers dwindle as sailors begin to die from starvation and thirst, but the ship eventually wrecks on the shore of Hawai‘i. The ship’s crew discovers cultivated fields next to an empty village, and they spend several days recuperating from their experiences on the open sea. The village belongs to Kiana, one of the ruling chiefs of Hawai‘i, who is away with his people on a religious pilgrimage. Returning from the mountain of Mauna Kea to discover the Spaniards, particularly the beautiful Beatriz, residing in his home and eating his food, Kiana decides to tell his people that Juan and his sister are gods who have come to bestow blessings upon the community.33

33 This plot point is similar to the story of Montezuma and the Aztecs initially greeting Cortéz and the Spanish conquistadors as gods. As Steegmuller notes in his biography, Jarves was obsessed with Mexican history as a young man and greatly admired William Hickling Prescott’s work, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1843). Jarves published *History of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands* the same year.
The remainder of the narrative revolves principally around competing romantic and sexual desires for Beatriz, the figure of “true womanhood” (23). Kiana very quickly falls in love with Juan’s sister and proposes marriage, though Beatriz’s heart belongs to Olmedo, who returns her feelings and struggles with his priestly vows of celibacy. Tolta, the Aztec captive, also desires Beatriz and conspires with Pohaku, a “dark” chief with “nostrils thick and wide spread, and…lips heavy and full,” to kidnap her and overthrow Kiana (132). Seeing an opportunity to exact revenge against the Spaniards for the conquest of the Aztec empire, Tolta “conceived of the design of eventually disposing of both” Kiana and Pohaku “while he gradually united all Hawaii under his own sway and forced Beatriz to become his wife” (136). Beatriz and Olmedo are taken captive, the former to be placed under Tolta’s power and the latter to be thrown into a volcano as a sacrifice. Before Tolta is able to realize his plans, Liliha, a young princess, rescues Beatriz while Hewahewa, Liliha’s father and Pohaku’s chief priest, saves Olmedo from the sacrifice. The chase to retake the captives culminates in a battle between the unraveling alliance of Tolta and Pohaku on the one side and Juan and Kiana on the other. The Spaniard and the noble Hawaiian chief are victorious and the Hawaiian nation is consolidated when Kiana and Hewahewa form an alliance and the warring factions make peace. Juan and Liliha consummate their romantic desire through marriage and children. Unwilling, however, to marry Kiana because “White maidens give their hands only with their hearts” (107), and unable to marry Olmedo because of their mutual respect for the Church, Beatriz dies at the end of the romance, leaving Kiana to refuse marriage to

anyone else and the priest to live the remainder of his days alone praying to his “spirit-bride” (276).

In Kiana, the land of Hawai‘i itself is represented as open to and inviting a peaceful colonization, configuring empire not only as inevitable, but natural. This representation of the land, moreover, is situated in the distant, geological past. Speculating on the emergence of the islands out of the ocean as a result of volcanic eruptions, the narrator of Kiana describes a feminized “nature” that “gradually creates to herself fresh domains out of the fathomless sea, destined by a slower and more peaceful process to be finally fitted out for the abode of man” (31). The “destiny” of the islands eventually becoming a habitation for man extends back to their emergence out of the “fathomless sea,” a time fathomless also in its historical reach. Just as Jarves’s and Cooper’s novels situate their fictional narratives in the historical past in order to legitimate the dramatic changes taking place in the Hawaiian 1848, so do the geological origin stories in each novel further reinforce the inevitability, the “destiny” of colonization. Time, or historical consciousness, be it socio-political or geological, is central to the cultural work of the Pacific historical romance in justifying transformations of Hawaiian identity and Hawaiian land, of naturalizing empire.

The romance shifts from the natural world to civil society at the end of the narrative to promote capitalist exchange among individual subjects that rather explicitly illustrates the way Jarves sought to address “the topics most in the thought of the age,” as he says in his Preface, specifically the economic and social transformations of the Māhele (8). At the end of the narrative the warring factions are united as Kiana and Hewahewa make peace. Through the influence of the Spaniards, the “predatory habits” of the
Hawaiians are abandoned in favor of “attention to their fisheries and the culture of the soil” (260). Conflict between the two tribes is replaced by peaceful commerce, which “led to the establishment of regular fairs,” where “the products of the soil and the manufactures of the several districts of Hawaii, each of which from peculiarity of soil or climate, or from the skill and industry of its inhabitants, could claim some local advantage, were brought and interchanged” (260-261). Here Jarves directly addresses the opposition between pacific commerce and violent conquest after describing the new marketplace, suggesting it shows “how soon and rapidly commercial industry supplants the fighting principle, if it be allowed a fair chance, even among the passionate and sensuous aborigines of Polynesia” (261). The principles of a free market economy, where buyers and sellers come together to exchange based on their individual skills and resources, represents the signal influence of the “white” civilization that has come to live on the islands, serving as direct endorsement of the division of land and wage labor being promoted by naturalized foreigners throughout the pages of The Polynesian leading up to the Māhele.

In addition to outlining his theory of the historical romance in the Preface, Jarves goes to great lengths to insist upon the whiteness of the Spaniards, referring within the space of three pages to a “white priest,” “white men,” “white strangers,” and a solitary “white woman.” It is significant that the Spanish are defined principally by the racial signifier of whiteness rather than European or Christian as general encompassing identities or the more specific Spanish or Catholic. Whiteness in this historical romance functions as a racial identity that I would suggest rests upon a temporal homogeneity that unifies national and religious difference in opposition to very explicitly racialized others.
(in this case the Hawaiians and Tolta, the Aztec), which creates a logic of equivalence that permits a certain historical interchangeability between “whites.” That is, the encounter, exchange, and incorporation of the “white” Spanish Catholics in Hawai‘i in the sixteenth century mirrors or anticipates the encounter, exchange, and incorporation of the “white” U.S. Protestants in Hawai‘i three centuries later. The Pacific historical romance in this instance performs the cultural work of producing a homogenous “white” race that functions as a signifier of identity to be occupied by different groups (Spaniards, U.S. Americans) at different moments of history.

Yet in his incessant identification of the Spanish as white in the Preface and throughout the narrative, Jarves also betrays a certain anxiety about the boundaries of the racial identity of whiteness, compelling him to draw distinctions between white U.S. Americans in the nineteenth century and their sixteenth-century Spanish racial forebears. For instance, Jarves alludes to the present, exterior time of the mid-nineteenth century to mark a contrast with the novel’s interior time of the sixteenth century in order to make a distinction between whiteness across time. Discussing the voyage of Alvírez up the Pacific coast in search of gold, the narrator implicitly alludes to the moment of 1848 in California. He writes, “Yet they were navigating waters, the tributary streams of which were literally bedded in gold. But neither the time nor people to which this treasure was to be disclosed had arrived” (21, emphasis mine). This passage implicitly invokes whiteness in relation to temporality (“the time”) and identity (“people”), as well as the relationship between the two. The Spaniards exploring the coast are “white,” but are not destined to discover and lay claim to the gold. That destiny, according to Jarves, is to become manifest at a different time and for a different white “people.” This passage
reveals Jarves’ particular racial articulation of U.S. exceptionalism that embraces the superiority of nineteenth-century “white” U.S. Americans in contrast to sixteenth-century “white” Spanish, not to mention the non-white Hawaiians and Mexicans.

The (in)stability of racial identity is further treated in two narrative elements that inform the processes of naturalizing empire. The first deals with the various ways in which the romance imagines individual foreigners becoming Hawaiian and the potential implications for individual white identity or subjectivity. The second, related plot device involves marriage, romantic and sexual unions. While naturalization functioned as a legal pretense for U.S. Americans to gain power in Hawai‘i and elsewhere, it also produced uncertainties about the presumed coherence not only of national identity but also of notions of the autonomous, possessive individual. As we shall see, Jarves engages and attempts to resolve some of these uncertainties with varying degrees of success in *Kiana*. To what extent does Jarves imagine the “white” foreigners not only becoming a part of Hawaiian society, but actually “becoming Hawaiian”? How do marriages across racial and cultural differences dramatize the desires and anxieties of “going native”? Moreover, in what ways do these different forms of crossing over (or not) in the novel serve to transform Hawaiian society? That is, how does this process of “becoming Hawaiian” perform the cultural work of empire by effectively “whitening” Native Hawaiians, both literally and figuratively? *Kiana* both explicitly and implicitly engages these questions, and in doing so participates in debates about naturalization and marriage laws that took place across the pages of the *Sandwich Islands News*, *The Polynesian*, and other print cultures of the Hawaiian 1848. And in situating the narrative of white foreigners becoming Hawaiian roughly three hundred years before the Land
Commission began dividing up the land, Jarves’ Pacific historical romance retroactively inaugurates what the novel’s subtitle defines as “a tradition of Hawaii” in order to justify the transformations Jarves and other foreign advisors encouraged Kamehameha III to adopt.

The encounter between the shipwrecked Spaniards and the Hawaiians at the beginning of the narrative stages becoming Hawaiian as a process of subject formation in which difference effectively merges into sameness or unity. When Kiana and his people return to their village from their religious pilgrimage to Mauna Kea, they encounter Juan and the rest of the Spanish crew living in their homes and eating their food. Both Juan and Kiana immediately prepare for battle, but the encounter and astonishment of their physical difference leaves them both momentarily uncertain how to proceed. Kiana’s “astonishment at the apparition of the white man…instead of the expected tawny hue of his own race, brought him to a sudden stop” (67). Recovering his senses, he throws his javelin at Juan, who deflects it with his shield, leaving the two standing face-to-face with each other. “Both paused,” Jarves writes, “as they now better saw each other’s strength and strangeness” (67). Beatriz jumps in between the two warriors to prevent any violence, and both her beauty and her bravery at this crucial moment astonish Kiana and the rest of the Hawaiians, opening the possibility for peaceful engagement across racial and cultural difference. The figure of Beatriz serves here to mediate and bridge this divide. As Beatriz overcomes this astonishment at racial difference and strangeness, her beauty also produces shock for Kiana, as he “gazed in astonishment with powerless arm upon the new apparition” when she comes to stand in between the Chief and her brother.
Her beauty convinces Kiana to tell his people they are gods returned to bless them, thus preventing any violence.

While the role of white womanhood continues to be crucial in mediating narrative desires and anxieties about foreigners integrating into Hawaiian society, I want to focus here initially on the relationship between Juan and Kiana, specifically how this “strangeness” moves to sameness as they not only become friendly, but symbolically merge their identities, becoming one. After the violence is prevented and Juan and the other Spaniards are welcomed among the Hawaiians, Jarves takes an anthropological digression, describing the “character and condition of the race among which Alvirez and his party were now domesticated” (81). This includes an account of the patriarchal position Kiana had over his people, and though he is by all accounts a benevolent and caring leader, the structure of traditional society creates conditions in which people were prone to “the servile feeling common to Oriental despotism” (74). This racialized inequality led many to aspire to serve Kiana in whatever way possible in order to get in his good graces, a situation that resulted in a dangerous melding of identities and the loss of individual subjectivity. Many of Kiana’s subjects aspired to positions of trivial servitude that came to define them; for example, “there were ‘pipe lighters,’ masters of the pipe as they might be called” among a myriad of other “parasitical condition[s] in which the individual merges his own identity into the caprices or policy of his ruler” (74). Since this merging of identity is done on starkly unequal terms it is represented as dangerous, trivial, and prone to a particularly racialized “despotism.”

This unequal merging of identity between sovereign and subject, however, is contrasted with the relationship that forms between Kiana and Juan; a relationship of
equality that merges yet mutually reinforces their individual identities. After some time passes the two men, “according to Hawaiian custom, exchanged names, by which in friendship, power and property, they were viewed as one” (82). Unlike Kiana’s subjects, whose attempts to merge their identities with him are described as “parasitical,” the merging of identities of Juan and Kiana follows from their mutual recognition of equality; in the momentary pause of time at their first encounter each recognized not only “strangeness” but also “strength.” This implicit equality (which is structured in opposition to the explicit inequality of Kiana and his people) serves to open up the possibility of incorporating “white” foreigners into the community. Still more, the two men are viewed “as one,” which situates Juan in a position of “power” as leader and sovereign over Hawaiians and their “property,” a situation similar to the naturalized foreigners working closely with Kamehameha III in the 1840s. The homosocial bond and sharing of power that forms between Kiana and Juan illustrates what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines as the “gender asymmetry” of “erotic triangles.” As Sedgwick notes, “there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power.”34 In Kiana, the relationship that forms between Juan and Kiana betrays an erotic subtext as it functions to transmit and share power between men. Finally, this merging of foreign and native identity, from the astonishment of racial difference to the recognition of sameness and a sharing of identity or subjectivity, is identified as part of a “Hawaiian custom,” one that Jarves fails to elaborate on beyond this brief reference. Nonetheless, the effect of

situating this merging of identities as “custom” defines Hawaiian society as one that can (must) embrace outsiders or foreigners that exhibit a degree of strength and equality with Hawaiian leaders.

Olmedo undergoes his own process of subject formation through a conversation about religion with Kiana, one that also reveals the desires and anxieties of transgressing and maintaining the boundaries of racial, sexual, and cultural identity. After respectfully listening to Olmedo’s story of Christian salvation, Kiana assumes the role of Indian orator to defend the Hawaiian gods and draw comparisons between the two faiths. Olmedo finds himself deeply moved by this impassioned statement of religious tolerance, leaving him to question the dogma of his own system of belief. Describing this transformation as the priest watches the natural ease of a feminized Hawaiian society, Jarves writes, “Olmedo’s heart swelled at these thoughts. As he gazed upon the scene before him, so in harmony with the joyousness of nature, so penetrated with her beauty, so choral with her melodies, the mere scholastic theologian died from within him” (99). Questioning whether the ascetic life of the priesthood was “a sacrifice of self,” Olmedo undergoes a transformation of identity that forms out of his relationship to the sensual, primitive Hawaiian society. “Out from his eyes,” Jarves continues, “as he stood erect and felt himself for once wholly a man, there shone a light that made those who looked upon him feel what it was for man to have been created in His Image” (100). The mutual gaze shared by the Spanish priest and Kiana, who “regarded Olmedo in amazement” during this transformative process, serve as the mark of recognition of the fulfillment of Olmedo’s new subjectivity.
Unlike the relationship between Juan and Kiana, however, Olmedo and the Hawaiian chief were not “viewed as one” after the priest’s transformation. In contrast to Juan, Kiana’s “was not the soul to enter into such a sanctuary” of Olmedo’s new interiority. Only the priest’s desire for Beatriz would allow him to merge his subjectivity with another in a manner similar to Juan and Kiana. This possibility of merging of Olmedo’s and Beatriz’s identities is described in a rather convoluted and confused passage, reflecting the confused state of identity and subjectivity treated in the romance. After noting the inability of Kiana to “enter” Olmedo, Jarves writes in the concluding lines of the chapter:

There was one [Beatriz], however, whose nature penetrated his [Olmedo’s] inmost thoughts. Nay, more, it instinctively infused itself into his and the two made One Heart; intuitively praising Him [Jesus?]. Their eyes met. One deep soul-searching gaze, and these two were for ever joined. (100)

While the two never physically consummate their mutual desire, Olmedo and Beatriz merge their identities, becoming “for ever joined.” Significantly though, it is the relationship between Olmedo and Kiana that inaugurates the priest’s transformation. This relationship between these two men represents another example of the gender asymmetry of Sedgwick’s erotic triangles. That is, both the priest and the chief desire the same woman—Beatriz—and that mutual desire forms an important link between them. “[I]n any erotic rivalry,” Sedgwick writes, “the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved.” In fact, “the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love,’ differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in
many senses equivalent.”35 Though the rivalry between Olmedo and Kiana is not figured as a violent contest, as it is in the erotic triangle of Kiana, Tolta, and Beatriz, it can be said to be a rivalry of belief or faith. And while Olmedo “wins” Beatriz because of their shared Christianity, the bond that forms between Kiana and Olmedo and the consequent transformation of the latter represents an equivalent, if not more powerful, connection.

The erotic triangle between Beatriz, Kiana, and Olmedo signals the second plot device at work in naturalizing empire. In addition to the merging of identities and the (re)formation of individual subjectivities, multiple romance and marriage plots across racial difference within the novel further dramatize the possibility of “white” foreigners becoming a part of Hawaiian society, incorporating themselves into the community while at the same time transforming that society. While Jarves emphasized the necessity of white settlers taking an oath of allegiance to Kamehameha III as the surest means to demonstrate their commitment to Hawaiian interests when he was editing The Polynesian, the emphasis on marriage in Kiana appears to align with the critics of naturalization in the Sandwich Islands News who emphasized the significance of white foreign men marrying Hawaiian women. The unnamed Spanish sailors in Kiana, for instance, marry native women, “readily domesticat[ing] themselves,” to be “placed on the footing of petty chiefs” (70). This is the first example of incorporation through a romantic union. This just-so story is significant for its brevity; there is no discussion of the propriety of native women marrying foreigners and there is no mention of them after they marry into the community. This brevity, I would suggest, functions in a sense to

naturalize this process in itself, presenting it as natural and normal by seamlessly weaving it into, and then writing it out of, the larger narrative.

The romance and marriage between Juan and Liliha, which occurs at the end just as quickly as the marriages between his crew and their native spouses, represents another romance across racial difference that consolidates conquest. These unions of white men to Hawaiian women are examples of what Shelley Streeby terms the “international race romance.” Building on the work of Doris Sommer, Streeby notes the way popular U.S.-Mexico War romances (produced in between the initial publication of Kiana in The Polynesian in 1841 and its publication in the U.S. the following decade) attempt to “turn force into consent by reimagining the U.S. invasion as an international romance in which the force of erotic passion could, as Sommer puts it, ‘bind together heterodox constituencies.’” Like the Spanish seamen who become “petty chiefs,” the union of Juan and Liliha further consolidates Juan’s position of authority and power. Echoing the article from the Sandwich Islands News that envisioned marriage “elevat[ing]” the Hawaiian race “by admixture of blood,” the union of Juan and Liliha performs a similar function, for the last we hear of this union of the white man and Native woman is that from “their mingled blood descended several noted chiefs” (276). The marriage of white men to Hawaiian women, then, functions in a similar manner to the description of Hawaiian geography and the emergence of a market society, as well as the promotion of legal naturalization in The Polynesian, in that all serve to reconfigure the violence of empire as a peaceful, consensual, and beneficial encounter across and merging of racial and national difference.

36 Streeby, American Sensations 99.
Yet Jarves’s romance does not present marriage across racial difference without qualifications. The particular alignment of race and gender significantly determines who is and who is not eligible for marriage. While multiple “white” Spanish men marry Hawaiian women, Beatriz, the sole white woman on the islands, does not cross racial boundaries of romantic and sexual intimacy, despite being the object of desire of multiple male characters in the novel. Indeed, the central plot is structured around non-white male desire for this representation of “true womanhood,” an emphasis, I would argue, that highlights and attempts resolves the instability of racial, national, and sexual identities in the different assertions of U.S. empire during the mid-nineteenth century. That is, Kiana is in love with Beatriz and proposes to make her his wife (106-108). She rejects him, ostensibly because she is in love with Olmedo but also because of Kiana’s status as non-white and non-Christian. Tolta, the Aztec taken captive by Juan and his men, also desires to make Beatriz his wife. This, however, is not so much a romantic desire, like Kiana’s, but a sexual desire that is entangled with his desire for revenge on Juan for the conquest of Mexico. Accepting Beatriz’s rejection, Kiana says he “seeks a companion, not a captive” (108). The opposite could be said about Tolta; he wants the white woman as his concubine and nothing more. While Kiana represents the noble savage in the romance, then, Tolta represents the opposite, the merciless, ignoble savage. These nonwhite male characters’ desire for the “solitary white woman” highlights how the production of different racialized masculinities worked manage and control difference by proscribing access to white womanhood as a site of sexual and social privilege.\(^{37}\) The conclusion of

\(^{37}\) On the place of the white heroine in the frontier romance, see Ezra Tawil, *The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006),
the narrative naturalizes both the consensual acceptance (Kiana) as well as the use of force and violence (Tolta) to interdict unions between white women and nonwhite men. White men marrying native women on the one hand, and prohibiting native men from marrying white women on the other, represent related assertions of access, privilege, and control exercised by white male agents of empire. These processes of becoming Hawaiian through marriage and other acts of naturalization dramatized in Kiana, as well as The Crater, The Polynesian, and the Sandwich Islands News, demarcate boundaries of racial, national, gender, and sexual identity while simultaneously producing privileged exceptions for those agents of empire to transgress those boundaries, a dialectic central to the logic of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire.

Native Hawaiian Print Cultures

Significantly, white men seeking to advance their own self-interest by marrying Native women were not the only ones to protest naturalization policies. The makaʻāinana, those apparently poised to benefit the most economically as well as morally and physically from the division of the land, protested the King’s policies of allowing haole (white person, foreigner) to take the oath of allegiance in a series of petitions submitted to the government. Situating their criticism alongside a sincere display of respect for the King and ruling chiefs, these petitions demonstrate a nuanced critique of both the naturalization and land division and the dangers these posed not only for the petitioners themselves, but the Hawaiian nation more broadly. In addition to the makaʻāinana petitions, Hawaiian intellectuals made use of an emergent Hawaiian-
language press to express their concerns about what increasing foreign influence and the *Māhele* portended for the Hawaiian nation in terms of identity, history, and sovereignty. In particular, historical writings by David Malo, also an author of some of the petitions, and Samuel Kamakau, who like Malo was educated at the missionary high school at Lāhainālūna and served intermittently in various government roles, present histories, traditions, and genealogies of the Hawaiian people alongside a critique of particular transformations of Hawaiian land and identity leading up to and during the *Māhele*. I want to suggest that these writings on Hawaiian history by Malo and Kamakau can be read as discursive interventions into a growing Pacific archive, including the historical romances of Cooper and Jarves, that attempted to document, recount, and invent particular pasts for Hawai‘i and the Pacific world that justified colonial policies of the present. Yet neither Malo nor Kamakau uncritically embraced a pre-haole Hawaiian past or summarily dismissed Christianity and a western system of law, signaling the ambivalence of their positions as missionary-educated Native intellectuals. Indeed, their decisions to publish in newspapers, along with the *maka‘āinana*’s use of petitions, represent efforts on behalf of Hawaiians to simultaneously appropriate and resist the print culture and other institutions and ideologies of U.S. imperialism, such as religion and law. This archive of Native-authored texts, then, testifies to the efforts of Hawaiians to produce alternative histories, traditions, and futures in print, registering their critical engagement with modernity through writing.

Malo’s *Hawaiian Antiquities* (or *Moolelo Hawaii*) and Kamakau’s articles on Hawaiian history from the *Kū‘ōko‘a* and other newspapers throughout the 1860s (collected and translated as *Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii*) provide important examples of the
“necessary historiography” that Maureen Konkle describes as crucial to move beyond a culturally-oriented emphasis on Native community and identity to focus on political and intellectual sovereignty. For Konkle, a principle focus on fictional literary culture in Native studies runs the risk of subsuming tribal identities within the logic of U.S. liberal society, whereas a turn to nonfictional print cultures such as treaties and history writing foregrounds the historical and legal claims to the political autonomy of Native nations. And the writing of Native national history from the nineteenth century to the present is central to that shift. “For Native intellectuals,” Konkle writes, “time is a political necessity: they write historical accounts of their traditions and experiences of European colonization and settlement in order to write themselves into a political future.”

Native historiography contests the assumption that indigenous communities lack legitimate political identities, an imperial fiction that naturalizes a dialectic of extermination and assimilation as an inevitable consequence of settler colonialism within modernity. Print cultures of Native nonfiction such as historiography, treaties, and petitions comprise an archive that counters assumptions that the U.S. and other imperial states serve as the only institutional framework for indigenous political identity, legitimacy, and freedom.

Further, this archive of Native nonfiction exemplifies the ways in which Native intellectuals and activists engage and appropriate various cultural and political genres of modernity rather than explicitly rejecting those forms as they documented and narrated their histories and identities. And while the historical encounter with U.S. empire unfolds

39 On Native nonfiction see, Robert Warrior, The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2005).
differently for Native nations across the North American continent and the Hawaiian nation, Konkle and work by other Native studies scholars can be productively extended to illuminate processes of colonialism in Hawai‘i, along with Hawaiian efforts to survive and resist the different forms of violence enacted in that encounter. As Haunani-Kay Trask observes in her discussion of “the mercurial colonial legacy” shared by Native American and Hawaiian struggles to resist colonial violence, “the shape of our histories is similar.”\footnote{Haunani-Kay Trask, \textit{From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i} (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1993) 26. This connection between Native North American and Hawaiian history is elaborated in the special forum on “Native Feminisms Without Apology” in \textit{American Quarterly} 60.2 (June 2008).}

In his political history of the Hawaiian Kingdom in the nineteenth century, Jonathan Osorio discusses several dozen petitions signed by thousands of Hawaiians submitted to the government after passage of the first Constitution in 1840 and continuing over the next five years. Malo and Z. P. Kauma‘ea, a fellow graduate of Lāhaināluna, drafted some of the petitions, while many others do not identify who was principally responsible for their composition. While some of the signatories penned their own names, others marked themselves with an “X” or had another sign for them. Summarizing the primary apprehensions the petitioners expressed across the majority of the documents as fear of haole citizenship, haole advisors in government, and haole landownership, Osorio observes that what “concerned them most was not the seizure of the kingdom by a foreign government, but that foreigners would replace them as the people of the land.”\footnote{Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, \textit{Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887} (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002) 31.} The petitioners’ concerns principally involved transformations of
Hawaiian identity and a sense of community, of what defined the Hawaiian nation and its people. In doing so they offer a unique insight into sovereignty, citizenship, and the global, racialized division of labor from a position of resistance. Again, the international and comparative perspectives of the issues described and analyzed in these texts situate Native Hawaiians as perceptive observers and critics of modernity. Not simply indexing a desire to return to a pre-haole society, Hawaiian print culture marks an active participation and negotiation of the political, economic, and cultural contours of the nineteenth-century world-system.

In seeking to preserve their relationship to the land and thus their sense of identity as Hawaiian, the petitioners made use of a particular form of print culture that traces its roots back through U.S. and English legal history, one most likely introduced to Hawaiians by the missionaries and haole architects of the constitutional government. In the first half of the nineteenth century, petitions, along with lecturing and pamphleteering, served as a central medium of social reform movements such as temperance, African colonization, and the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions that sent the first missionaries to Hawai‘i in 1820. Focusing on women’s petitions in the antislavery movement in the United States, Susan Zaeske defines the petition as “a genre of political communication” that can serve as a medium for disenfranchised populations not only to seek redress from authority but also to articulate a collective sense of identity and community. Zaeske traces “the subversive potential of the right of petition” through Anglo-American legal history, noting that the petition,
while typically written in humble, supplicating language, demands a response from the recipient, calling on those in power to either justify or alter their current practices.  

Moving consideration of the petition as a discursive form beyond the field of political communication in her reading of the petitions drafted by the eighteenth-century Mohegan intellectual Samson Occom, Caroline Wigginton writes, “Though legal petitions are a nontraditional genre for literary studies, [Occom’s] petitions are more than historical or even legal documents; they are concrete moments of intellectual sovereignty.” Petitions, she argues, represent “rich sites for cultural and literary analysis” for Native studies as texts that mediate between tribal communities and settler colonial regimes as well as between the tribal community and individual authors.  

For Wigginton, Occom’s petitions articulate an intersection of what Gerald Viznor terms “survivance” and Jace Weaver calls “communitism,” as they document and express overlapping modes of survival, resistance, community, and activism. Extending both Zaeske’s and Wigginton’s analyses to frame my reading of the Hawaiian petitions of the 1840s, I suggest that, among other things, the petition can represent a literature of contestation embraced by indigenous and colonized peoples that materially situates struggles and demands for sovereignty within cultures of print. The collective nature of their composition and authorship enunciates community solidarity and active resistance to enforced political, but also epistemological and cultural, change that so frequently characterizes the violence of incorporation into regimes of capitalist production and

exchange. Moreover, the petitions codify the maka‘āinana understanding of Hawaiian national identity and history, looking to the past as they attempt to chart their way into an uncertain future. Similar to Kamehameha III and Native elites working in the government who cautiously embraced a policy of “strategic accommodation” of Western legal systems, the maka‘āinana also perceptively observed the present circumstances of haole influence and articulated their own understanding of sovereignty and independence.  

Triggering a debate concerning the meaning and scope of independence for the Hawaiian Kingdom, some of the petitions reveal differing interpretations of independence that emphasized either foreign or domestic perspectives of sovereignty. A petition from “the common people of Lahaina, and Wailuku and Kailua” from the summer of 1845, for example, acknowledged the decision of Kamehameha III to send representatives to the U.S. and Europe to secure recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty as both wise and necessary. The King had sent Timoteo Ha‘alilio and William Richards, a former missionary and principal author of the 1840 constitution, on a diplomatic mission to ensure Hawai‘i’s position as an independent member of the family of nations in 1842. Their efforts met with success, as Great Britain, France, Belgium, and the United States all agreed to recognize Hawai‘i’s status as a sovereign nation. However, during their diplomatic mission the British naval Captain Lord George Paulet had temporarily forced Kamehameha III to cede Hawaiian sovereignty to him in 1843 until the British

45 This petition is printed in The Friend. A Semi-Monthly Journal, Devoted to Temperance, Seamen, Marine and General Intelligence, 1 August 1845. Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa includes this and three other translated petitions in the appendix of her book, Native Land and Foreign Desires 331-338.
government rebuked his action. Thus, the petitioners affirmed the necessity of securing diplomatic recognition, writing to the King, “You and your Chiefs perceived the perilous situation of the Hawaiian kingdom in reference to foreigners.” Outright colonial annexation represented a palpable danger to Hawai‘i, one the King, the petitioners, and even naturalized foreigners agreed should be prevented, albeit for very different reasons.

However, for the signers of the petition recognition was not the fulfillment of independence, but simply one aspect of a longer process that moved between international political considerations and domestic political concerns. Since “these large nations have declared the independence of the Hawaiian kingdom,” the petitioners observe, therefore, “it is very clear to us, that it is not proper that any foreigner should come in and be promoted in your kingdom, among your Chiefs, and your people.” That is, since the King felt he needed advisors familiar with international law working on his behalf to secure recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty, it made sense to employ foreigners to this end. But as that end had been secured, foreign advisors were no longer necessary. The petitioners proffered their own understanding of independence, writing, “This is independence; that your gracious Majesty, Kamehameha III. be King, and the Chiefs of your kingdom be your assistants, and also your own people.” Acknowledgement of Hawaiian sovereignty by foreign nations did not serve as the sole condition of independence for the petitioners; rather, Native Hawaiian self-determination within the domestic space of the Hawaiian government itself was equally significant. That Native Hawaiians, and not naturalized foreigners, should constitute “your own people” links definitions of independence to definitions of Hawaiian identity and community.

46 Silva, Aloha Betrayed 36-37.
The reply to the petitioners from the government attempts to foreclose discussion regarding the definition of independence, stating authoritatively, “This is the meaning of independence;—that Kamehameha III. be King of the Hawaiian Islands, and there be no other King over him.” Insisting on the King’s sovereign authority to choose his government ministers, the response continues to emphasize the foreign context of independence as a qualification “to transact business with foreigners,” thus requiring advisors familiar with a market economy and international trade. The response implies that the political equality of sovereignty within the family of nations could ensure Hawai‘i favorable conditions with trading partners within the capitalist world-economy. Put differently, recognition of their political independence implied a legitimate economic, as well as political, identity for Hawai‘i.47

While not addressing the context of international trade specifically, the petitioners presented their own response to the idea that independence meant “transact[ing] business with foreigners,” warning of the dangers of economic exploitation that could result from political equality, for citizens and states. Again, turning the focus from the foreign and back toward the domestic, the petitioners note that “[f]oreigners come on shore with cash, ready to purchase land; but we have not the means to purchase lands.” They continue to stress this economic inequality, raising questions about its consequences: “Is it proper at this crisis that we should be turned in with the wealthy foreigners to purchase ourselves land? That is equivalent to the land with the life of the kingdom passing into possession of foreigners.” The maka‘āinana lacked the capital to buy land their communities had

47 The government response to the petition is also included in the 1 August 1845 issue of The Friend.
been working for generations under the traditional labor system. Laws that would allow everyone an equal opportunity to purchase newly privatized land (significantly figured here as a “crisis”) meant little to them given the advantages of wealth and power of foreigners. The equivalent logic promoted by naturalized foreigners giving Native and naturalized Hawaiians a commensurate claim to rights and resources is exposed here as a condition of inequality. For the petitioners this is “equivalent” to the loss of their land, and thus their sovereignty and independence.

Moreover, this incisive analysis and rejection of formal equivalence can be extended to serve as an implicit warning about the possible shortcomings of sovereign recognition. That is, the right “to transact business” as the meaning and condition of independence for the Hawaiian nation may place it on an ostensibly equal political footing in the family of nations, yet leave it open to economic subordination and exploitation. The danger of this situation, for individual Hawaiians and the Hawaiian state, was that it created conditions in which responsibility for the loss of land and economic exploitation could be placed upon the Native Hawaiians themselves. Recognizing the difference between traditional colonial tactics such as those carried out by Paulet that overtly negate sovereignty and their own unorthodox condition of coloniality, the petitioners write:

If this kingdom had passed into the possession of the British, then we should have mourned with regret and love for the chiefs, who had been made destitute. But if the kingdom is now given to foreigners on account of their intrigue, who will pity us? The former would have been our guiltless misfortune; the latter is our mistaken policy.
This condition, one that stresses autonomy and consent, assigns responsibility and blame to the dispossessed. Like the logic of consent that informed the colonization movement’s efforts to send black Americans to the foreign shores of Africa, in Hawai‘i the private right to own land figures the colonized as complicit in their own exploitation. Further, similar to the emphasis on the recognition of Liberia’s sovereignty, recognition of Hawai‘i’s independence within the family of nations naturalizes U.S. empire by disavowing imperial designs, leaving each with the “choice” to export the tropical products of agricultural labor as (neo)colonial peripheries within the world-system. And like Delany and other black critics of Liberian colonization, the Hawaiian petitioners recognized and rejected those imperial designs that would appropriate their land, leaving them only with the burden of responsibility.

A petition from Kona also invokes the British to draw comparisons between their colonial projects in South Asia and domestic transformations of land and labor in Hawai‘i. Registering the intimate connection between the commoners and the land, the petitioners ask, “When a tract of land is sold to a foreigner what will become of the men on the land? Are they sold with the land and thus become his servants?” Looking abroad, they make connections between their own situation and “some of the lands sold in the western part of India,” where stories of “the black people…being sold, together with the land” raise legitimate concern regarding their own precarious situation. Pointing to the global dimensions of the coerced, racialized division of labor of “the white men” and “the black people” that accompanies different colonial projects within modernity, the petitioners flip the liberal discourse of William Little Lee and other naturalized haole on its head. The division of land to Lee signaled a moment of “emancipation” and
“freedom” for the Hawaiian people, but for the petitioners it presented the threat of enslavement and bondage.\textsuperscript{48}

Attempting to assuage these concerns about naturalization of foreigners and privatization of land through an alternative transnational comparative logic of race, Native chief and government agent John Young Jr. attributed the history of indigenous displacement and genocide on the North American continent to the lack of legal protections that accompany citizenship and that theoretically transcend race in a national community. “Did you ever hear of a people destroyed by allegiance?” he asks, addressing the petitioners’ objection to naturalization. “America was overrun…and the red-skins were destroyed. But the white men owed them no allegiance.” Had the “red-skins” and “white men” professed allegiance to a common sovereign power, Young imagines, the Native experience of white settler colonialism would have been different.\textsuperscript{49}

Acknowledging the history of racial violence that characterized U.S. continental settler expansion, Young sought to convince the petitioners that a shared allegiance of Native Hawaiians and naturalized “white men” could prevent the same fate, that the equality and obligation implied in the political bonds of allegiance would level hierarchies of racial difference and economic inequalities. It is also possible to read in this statement not an assertion of confidence in the power of the oath of allegiance, but rather a sense of anxiety regarding the lack of options facing Hawaiian rulers. That is, given the choice

\textsuperscript{48} Quoted in Kame'eleihiwa, \textit{Native Land and Foreign Desires} 332.
\textsuperscript{49} The Young quote included in Laura Fish Judd, \textit{Honolulu, Sketches of the Life, Social, Religious, and Political, in the Hawaiian Islands from 1828 to 1861} (Honolulu: Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1928) 116. Of course the numerous treaties between Native tribes and white colonial settlers rather explicitly reveals the latter owed the former a contractually-bound allegiance, one that registers tribal communities as sovereign.
between a liberal naturalization policy and its potential consequences, on the one hand, and a guaranteed loss of land through violent displacement and extermination, on the other, perhaps Young and the other ruling Chiefs felt accepting the advice of the naturalized foreigners represented their best option in preventing a shared fate with Native North Americans.  

If the government continued the “granting of citizenship to foreigners by oath,” the Kona petitioners continued, not only would the Native Hawaiians possibly become conscripted within a global division of labor, with “the white men” and “the black people” embodying this division, they also saw the threat of displacement from their national home, forewarning of the possibility of Hawaiian diaspora. The petitioners envision “the Hawaiian people going from place to place in this world like flies. They will desert Hawaii, their mother, and go to foreign countries.” Naturalizing white foreigners would result in Native Hawaiians either becoming alienated laborers on their own land or forced to leave that land, the principal basis of their identity. Samuel Kamakau also recognized these effects of the “new law” for the Hawaiian people. Writing more than two decades after the petitioners raised these concerns about their future, Kamakau notes Hawaiian people dispersed throughout the globe, with hundreds living in other Pacific Islands, the Pacific Northwest and California, South America, and New England. “The Hawaiian race,” he writes, “live like wanderers on the earth and dwell in all lands surrounded by the seas.”

50 This point is developed in both Silva, Aloha Betrayed, and Sally Engle Merry, Colonizing Hawai‘i: The Cultural Power of Law (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
51 Samuel Kamakau, Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii (Honolulu: Kamehameha School Press, 1992) 404. Subsequent references will be from this edition and included parenthetically in the text.
also “became wanderers,” displaced from their land and forced “to become contract laborers and serve people like slaves” (403). The conditions of modernity for Hawaiians in the mid-nineteenth century, according to the petitioners and Kamakau, can thus be figured as the “choice” of enslavement or exile. Incorporation of Hawai‘i into the modern capitalist world-economy, not as a subordinate colonial dependency, but as an “independent” sovereign governed by the “new law” of the West severed the relationship between the Hawaiian people and the land.

The petitions, along with efforts by Kamehameha III to secure diplomatic recognition of Hawaiian independence from the U.S. and European nations, demonstrate efforts by Hawaiians—from the common people to the King—to understand and deploy different forms of western print and legal cultures in order to maintain the internal sovereignty of Hawaiian society as well as the external sovereignty of national legitimacy and autonomy. In both instances the emphasis is on present political conditions with a strategic eye looking to the probable consequences of haole influence for their collective future. Yet these efforts to negotiate and influence the transformations taking place throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century were undoubtedly rooted in a firm sense of the past, of Hawaiian history. Discussing the concepts of ka wā mamu (past) and ka wā mahope (future) as grounding their orientation to temporality, Osorio writes Hawaiians “face the past, confidently interpreting the present, cautiously backing into the future, guided by what our ancestors knew and did.”

Hawaiian intellectuals such as David Malo and Samuel Kamakau recognized this temporal epistemology as crucial as the Kingdom moved into an uncertain future. Both documented the social and

---

52 Osorio, Dismembering Lāhui 7.
political histories of Hawai‘i before and after haole contact, using the education they received at the missionary school and the emergent Hawaiian-language print community to produce written texts that narrate their own traditions and histories. In doing so, I argue, this Hawaiian historiography serves an important counterpoint to the invented traditions and imagined communities conjured up in the historical romances of Cooper and Jarves as well as the travel narratives and proto-anthropological texts of Jarves, the Wilkes Expedition, and other work that constitute the U.S. Pacific archive in the nineteenth century. Recalling Fanon’s work on the responsibility of the Native intellectual in resisting the colonial “work of devaluing pre-colonial history,” Malo and Kamakau’s writings, simply put, can be read as attempts to ensure that the Hawaiian “past is given back its value.”

Discussing the geological origins of the islands in Hawaiian Antiquities, Malo moves from traditional Hawaiian versions of this story to a commentary on the futility of scientific discourse to arrive at a conclusive truth. In his chapter on the “Formation of the Land,” Malo opens by acknowledging the multiple, “contradictory” versions of Hawaiian cosmogony in different Hawaiian traditions. He then shifts his focus to the theories of “scientists from other lands” who generally believe “that there was probably no land here in ancient times, only ocean; and they think that the islands rose up out of the ocean as a result of volcanic action.” These scientists from other lands rely on a comparative logic that looks to other islands that have emerged from volcanoes and abstract from that to posit a similar origin for the Hawaiian Islands. Without directly refuting this deductive reasoning that led scientists to this conclusion, Malo suggests that “[t]his view may not

53 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 210; 211.
be entirely correct; it is only a speculation,” and there is also a possibility “that there has always been land here from the beginning.” One cannot be sure either way according to Malo, since the scientific theories rely on “speculation” and the multiple versions of the ancient stories are also “utterly unreliable and astray in their vagaries.”

What is significant here is Malo’s refusal to privilege one particular epistemology over another; he remains equally suspicious of the traditional stories and the scientific theories. He says that many of the ancient stories must be “mistaken,” and also insists that the scientific theories are “speculations.” In doing so he denaturalizes the presumed authority of scientific discourse. In addition, he refuses closure; he won’t say definitively what his view is. The closest he gets to his own view is from the Kumu-lipo genealogy that “said the land grew up of itself.” “Perhaps,” he continues in his discussion of this genealogy, “this is the true account and these Hawaiian Islands did grow up of themselves, and after that human beings appeared on them….who knows?” (3). This account, that the land “grew up of itself” and humans then “appeared on them,” revises the romantic visions of empty space open and inviting colonization featured so prominently in both The Crater and Kiana. There is no implication that the land and its natural resources emerged specifically for people, Hawaiians or otherwise.

While Malo articulates his uncertainty regarding both traditional and western theories about the physical formation of the islands, he expresses a greater degree of certainty when he moves into his discussion of genealogies and the history of the Hawaiian people. The genealogies served an important function for the Ali‘i Nui, or

---

54 David Malo, Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii) (Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1951) 3-4. Subsequent references will be from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.
ruling Chiefs, in determining lines of descent and thus who was qualified to rule over the people. The “genealogies of the kings,” Malo writes, “were always preserved by their descendants, that the ancestral lines of the great chiefs might not be forgotten” (55). Thus, the genealogies served an important function in distinguishing *Ali‘i* from *maka‘āinana*, the common people, documenting royal lineage “so that all the people might see clearly” (55). Clarity of vision as the Hawaiian people looked to their past serves as a counterpoint to the historical romances that revise and distort not only the Hawaiian past but the perception of Hawaiian identity in the present. Observing and interpreting their own past represents an alternative, decolonizing temporality, one that long precedes and exists independently from western contact and historical epistemologies, from natural science to the fictions of romance. Malo emphasizes that these genealogies speak to an internal, hierarchical division within the *Lāhui*, the nation or race, yet he points out that if traced back far enough they reveal a shared origin across these social divisions. Writing about the first Hawaiians, he notes that “[c]ommoners and *alii* were all descended from the same ancestors, Wakea and Papa....There was not difference between king and plebian as to origin” (52). And while this origin implicitly refutes the invented traditions of white *haole* becoming Hawaiian in the past and the racial formations that mark indigenous peoples as “primitive” or “savage” in the Pacific romance, both Malo and Kamakau acknowledge the genealogies speak to the arrival of strangers at different points in history. Thus, they demonstrate that the understanding of the Hawaiian race is not fixed and static across time. The traditions and stories that Malo and Kamakau recount in their work include a number of cultural and identity crossings and transgressions; of the “original people” coming from distant lands, of relations
between chiefs and commoners, and the “mingled blood” of Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. What this suggests is that their genealogies are not attempting to establish a “pure,” undiluted Hawaiian lineage in opposition to the imperial efforts to imagine the incorporation of outsiders or foreigners. In these histories, foreigners can and do become Hawaiian and marriage and sexual reproduction take place across social and racial boundaries, but in a way that does not lay the groundwork for dispossession or disruption of traditional practices. On the contrary, these processes are narrated in the genealogies in ways that structure and strengthen Hawaiian history and identity.

Malo offers alternative racial and social formations, moreover, that reveal the complexity of Hawaiian governing institutions and cultural practices in ways that disrupt charges of Hawaiian “savagery” as well as assertions of the necessity of naturalized foreigners advising the King from within the government. His chapter from Hawaiian Antiquities entitled “The Civil Polity” focuses primarily on the role of the kalaimoku, or traditional advisors to the King. Taken as a whole, the chapter represents an analysis of the internal sovereignty of the traditional Hawaiian state, outlining the different responsibilities and obligations that maintain the balance between the King, Ali‘i, and commoners. The kalaimoku, as the chief councilor to the King, played a mediating role in this balance, keeping an eye on the interests of both the people and the King. They also mediated the relationship between past and present, frequently consulting with the genealogists to become “well-acquainted with the methods adopted by different kings, also with those used by the kings of ancient times,” and thus perceptive about what ensured successful rule and a contented populace (198). All this is to say that the civil polity Malo presents is a functioning governmental organization, with the King’s
principal duty being to protect the interests of the people. And the people themselves were by no means ignorant regarding their condition; Malo mentions the back country people (kuaʻāina or “country bumpkin”55) who were themselves “skilled in the art of government” and “shrewed critics of the faults as well as the virtues of the kings” (198). Further, the emphasis on the kalaimoku and their crucial role in maintaining the internal sovereignty of the Hawaiian kingdom speaks to the petitioners’ insistence that naturalized foreign advisors were not necessary to protect Hawaiian sovereignty. Looking forward to the past (ka wā mamua), Malo reveals that the kalaimoku had long fulfilled that advisory role. Many Hawaiians, including Malo and the makaʻāinana petitioners, saw no reason why Native Hawaiian kalaimoku could not continue to do so.

Samuel Kamakau’s writings also contextualize and elaborate on a number of the issues raised in the petitions. In addition to his teaching and government work as one of the first representatives of the common people in the 1840s, Kamakau went to great lengths to document and publicize Native Hawaiian perspectives of their identity and history in ways that observed and refuted claims of foreigners circulating in newspapers and historical romances. In addition to the hundreds of articles he composed for Hawaiian language newspapers over three and a half decades, Kamakau was also instrumental in the founding of the Hawaiian Historical Association in 1841. Kamakau understood the Historical Association as a necessary intervention into the historical narratives produced by naturalized haole, a discursive process of colonization that could effectively write indigenous people out of history. Echoing the comparative racial logic of John Young in his response to the petitioners discussed above, Kamakau insists that

55 Translation provided in Kameʻeleihiwa, Native Land and Foreign Desires.
documenting and protecting history is necessary “because of the fact that these foreigners are partaking of the same food with us,” thus “what they would say now would be given much credence by our descendants, and if we do not gather these data now, after many generations our children would be like the American Indians – a race without a history” (Ruling Chiefs iv). What is interesting here is the way in which Kamakau figures his critique of the discursive power of white settlers to erase Native histories. Implicit in this statement is Kamakau’s concern that “what they…say now” will serve to distort or completely suppress Hawaiian history in the interest of settler expansion. Furthermore, in referencing “American Indians” as a “race without a history,” he identifies shared experiences of colonial violence among indigenous communities in Hawai‘i and the North American continent, a process that involves the negation of Native history in the scramble to appropriate land. The writing of native historiography, for Kamakau, functions as a discursive and material contestation of that articulation of imperial erasure. Similar to the North American Native intellectuals writing early examples of what Andrea Smith and J. Kēhāulani Kauanui term “decolonizing historiographies,” Kamakau recognized Hawaiian history as crucial for denaturalizing the cultural work of empire on the islands, producing not only Native history but assertions of Native sovereignty.56

Kamakau is divided regarding the transformations that have occurred as a result of foreign influence in the government. At times he is critical of behaviors and social conditions of the old times, characterizing them as immoral and profoundly unequal. At others, he looks back to the old times as positive and beneficial, particularly in contrast to

56 Andrea Smith and J. Kēhāulani Kauanui, “Native Feminisms Engage American Studies,” American Quarterly 60.2 (June 2008), 246.
current conditions for the common people. Thus, he can talk about the benefits of a
constitution securing and protecting “rights of the common people” and then immediately
follow that with a critique of the changing conditions of labor that accompanied these
newly protected rights. Kamakau contrasts the old times, when many realized a
“generous way of living,” wherein “the people were fed and every wish of the chief was
gratified,” with the present reality where “the working man labors like a cart-hauling ox
that gets a kick in the buttocks.” Kamakau attributes these harsh conditions specifically
to a system of wage labor, where the worker “gets a bit of money for his toil; in the house
where he labors there are no blood kin, no parents, no relatives-in-law, just a little corner
for himself” (372). This condition of alienation is the principal factor differentiating the
old times from the new. Kamakau acknowledges that in the pre-haole era “the work was
hard,” but “that today is even more so when families are broken up and one must even
leave his bones among strangers” (372). The alienation from community is represented
here in the figure of the bones, a material symbol binding historical identity to a very
specific geographical location, to very particular land.

Throughout his articles Kamakau moves between unequivocal critique of foreign
influences and efforts to reconcile himself and Hawaiian society to these changes. In
many ways this latter, more tempered perspective comes out of his traditional deference
and respect to the King and his decisions. Like the petitioners, he found himself in the
difficult position of adhering to the Kamehameha III’s adoption of western rule of law.
The traditional system of government dictated the people adhere to the King’s decisions,
but the new laws disrupted that relationship, in addition to the relationship between the
Native Hawaiian people and Hawaiian land. Thus, Kamakau could write that the
introduction of what he ironically calls “good laws” that in truth “were laws to change the old laws of the natives of the land and cause them to lick ti leaves like the dogs and gnaw bones thrown at the feet of strangers, while the strangers became their lords,” as a direct refutation of allowing foreigners to become naturalized Hawaiians and serve in the government (399). Yet Kamakau follows this with the inclusion of a letter written to Kamehameha III that presents a subtler, more nuanced critique of this process. A dialogical text, the letter presents answers to questions that Kamakau posed to “the old people who had lived in the time of Ka-hekili and of Kamehameha I,” to find out “how the government was administered in their day” (399). Including the voice of elders, Kamakau moves beyond his own individual perspective to represent the collective views of a community familiar with traditional ways.

In fact, in the letter Kamakau assumes the role of devil’s advocate, telling the elders, “from foreign lands life has been restored to the government,” or asking, “What chiefs are there who are able to fill the vacancies” if naturalized foreigners are prohibited to serve in the government (400)? It is through the voice of the old people that Kamakau presents not only their, but also his own, concerns about the naturalization policies to Kamehameha III, who all “love devotedly.” In response to Kamakau’s assertion that foreigners represent the source of the Hawaiian nation’s restoration and the means to ensure it does not become a colony of European powers, like the petitioners, the old people suggest that European nations were not the only threat to their sovereignty, insisting that the naturalized foreigners advising the King needed to be watched most carefully. Kamakau’s letter quotes them as insisting, “Perhaps it is not Great Britain alone which has these treacherous thoughts. There may be men living right among us
who will devastate the land like the hordes of caterpillars the fields; they hide themselves among us until the time comes, then they will be on the side of their own land where their ancestors were born” (400). For the elders, and thus Kamakau given his critique of law that preceded the letter quoted above, outright seizure of Hawaiian sovereignty by other nations presented a real threat to the Hawaiian nation, but allowing foreigners to “hide themselves among us” by taking the oath of allegiance and working in the government on the pretext of preventing those outside powers from gaining possession substituted one threat for another. Insisting that naturalized haole would ultimately side with “their own land” and “their ancestors,” Kamakau allows the old people to insist that the abstractions of political equality among native and naturalized citizens fail to supersede the particularities of one’s heritage and birthplace, among other markers of social identity (400).

Kamakau continues to express his doubts regarding the views of the old people, presumably to get them to elaborate on their critiques. Referring to the petitions, he informs his elders he “disapprove[s] of the people’s protest against foreign officials since it is the desire of the rulers of Great Britain, France and the United States of America to educate our government in their way of governing.” “[H]ence it is,” he insists, “that they allow Hawaii to remain independent,” revealing that independence within the modern world-system in the final analysis is a condition decided upon by those powers (400). This position directly echoes that of John Young Jr.’s response to the petitioners, defining independence in terms of the external recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty by foreign powers that sought to “transact business” with the nation. Like Young, Kamakau was involved in the government, serving in the legislature at the time the commoners were
petitioning the King when this letter was originally written. Thus, these disagreements with the commoners and the old people may in fact be sincere, though the concerns he expressed in founding the Hawaiian Historical Association four years prior to this clearly indicate he had formulated a critique of foreign influence long before he included the letter in the articles from the 1860s that constitute _Ruling Chiefs_. In any case, the response of the old people to his position, sincere or otherwise, provides insight into concerns of Native Hawaiians and may have played a role in solidifying Kamakau’s own critique of naturalization, land division, and Western rule of law.

“This is an amazing thing!” the old people proclaimed, expressing their astonishment about this definition of independence and assuming the role of skeptical observers. Since they did not “see it with [their] eyes,” the benefit to the Hawaiian people and the security of Hawaiian independence through the influence of naturalized foreigners were nothing but legal and ideological fictions to serve the self-interest of those _haole_. Alongside this critical vision, the old people listened with skeptical ears to foreigners who “talk in their clever way,” about rights, law, and property, demanding the people listen to traditional understanding of “what is right and what is wrong” (401). Their senses acutely attuned to the imperial designs of the naturalized foreigners, the old people get the last word in the letter, warning Kamakau and others they “will see the truth of it,” that “[e]ntertaining foreigners…is the beginning which will lead to the government’s coming into the hands of the foreigner, and the Hawaiian people becoming their servants to work for them,” characterized by these new foreign rulers “as stupid, ignorant, and good-for-nothing” which will “embitter the race and degrade it” (401).
Malo and Kamakau’s writings address also issues of morality and sexuality as they relate to the political and racial economies of modernity. In doing so, they move from naturalization in relation to law and political identity to the naturalization of regulated behavior and comportment. Malo and Kamakau both address Hawaiian histories of sexuality prior to and following European contact on the Islands and register the contradictions of sexual practices in relation to colonization. While the missionaries demanded strict adherence to monogamous, heteronormative restrictions on sexual practices, the sailors and merchants on the Islands incessantly encouraged Native Hawaiian women to defy those restrictions. Both had serious consequences for individual Hawaiian bodies and the Hawaiian social body, as sexual encounters with white men introduced new diseases and infections into the Hawaiian population and the regulated sexual morality of the missionaries cultivated feelings of guilt and shame to transform and govern the population. As Sally Engle Merry has documented in her analysis of Hawaiian court records, almost three quarters of all cases involved sexual behavior and social deportment during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. And in many ways it is through the point of view of the missionaries that Malo and Kamakau discuss these changes. Malo, for example, recounts that within traditional understandings of morality “indiscriminate sexual relations between unmarried persons…fornication, keeping a lover…hired prostitution…bigamy, polyandry, whoredom…sodomy…and masturbation were not considered wrong,” (74) and looks favorably upon the prohibition of these “unnatural vices” by the missionaries (65).

57 Statistic cited from Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “Strategies of Erasure: U.S. Colonialism and Native Hawaiian Feminism,” American Quarterly 60.2 (June 2008), 278. Merry, Colonizing Hawai’i.
Kamakau similarly discusses homosexuality as “an evil practice with which certain people in old days defiled themselves” (234). The very identification of these sexual and social practices as “unnatural” by Malo, a sentiment echoed by Kamakau, signals the degree to which the missionaries had naturalized their own narrow definition of acceptable sexual behavior and gender roles. As Fanon writes, “The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives’ heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.”

That is, the naturalization of heteronormative monogamy furthers imperial projects, in Hawai‘i and elsewhere, by marking other sexualities as aberrant and “unnatural,” thus legitimating efforts to proscribe them through physical and psychological violence. This transformation of sexual practices into “unnatural” behaviors exemplifies what Scott Laruiia Morgensen calls “settler sexuality.” For Morgensen, settler sexuality functions as a form of biopolitics wherein “a white national heteronormativity…regulates Indigenous sexuality and gender by supplanting them with the sexual modernity of settler subjects.” While Morgensen focuses on the central place of settler colonialism in the formation of “sexual modernity” through the eradication of racialized sexual difference within histories North American Native communities, his formulation can be usefully extended to illuminate similar processes in Hawai‘i.

---

58 Fanon, Wretched of the Earth 211. Of course, Fanon did not always recognize the heteronormative assumptions implicitly embedded in his own intellectual project, a point made Isaac Julien and Mark Nash’s film biography, Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1995).

Yet while both Malo and Kamakau appear to enunciate the logic of settler sexuality by defining non-normative sexualities as “unnatural” and “evil,” both writers complicate and even challenge this foreclosure, suggesting that within the social history of Hawai‘i heteronormative monogamy as the exclusive means of expressing sexual desire itself appears rather unnatural and that foreigners themselves are woefully incapable of adhering to these imposed standards. Malo, for instance, concludes *Hawaiian Antiquities* exactly at the place Kamakau begins the articles that make up *Ruling Chiefs*, with the stories of Līloa and his son ‘Umi. A great warrior and extremely religious, Līloa was also “addicted to the practice of sodomy,” according to Malo. As the commoners became aware of their King’s sexual desires, Malo recounts, “they tried it themselves, and in this way the practice of sodomy became established and prevailed down to the time of Kamehameha I. Perhaps it is no longer practiced at the present time. As to that I can’t say” (256). Regardless of how Malo felt personally about this practice, this inclusion of Līloa’s story and its connection to the present resist missionary efforts to erase and suppress this aspect of Hawaiian history and identity. *(Interestingly, Kamakau does not address Līloa’s “addiction” in his account.)* Furthermore, Malo does not provide a reason for his inability to speak to current sexual practices among Hawaiian people. While his embrace of Christianity and its attendant moral codes may suggest his

60 Significantly, the story of Līloa and Umi also marks a division, and balance, of power in traditional Hawaiian governance. According to Kame‘eleihiwa, Līloa was the Mō‘ī of Hawai‘i Island approximately ten generations prior to Kamehameha. Umi’s mother was not from a distinguished genealogy, and was perhaps a maka‘ainana. Hence, Liola passed on rule to another son, Hakau. Yet because of his love for Umi, he granted this son the right to make war, thus “dividing the ruling power in two—creating government and military—with each to serve as a check upon the other” (Kame‘eleihiwa 53). I point this out to emphasize that Malo and Kamakau’s discussion of the political and the intimate are not separate, but rather intersecting issues.
own refusal to acknowledge the present reality of non-normative sexual behaviors, it is possible to read in this unwillingness to elaborate a reluctance to further scrutinize and condemn his contemporaries. Indeed, his disillusionment with whites on the Islands toward the end of his life led him to request that he be buried up in the mountains; a final gesture ensuring that his own body remain away from the scrutiny of foreigners.

Kamakau, instead of situating “sodomy” in particular and other non-normative sexualities more generally as part of his documenting of Hawaiian genealogies, chose to focus on the hypocrisy of foreigners on the islands, criticizing the impact of their sexual exploitation of Hawaiian women. After his mention of the “evil practice” of homosexuality, for example, he concludes by insisting, “Today, licentiousness is more common than formerly” (235). This increased licentiousness, for Kamakau, is attributable to white sailors and their practice of giving commodities to Native women in exchange for sex. Worse still, the sailors refused to adhere to the ‘Aikapu, the religious practice separating men and women when eating and prohibiting women from eating certain foods. Looking back to “Captain Cook’s Visit to Hawaii” as emblematic of this practice of trading goods for sex, one that continued with the arrival of subsequent European and U.S. ships, Kamakau explains how Cook’s men gave Hawaiian women mirrors, ribbons, and other desired goods for sexual favors until the King prohibited women from going out to the ships. But the sailors then simply came on shore, resulting in many “‘opala haole,” or “foreign rubbish,” “born to the women,” according to Kamakau. Yet along with these newly desired commodities and unwanted children, foreign sailors also “bequeathed such possessions as the flea, never known…before his day, and prostitution with its results, syphilis and other venereal diseases. These serious
diseases caused the dwindling of the population after the coming of Captain Cook” (95-96). Thus, for Kamakau the attitudes about and consequences of sexual practices undergo significant transformation with the arrival of Westerners beginning with Cook and his men. The exchange of sex for commodities that Kamakau criticizes highlights the shifting sexual and social relations that accompany the capitalist transformations of land and labor on the Islands that came about through the Māhele.

While Kamakau observes that the “great thing done” in 1848 was the division of land by the Board of Commissioners to Quiet Land Titles, he also notes that along with the proliferation of sexually-transmitted infections, a serious “epidemic of measles accompanied by dysentery occurred in this year” as well (410). The outbreak among the native Hawaiians stemmed from the arrival of a U.S. military ship in Hawai‘i that fall. Kamakau’s record of 1848 here registers the tragic demographic consequences of foreign contact for Hawaiians. He connects this epidemic to the display of U.S. military power in the Pacific as well as the privatization of land orchestrated by the naturalized foreigners.

Not only did many native Hawaiians lose their land beginning in 1848 because of their confusion about the Board’s rules, the complex paperwork, and the prohibitive cost of filing an appeal, but, as Kamakau notes, thousands of Hawaiians lost their lives in this year too. As the writings of Kamakau, Malo, and other Hawaiians make clear, however, these different losses did not go uncontested; they represent important counter-narratives to the print cultures of empire that attempted to naturalize this violence and loss.
Conclusion

Many of the naturalized foreigners acquired vast amounts of land and established plantations shortly after the Māhele. Devoted to principally to coffee and sugar—major tropical agricultural products for export on the world market, as we saw in Chapter One—they formed an agricultural society to share their experiments with different cultivation techniques, agricultural products, labor, and other aspects of plantation management. It was a precarious venture for them through the first half of the 1850s, due in part because of droughts, dramatically fluctuating market prices in California, and, most significantly, a demand for labor. A circulation published by the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society shortly after their first meeting in the spring of 1850 acknowledged the hemispheric context of the American 1848 that articulated with the Hawaiian 1848, noting that “[w]ithin the last two years…a great and sudden change has taken place in the prospects of this group.” This change included both the “extension of territory and government of the United States to the borders of the Pacific” as well as the Hawaiian government “relaxing its former tenacious grasp on the arable lands of the Islands, and even inviting and encouraging their cultivation by foreign skill and capital.”

The division of land was still underway, though laws restricting ownership to native or naturalized Hawaiian citizens had been quickly done away with. Native Hawaiians were dying off from syphilis, measles, and other foreign diseases in devastating numbers, and those who had lost their land were not eager to go to work on the plantations. The issue of labor represented a “subject of great importance” to the Agricultural Society. In the

1850 circular they proposed the “introduction of Coolie labor from China to supply the places of the rapidly decreasing native population.” While their first attempt to import Chinese labor failed and the society lost $900 in the deal, subsequent efforts proved more successful for them and throughout the 1850s a significant population of Chinese laborers arrived in Hawai‘i. There was, however, no discussion within the agricultural society about their eligibility or their right to become naturalized Hawaiian citizens. Rather, they were seen as a tractable workforce preferable to the native Hawaiian population. Naturalized primarily within a racialized division of labor rather than as enfranchised political subjects, their importation into Hawai‘i represents yet another shift in the genealogy of U.S. empire as well as another culture of displacement entangled in the issues of race and labor, citizenship and sovereignty, in the American 1848.

---

62 Ibid., 8.
63 On the relation of “coolie” labor and empire, see Jung, Jung, Moon-Ho Jung, Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006); Lisa, Lowe, “The Intimacies of Four Continents.” in Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History, Ann Laura Stoler, editor (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006): 191-212; and John Mei Liu, “Cultivating Cane: Asian Labor and the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation System with the Capitalist World Economy, 1835-1920” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985). The 1850s also marks a shift in the strategies of U.S. empire in Hawai‘i. The decade was full of public discussion and debate, both in the U.S. and on the Islands, regarding annexation. This moment signals another interesting articulation of race and citizenship in relation to empire as much of the debate revolved around the position native Hawaiians would occupy as U.S. citizens following annexation. Anti-annexationists used the prospective political equality that would be extended to this racialized population to support their positions, which echoes the debates about Mexicans during the U.S.-Mexico War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
CHAPTER THREE

Becoming Nicaraguan: Sensational Print Cultures and the Filibuster Public Sphere

Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal ends his 1950 poem “With Walker in Nicaragua” with the following account of the filibuster’s execution in Honduras ninety years earlier:

They could see from where they stood
a newly made grave in the sand,
and Walker, who kept speaking, calm and dignified,
beside the grave.
And the man said:
“The President
the President of Nicaragua, is a Nicaraguan…”
There was a drum roll
and gunfire.
All the bullets hit the mark.
Out of ninety-one men only twelve made it back.
And there, by the sea, with no wreaths or epitaph remained
William Walker of Tennessee.

These concluding lines from a poem that recounts the story of the mid-nineteenth-century invasion and occupation of Nicaragua by a group of U.S. American filibusters led by William Walker nicely frames my third and final example of the process of naturalizing empire I have been describing in this dissertation. Walker, a native of Tennessee who had moved to California to work as a journalist in the 1840s, had gained notoriety during the following decade for his attempt to wrest lower California from Mexico and later for his invasion and occupation of Nicaragua. After being forced out of Nicaragua by allied Central American military forces, Walker made repeated attempts to retake the country, insisting on his claim to the presidency as a naturalized Nicaraguan citizen, a claim that would ultimately lead to his execution. Cardenal’s poem briefly registers this
equivocation surrounding the filibuster’s national identity. From one perspective Walker “is a Nicaraguan,” while another describes him as being “of Tennessee,” and thus a citizen of the United States. By ending the poem with the line “William Walker of Tennessee,” however, Cardenal explicitly rejects Walker’s own claim in the poem that he “is a Nicaraguan,” conclusively resolving that ambiguity within Central American cultural memory.¹

Nevertheless, in acknowledging Walker’s particular assertion of Nicaraguan national identity, the poem captures not only the filibuster’s personal delusions of grandeur regarding his claim to the presidency, but what was in fact a fairly common representation of filibusters in newspapers in the United States during the 1850s. That is, Walker and other U.S. American filibusters claimed to be naturalized citizens of Nicaragua, and U.S. newspapers oftentimes reinforced this claim in representing them as “naturalized Nicaraguans” running the government of a sovereign nation separate and independent from the United States. Walker, for example, proclaimed in his memoir, *The War in Nicaragua* (1860), that after he and his men (“La Falange Americana—the


Podían ver desde donde estaban
una fosa cavada en la arena,
y a Walker junto a la fosa, que seguía hablando
calmo y sereno.
Y el hombre dijo:
“El Presidente
el Presidente de Nicaragua, es nicaraguenses…”
Hubo un toque de tambor
Y una descarga.
Todas las balas hicieron del blanco.
De noventa y uno solo doce volvieron.
Y allí quedó sin coronas ni epitafio junto al mar
William Walker de Tennessee.
American Phalanx”) landed at the Pacific town of Realejo, “[b]y the constitution of 1838, a simple declaration of intention made any native-born citizen of an American Republic a naturalized citizen of Nicaragua, and under this clause most of the Falange became Nicaraguans.”

“Filibuster,” in this instance, signifies not simply a U.S. citizen involved in the illegal invasion and occupation of another state, but also a material and representational process of appropriation and dispossession of both foreign identity and foreign territory.

Furthermore, Cardenal’s poem stages Walker’s imperial assertion of Nicaraguan citizenship amidst a scene of spectacular public violence—execution by firing squad—that, as we will see, frequently recurs in what I am calling the sensational print cultures of the filibuster public sphere. Reported as and represented through tales and images of imperial adventure, foreign female bodies, treasonous letters, and death by (as well as harrowing escape from) firing squads, in addition to blackface minstrel performances, rowdy public rallies, and grotesque fantasies of horror and torture, Walker’s filibuster in Nicaragua is marked by these cultures of sensation throughout the pages of his newspaper El Nicaragüense, the new pictorial journalism of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, and other writings I address in this chapter. I examine how these different sensational print cultures worked to constitute a filibuster public sphere, a space of discourse and

---


association in which the cultural work of becoming Nicaraguan unfolds through the representation of new public formations in both Nicaragua and the United States. The formation of this filibuster public sphere involves the representation and organization of at least three different but overlapping publics: the Nicaraguan public made up of both native and naturalized citizens during the filibuster occupation, the pro-filibuster public in the United States represented as the public opinion and thus the embodiment of the nation’s popular sovereignty, and finally, a public of readers in both Nicaragua and the United States of publications such as El Nicaragüense, Leslie’s Illustrated, Walker’s memoir, and other filibuster writings that constituted a transnational public of print. These sensational print cultures, I argue, worked to create, consolidate, and connect these differentiated, transnational publics of discourse and association as a means of naturalizing filibustering as a form of empire-building.

In focusing on these different filibuster publics and the cultures of sensation as interconnected processes of naturalizing empire, this chapter extends and revises David Anthony’s discussion of what he terms “the sensational public sphere” in antebellum U.S. culture. For Anthony, the sensational public sphere designates a discursive space wherein an emergent gender and class formation of professional manhood expressed fears and apprehensions over fiscal instability and economic insecurity. In marked contrast to Jürgen Habermas’s characterization of the bourgeois or liberal public sphere as an impersonal, disembodied, rational space of debate, Anthony’s characterization of the sensational public sphere emphasized “the excessive emotions, passions, and desires of the professional classes,” and thus “acted as the emotionally charged underbelly of the
period’s more properly bourgeois public sphere.\textsuperscript{4} Emphasizing the embodied, corporeal, violent, and frequently irrational, “the sensational public sphere was forwarding vexed questions of class, gender, and self-possession into public discourse in new ways.”\textsuperscript{5} While Anthony foregrounds professional manhood in the shifting capitalist economy as the crucial context informing and structuring his discussion of the sensational public sphere, his analysis provides useful insights into the different publics and national, racial, and class formations represented in the sensational print cultures of filibustering I consider here. For example, he claims the sensational public sphere of the antebellum United States is marked by “a profound sense of lost security” for “masculine selfhood,” and, as I address below, we can see an analogous articulation of concern and anxiety over the sense of lost national and masculine selfhood implied in the process of “becoming Nicaraguan” and settling in that Central American country.\textsuperscript{6}

While I attend to the sensational scenes of the filibuster public, however, it is important to emphasize that Anthony’s designation of the sensational public sphere does not perfectly map onto what I am calling the filibuster public sphere. For one, filibustering was by no means exclusive to an emergent professional class. Walker’s filibuster drew men from laboring and professional classes, including urban mechanics, merchants, Mexican War veterans (officers and enlisted men), recently arrived

\textsuperscript{5} Anthony, Paper Money Men 23.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 24.
immigrants, and failed forty-niners, among others. As we will see, newspapers such as *Leslie’s Illustrated* played a central role in the efforts to appeal to and unify these different groups as aligned in support of Walker. This is perhaps most striking in the newspaper’s almost complete silence about Walker’s decision to reinstitute slavery in Nicaragua, but efforts to appeal to a broad readership across region, gender, and class also emerge in the different, overlapping cultural forms in the paper. Thus, for example, *Leslie’s Illustrated* deployed tropes of domesticity and sentimentalism alongside scenes of sensation in order to present Walker and the filibusters and respectable and supported by both U.S. and Nicaraguan men and women. In addition to exciting images and sensational narratives of imperial adventure, *Leslie’s Illustrated* sought to portray Walker in terms of middle-class respectability to justify his filibuster to a large and heterogeneous audience in the antebellum United States. In doing so, however, this emergent form of mass culture elided the social conflict and violence underscoring the middle-class ideology of “respectability” both at home and abroad. “Mass culture,” as Shelley Streeby notes, names the different “cultural forms that try to suppress class antagonisms in order to appeal to a broad, cross-class audience.”

This pretense of or claim to represent middle-class respectability raises a second point about the scope of the filibuster public sphere extending beyond Anthony’s

---

sensational public sphere. That is, the articles, editorials, and speeches defending Walker’s filibuster and criticizing the Pierce administration’s reluctance to support this particular form of U.S. empire-building represent the filibuster public sphere in terms that echo Habermas’s discussion of the emergent bourgeoisie. As Habermas says of the liberal public sphere, which as he notes “from the outset was a reading public,” it “may be conceived as the sphere of private people coming together to form a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves.” Habermas asserts that the bourgeois public sphere emerges as a crucial site for the critique of state power. In this liberal public sphere, publicity functions as a regulative norm that could both criticize and guide polices of the state. In the particular case of the filibusters, we can see a similar process unfolding as private, individual U.S. citizens joining or supporting filibustering came together to form a public, one frequently (and often forcefully) opposed to the efforts by the federal government to limit or prevent private military expeditions such as Walker’s in Nicaragua. Thus, I examine the role of different print cultures in articulating that public in opposition to state power as they claimed to represent the opinion of “the people,” and thus the popular sovereignty, of the United States. Therefore, it is important to point out that the federal government did arrest and prosecute potential filibusters leaving U.S. territory, particularly those going to assist Walker, as they shut down recruiting offices and prevented ships such as the

---

Northern Light and Tennessee from leaving New York harbor, both bound for Nicaragua with U.S. filibusters. When the government did intervene it triggered an outcry in the different sectors of the national press that reveals the competing claims of the state and the press in representing “public opinion” and popular sovereignty in the nation.

Furthermore, Habermas emphasizes the “bracketing” of social status as a normative ideal of the liberal public sphere, and this suspension of difference extends to and illuminates multiple ideologies of discourse and association in the filibuster public sphere. “[F]ar from presupposing the equality of status,” writes Habermas, social intercourse in the bourgeois public “disregarded status altogether.” Yet instead of creating a space wherein social and economic differences could be set aside in order to carry out “respectable” deliberation about the common good, as this ideal presupposed, bracketing of status in the liberal public sphere naturalized new forms of domination, as several critical revisions of Habermas’s theory have noted. Nancy Fraser, for instance, observes, “such bracketing usually works to the advantage of dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates.”

This bracketing of social status informs the filibuster public sphere in two significant ways. For one, it underscored the promotion of a unified public of native and naturalized Nicaraguans in El Nicaragüense. The newspaper’s combination of English and Spanish sections suggests the ways in which social identities of race and nation were bracketed to imagine the formation of a bilingual discursive public. Additionally, as we

---

10 Habermas, Structural Transformation 36.
11 Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” In Calhoun, Habermas and the Public Sphere 120. For another incisive critique of the liberal public sphere, see Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, The Gender of Freedom: The Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
will see, the newspaper imagined the comingling of U.S. filibusters and Nicaraguans at numerous public events such as military processions and blackface minstrel performances in Granada. Though racial, national, and social differences were not dissolved or eliminated in this imagined Nicaraguan national public, *El Nicaragüense* presented association across these differences as a key feature of a new public formation in the country. Of course, it should be stressed that the ideological work of depicting a heterogeneous public in *El Nicaragüense* and other filibuster print cultures represented imperial violence and domination as peaceful association and parity. As *El Nicaragüense* attempted to disregard status in promoting the formation of a new Nicaraguan public, then, it served to reify configurations of power across those ostensibly disregarded differences.

The second way in which the bracketing of social status informs the filibuster public sphere is in the attempt of *Leslie’s Illustrated* to appeal to a broad, mass U.S. reading public as it reported and commented on Walker’s filibuster in the newspaper’s early years. That is, *Leslie’s Illustrated* presumed to speak on behalf of the public opinion of the United States in its celebratory reporting of filibustering. In doing so, I argue the paper attempted to discursively produce a U.S. public, one differentiated by social markers such as region and class, yet unified in support of the filibuster takeover of Nicaragua. Thus, *Leslie’s Illustrated* imagined that social differences within the United States could be set aside or disregarded as the public came together to champion Walker’s actions and criticize the federal government’s efforts to restrict those actions.

Finally, the filibuster public sphere departs from both its overlapping sensational and liberal counterparts in its transnational orientation. Consequently, I attend to the
transnational production, circulation, and consumption of *El Nicaragüense*, *Leslie’s Illustrated*, and other filibuster writing. These filibuster print cultures represented and imagined the unification of different publics within and across Nicaragua and the United States. In reading *El Nicaragüense*, we can see efforts to unite native Nicaraguans and the naturalized filibusters in a new national public, as well as the reservations about and limitations of that imagined public. *El Nicaragüense* was printed in Nicaragua, but most copies found their way back to the United States. *Leslie’s Illustrated* had reporters and artists in Nicaragua sending back material to New York for the new paper in its effort to promote the pro-filibuster public as the public opinion in the U.S. The sensational print cultures of the filibuster public sphere, then, represent one example of “the ways in which literary transnationalism and the operations of imperialism can go hand in hand,” according to Anna Brickhouse. Thus, while the nineteenth-century public sphere in the United States became a critical location for social movements such as abolition, feminism, and labor to influence public opinion and in turn pressure the state to enact legal reforms, the history of filibustering forces us to bear in mind that the public sphere

---

12 Douglas E. Jerrold was one artist-reporter sending illustrations to *Leslie’s* from Nicaragua. The newspaper spelled out the agreement it had with their embedded reporters and the filibusters in Nicaragua: “Our arrangements are such that we shall be prepared to publish interesting letters by every mail, with accurate illustrations, and as our artist and correspondent are both connected with government offices, we shall be able to furnish our readers with the freshest and most reliable news. Our correspondents are travelling with a government commission, and will have ample opportunities for sketching interesting localities, including scenes at the seat of war. Public curiosity and interest in the United States are now largely directed to this country, and will necessarily appreciate truthful illustrations, descriptions of localities, and leading events.” “The Nicaragua Question – Outbreak of Hostilities in Central America.” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*. 12 April 1856.

could also function as a space for reactionary, racist, and imperialist projects to garner public support and challenge federal authorities.¹⁴

I examine two different forms of sensational print culture to trace the processes of “becoming Nicaraguan” as an imperial affirmation of national, racial, and gendered selfhood in the filibuster public sphere as examples of naturalizing empire: first, the transnational circulation of Walker’s newspaper, _El Nicaragüense_, alongside other sensational stories and tales of imperial adventure; and second, the accounts of Walker in Nicaragua found in the pictorial journalism of _Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper_, a new form of media that emerged in the United States at the same time Walker established himself in Nicaragua. _El Nicaragüense_, the official paper of Walker’s regime, presents a unique example of what Rodrigo Lazo calls “transnational writing.”¹⁵ Published in Nicaragua and distributed primarily throughout major U.S. cities, the newspaper registers attempts to foster cultural and economic ties with the U.S. despite the insistence on retaining the political sovereignty of Nicaragua under filibuster rule. The production, distribution, and consumption of _El Nicaragüense_ provides one example of the circuits of imperial print culture that sought to secure the support of the U.S. public in order to both entice potential U.S. Americans colonists to the country and pressure the federal government to diplomatically recognize the filibuster regime, revealing the transnational context of imperial sovereignty. While the paper printed a number of articles in Spanish

---


most likely as a pretense of local appeal, the English section clearly signals that the
filibusters knew their success hinged upon a sympathetic U.S. populace.

*El Nicaragüense* was not alone in this effort, as illustrated newspapers such as
*Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* celebrated Walker’s actions in Nicaragua. Visually
(and often sensationally) depicting people, places, and events represented a new way to
produce and consume the current news of the day. The images provided portrayals of an
event that could literally be taken in at a glance, conveying a purportedly “accurate”
depiction, despite the fact that the publication of these images was the finished product of
both a careful material and ideological construction. *Leslie’s Illustrated* sought to be
both informational and amusing, deploying conventions of domestic sentiment and
sensational spectacle in both image and word. The paper furnished the U.S. reading
public with narrative and visual accounts of Walker’s filibuster that attempted to dispel
charges that Walker was nothing more than a lawless renegade by depicting him as a
temperate ruler overseeing the regeneration of his country, a process that *Leslie’s
Illustrated* believed could possibly lead to its incorporation into the domestic space of the
United States, though it consistently advocated that the Pierce administration
diplomatically recognize Walker’s government. The cultures of sensation in both the
transnational circulation of *El Nicaragüense* and the pictorial journalism of *Frank
Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* actively worked to produce and reproduce the filibuster
public sphere as a process of naturalizing empire. Taken together, filibuster newspapers
as well as visual and narrative accounts from the illustrated press provide perspectives
that attempt to negotiate the conflicted terrain of national identity and sovereign authority as it played out in mid-nineteenth-century U.S. empire-building in the Americas. \[16\]

**On Filibustering and Firing Squads**

As Cardenal’s poem implies, and as we will see in multiple examples below, execution by firing squad in particular represents a key scene in sensational print cultures that condenses and illuminates the different articulations and contradictions of naturalizing empire in the filibuster public sphere. Execution by firing squad on the imperial frontier, similar to the scaffold scenes common in urban cultures of sensation, thrilled readers with narratives and images of violence, punishment, and death. As David Reynolds has pointed out, the scaffold scene was frequent and popular in antebellum sensational literature. \[17\] The scaffold scene and the firing squad both spectacularly represent public execution for public consumption, in that they are often presented in narratives and images as tense, emotionally-charged, and dramatically-heightened moments. The firing squad recurs frequently as a spectacular scene in articles, stories, and images of filibusters. *The Free Flag of Cuba; or, The Martyrdom of Lopez: A Tale of the Liberating Expedition of 1851* (1854), a novel by Lucy Holcombe Pickens about the filibustering expedition to Cuba led by Narciso López, for example, describes the

---

\[16\] For this chapter I have consulted both *El Nicaraguense* and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* in microfilm. I have also benefited tremendously from facsimile reproductions and anthologies of the two newspapers compiled by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer. See *La Guerra en Nicaragua Según Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1855-1857 / The War in Nicaragua According to Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 1855-1857* (Managua, Nicaragua: Banco de América, 1976) and *El Nicaragüense: Bilingual Facsimile Edition edited with a guide by Alejandro Bolaños Geyer* (Saint Charles, MO: Privately Printed, 1998). Parenthetical citations in the text provide original publication date.

execution of fifty U.S. men by firing squad as a “scene that has thrilled so many hearts with mingled feelings of pity and horror.”

Describing the mass execution of these filibusters, Pickens writes that the “rich, hot blood of the patriots dyes [Cuba’s] soil,” depicting the men as liberators executed in a struggle against Spanish colonial rule. Many U.S. newspapers expressed outrage over this mass execution of filibusters while simultaneously describing in lurid detail the crowds of Cubans cheering as they mutilated the bodies of these executed men. In other execution scenes, however, the roles are effectively reversed, with filibusters in Nicaragua executing native Nicaraguans for their “Spanish treachery,” and elsewhere we even see Walker ordering the execution of his fellow filibusters.

In addition to the ambiguity of national identity and national alliances that emerge within the imperial formation of filibustering, these different configurations of this crucial scene also dramatize a particular relationship of power between the individual and the state. That is, the firing squad scene registers the fears and anxieties about the consolidation of power by the state over individuals that parallel the frequent assertions of the sovereignty of public opinion in opposition to an oppressive, unresponsive, or indifferent government. According to Janice Thomson, in the nineteenth-century U.S., “where popular sovereignty was claimed,” the “expectation that the state would effectively police its own people and borders empowered the weak and fragmented U.S.

---


19 May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld* 2.
central state to monopolize authority over the deployment of violence” of its citizens. The firing squad scene stages this emergent monopolization of violence, punishing or refusing to rescue private citizens engaged in filibuster expeditions despite protests of the newspapers on behalf of “the people.” For example, in *The Free Flag of Cuba* a character appeals to Owen, the U.S. Consul in Cuba, on behalf of the filibusters about to be executed, entreat ing him not to “let the love of office trammel the natural prompting of humanity, which you must feel for men who claim the same national mother as yourself. Even though the State department reprove, the great voice of the American public will strongly support you” (138). The “State department” is implicitly aligned here with colonial Spain instead of “the American public” rallying behind “the patriots;” the unwillingness of this representative of the U.S. state to intervene on behalf of men who share “the same national mother” implicates the U.S. government in their execution. Similarly, *Leslie’s Illustrated* frequently asserted that the Pierce administration was more concerned about relations with Great Britain than the U.S. public’s supposed embrace of Walker and filibustering, and that federal authorities were ignoring public opinion of the nation’s people in favor of geopolitical maneuvering among nation-states. The “national mother” invoked in the Pickens novel marks a more general anxiety about the U.S. state abandoning the national family in favor of the family of nations.

Yet the firing squad scene also registers a contradiction defining the relationship of filibusters to the state and public opinion. That is, once Walker took power in Nicaragua, he effectively became a representative of that state, and in ordering executions

---

he blatantly defied the public opinion of Nicaragua, a reversal anxiously engaged in the sensational stories I examine. In defending his decision to execute the Nicaraguan General Ponciano Corral, for example, Walker insisted he was simply upholding the constitutional authority of the new Nicaraguan government despite the fact “the sympathy of the people for the prisoner was everywhere shown” (*War in Nicaragua* 139). Referring to himself in the third person in his memoir, he writes, “Walker had solemnly sworn…to observe and have observed the treaty of the twenty-third of October; and he was responsible before the world, and especially to the Americans in Nicaragua…for the faithful observance of his oath. How could the treaty continue to have the force of law if the first violation of it…was permitted to pass unpunished?” (138). While Walker’s filibuster is represented as the expression and embodiment of U.S. popular sovereignty in the sensational print cultures supporting him, sensational stories of the firing squad simultaneously express concern about his position as representative of state power in Nicaragua, particularly in his ordering other filibusters—the “Americans in Nicaragua”—to take part in executions, or ordering the execution of filibusters themselves. The firing squad scene, then, marks a contradiction in the filibuster public sphere in that it spectacularly dramatizes the violent public discipline of individuals by representatives of state authority, yet in these scenes the filibusters themselves are both the individuals subject to execution as well as the representatives of authority exercising the state’s monopoly of violence.
**Sensational Publics of Empire**

*El Nicaragüense* began publishing every Saturday one week after Walker and his men took over Granada in October 1855 and continued through the following year, its final issue published the day the filibusters destroyed and fled that city on 22 November 1856. Edited by Joseph R. Malé and George Cook, the newspaper included English and Spanish sections, though the latter consisted mostly of (poor) translations of English articles published in prior weeks and decrees issued by the filibuster government. The English section made up the majority of original material, and included editorials, governmental decrees, foreign news from Europe, accounts of battles, poems and fiction, and articles promoting the natural wealth and financial prospects of different regions in Nicaragua and Central American more generally. The articles and excerpts of travel accounts that detailed the country’s many resources were particularly important in the attempts to promote colonization from the United States, as most of the papers did not remain in Nicaragua. Of the roughly twenty-five hundred copies published every week, over half went to eastern U.S. cities such as New York and New Orleans. The remaining copies went to California or were circulated among the filibusters and U.S. American travelers passing across the isthmus.²¹

This production and circulation of *El Nicaragüense* between Nicaragua and the United States provides an important example of what Rodrigo Lazo calls “transnational writing.” Discussing the writing of Cuban exiles in the United States advocating Cuban independence from Spain and the promotion of Cuban nationalism during the 1840s and

---

1850s, Lazo characterizes “transnational writing” in this context as print culture that “moved from the United States to Cuba and back as it went through the stages of composition, publication, and circulation.” In the case of El Nicaragüense, however, transnational writing was not produced by exiles seeking to liberate their home country from colonial rule, but rather by agents of empire attempting to justify their actions to different reading publics in the United States, Nicaragua, as well as those moving between the two nations. In this section I claim this transnational newspaper and other filibuster writings do this work of imperial legitimation in part through the promotion of new national and cosmopolitan publics in Nicaragua made up of both native and naturalized Nicaraguans. As we will see, accounts of different symbolic unions in public—national, racial, and sexual, among others—functioned as efforts to shore up claims that the filibusters were “becoming Nicaraguan” in order to consolidate their rule within the country.

At the same time, the newspaper appealed to pro-filibuster publics in the United States, stressing the supposed antagonism between national public opinion and federal policy regarding U.S. diplomatic recognition of Walker’s government. In a common refrain, for example, the paper proclaimed that “[a]lready has the tide of public opinion, the power of the American law, spoken plainly in its favor [of recognition]; and a weak and vacillating President of the United States can never stem that tide” (“Nicaragua and the United States,” 2 February 1856). Articulating what John-Michael Rivera calls “the transnational paradoxes of sovereignty,” wherein “sovereignty finds its power through the transnational relation between the sovereign colonial power and its newly subjugated

22 Lazo, Writing to Cuba 17.
national subjects,” the transnational circulation of *El Nicaragüense* imagined the formation and connection of this relation through the articulation of these different filibuster publics. In sum, I argue that the paper represents an imperial formation that attempts to forge a new national subjectivity (*El Nicaragüense* literally means “the Nicaraguan”) and sovereignty constituted by and within the transnational movement and circulation of people, commodities, and, significantly, print.

Similar, then, to the imagined histories of the Pacific historical romance that envisioned a unified community of natives and naturalized foreigners, *El Nicaragüense* and other filibuster writing emphasized public unions and rituals along with the public circulation of print in an effort to achieve the same end—an imagined unified national community of native and naturalized subjects as a strategy of imperial domination. In both instances, different forms of print represented this national formation as a means of naturalizing different forms of U.S. imperial expansion. Yet while the process of naturalizing empire in Hawai‘i was mediated in particular through the literary genre of the historical romance, *El Nicaragüense* and other filibuster writings drew on the cultures of sensation—including imperial adventure tales, blackface minstrelsy, and gothic horror stories, among other examples—to mediate the specific imperial formations of the filibuster public sphere. Significantly, the sensational cultures of filibustering in *El Nicaragüense* and elsewhere, as with Pacific historical romance, represent a genre of empire that also registered and expressed the anxiety and incoherence that marked the numerous contradictions of disavowing U.S. American identity and publically

disclaiming a connection to the U.S. political body. That is, the work of different mass cultures of sensation in producing “a fictive, unified body of the nation people” in Nicaragua and the United States simultaneously registered racial, national, and other social cleavages that undermined that fictive unity.²⁴

For instance, an article from the 8 March 1856 issue of El Nicaragüense entitled “Raising the Flag” celebrates the Nicaraguan flag as a symbol of national unity when it was raised in the central plaza of Granada. The public ceremony included “the ringing of bells, the booming of cannon and the stirring strains of martial music” and “was witnessed by the greater part of the soldiers and citizens of Granada.” The public unfurling of the new Nicaraguan flag, for the article’s author, functions here to mark the pacification of the country and the new national community called into being through the work of the filibusters. The plaza is represented as a public space bringing together the filibusters and native Nicaraguans united under a common flag. However, the article goes on to undermine the unity it proclaims when it condescendingly recounts the fear of the “unsophisticated natives” who initially suspected the flagpole was going to be used as a gallows or whipping post where Nicaraguans would be publically (and sensationally) “strung up” and “thrashed” by the filibusters. While attempting to mark a moment of national unity, the anonymous author felt compelled to assert the racial and national superiority of the filibusters, expressing the cultural antipathy harbored toward native Nicaraguans as “unsophisticated” for their “profound ignorance” of what the public display of the flag represents. The brief article, then, encapsulates the contradiction of publically proclaiming an imagined national unity on one hand, and the spectacular

²⁴ Streeby, American Sensations 27.
violence of empire that served to shore up racial and national hierarchies on the other, that runs throughout the pages of *El Nicaragüense*.

The newspaper included occasional pronouncements about filibusters as naturalized Nicaraguan citizens, and these represent the most explicit and straightforward examples of naturalization functioning as a tactic of empire. A speech delivered by Walker, for instance, to “the people of Nicaragua,” published in both English and Spanish, illustrates this as it begins with Walker addressing his audience as “Fellow-Citizens,” and continues, “I am your fellow-citizen, for Nicarag[u]a is my adopted country, as it is equally that of the thousands of brave spirits who have accompanied me hither, who have spilled their blood and sacrificed their lives with glory, in defending this their country” (“Address By Gen. Walker,” 14 June 1856). These direct claims to Nicaraguan citizenship echo Walker’s later claim in his memoir that he and the other filibusters “became Nicaraguans” when they took the oath of allegiance upon arriving in Nicaragua. However, throughout *El Nicaragüense* we can see the additional ways in which filibusters “became Nicaraguan” through the discursive representation of sensational and other filibuster publics, as well as the ways in which the paper pointed up the limitations and reservations of becoming Nicaraguan as a tactic of empire.

Emphasizing an open, cosmopolitan society with a liberal emigration policy served as one of the principal means by which the filibuster newspaper promoted the idea of a unified national community made up of native Nicaraguans and the naturalized filibusters from the United States. From its earliest issues, *El Nicaragüense* advocated policies of open immigration and free trade for Nicaragua; according to the paper these policies would ensure both national unity and national strength. National isolation, the
paper warned, would not only perpetuate the violent internal divisions that had rent Nicaragua for decades, but would also put it in bad standing with the larger international community of modern states, or the family of nations. “Nothing can be more absurd,” the paper warned in an editorial entitled “National Intercourse,” for a national government “to exclude other nations from its commercial advantages, or to restrict foreigners in their intercourse with its inhabitants.” Drawing on metaphors of the family and community to illustrate the folly of national isolation, the editorial asserts, “As well might a man endeavor to live in Granada interdicting all correspondence between his household and the other families of the city…. As with an individual family among those of a particular city, so with a particular family among the nations of the earth.” Failure or refusal to carry on correspondence publically with neighbors signifies one’s failure as a community member, something that takes on particular resonance with Walker’s interception of private letters written by Ponciano Corral, as we will see shortly. But the immediate point here is that national “families,” according to El Nicaragüense, must be open and welcoming of outsiders to find their successful place within the larger family of nations. The editorial thus takes a broad, international view of the formation of Nicaraguan national community, of the Nicaraguan “family,” that situates the naturalization of foreigners such as the filibusters (and their subsequent participation in governmental affairs) as a natural condition of the modern world-system in which it presumes Nicaragua would want to participate.

Walker emphasized the significance of public ritual in naturalizing this national “family” of native Nicaraguans and naturalized filibusters in his memoir, *The War in Nicaragua*. Upon the defeat of the General Ponciano Corral and his Legitimist troops,
for example, Walker recounts how Corral entered Granada to formally surrender. *The War in Nicaragua* represents this event as one of public reconciliation, not only between warring Legitimists and Democrats, but also between native Nicaraguans and the naturalized filibusters. He writes:

> The two commanders [Walker and Corral] approached each other near the centre of the square, and, after embracing, dismounted, walking arm in arm to the church on the east side of the Plaza. Attended by numerous officers, both Legitimist and Democratic, they were met at the door of the church by Father Vigil and conducted toward the high altar. A Te Deum was sung, and then Corral and Walker passed from the church to the government house, on the opposite side of the square. (129-130)

The scene depicts a symbolic marriage of sorts between Corral and Walker, one that unites the two men in homosocial fraternity as well as uniting the rival Nicaraguan factions and the U.S. American filibusters in an imagined national community. This processional march occurred less than a week after Walker and Corral signed a treaty on 23 October 1855, which Walker repeatedly refers to in his memoir as the document that “guaranteed the naturalized Nicaraguans equality of all privileges with the native born” (227). The public ceremony, complete with attendants and a public procession around the city plaza, receives the blessing and sanction of both public and religious authorities, further reinforcing Walker’s earlier claim that he and his men “became Nicaraguans” through their naturalization oath that was later codified in the treaty. The symbolic union reinforces this claim, joining the two groups as a national family that will subsequently turn to the larger family of nations for recognition of this new union.25

---

25 Unions between U.S. and Nicaraguan men were also configured in terms of sexual anxiety and panic in the these sensational print cultures. In a typical description of Nicaraguan women, for example, *Leslie’s Illustrated* expressed concern about both Nicaraguan women and men seeking the affections of U.S. American men. It says: “The flower girls, as in every place, are always, pretty and coquettish, and manage,
This symbolic union, however, was quickly undermined by what Walker describes as an act of infidelity on the part of Corral. Walker intercepted letters written by Corral and the Nicaraguan General was consequently subjected to another public ritual—execution by firing squad. Corral’s execution registered the potential threat of the transnational circulation of print to filibuster rule because it resulted from accusations that he had written and covertly sent letters to Nicaraguan military leaders in exile in Honduras and Guatemala. The letters, which sought assistance in unseating the filibusters from power, were intercepted and delivered to Walker. In many ways this serves as a tragically ironic reversal of the above metaphor chastising the citizen of Granada for “interdicting all correspondence,” as that is exactly what Walker did when he assumed power. After intercepting the letters, Walker imposed severe restrictions on movement (“interdictions”) in and out of Granada and charged Corral with conspiracy and treason. As he writes in The War in Nicaragua, “When all had assembled the letters of Corral were produced, and the commander-in-chief charged him with treason, by inviting the enemies of the State to invade Nicaragua, and conspiring with them for the purpose of overturning the existing government” (136-137). Here Walker uses this incident to position Nicaraguan exiles as “enemies of the State,” thus implicitly affirming the proclaimed legitimacy of filibuster rule and his own position as representative of that state authority. The passage from Walker’s text also registers the centrality of writing—of different cultures of print—to affirm and potentially undermine that rule. While the public circulation of Walker’s own text that recounts this incident, along with El
Nicaragüense and, as we will see shortly, U.S. newspapers such as Leslie’s Illustrated, reiterated a celebratory narrative of filibustering as a means of naturalizing Walker’s authority, the attempted circulation of secret letters among Nicaraguans across Central America challenges that claim of power.

El Nicaragüense celebrated the treaty of peace between Walker and Corral in its inaugural issue, noting that “[b]oth gentlemen have enshrined themselves in the hearts of the people of Nicaragua” (27 October 1855). This, however, is the only mention of Corral in the newspaper, and it remained silent about Walker’s decision to execute the Nicaraguan general most likely because of the unpopularity of the decision amongst Nicaraguans. But the story of Corral’s letters and execution did find its way into the sensational print cultures of the United States prior to the publication of Walker’s memoir in 1860. In addition to the images, articles, and fictional stories about Corral’s execution published in Leslie’s Illustrated, which I address in the next section, the interdiction of secret letters and subsequent execution by firing squad served as the central plot device in a story from the January 1857 issue of the Flag of Our Union that used Walker’s filibuster in Nicaragua as its setting. Published in Boston by Frederic Gleason and Maturin Murray Ballou, the Flag of Our Union was one of the most popular story-papers in “a new sphere of sensational mass culture…publishing adventure fiction” in the United States.26 Entitled “The Deserter: A Sketch From Life In Nicaragua,” the story was written by William O. Eaton, a regular contributor during the 1850s to the Flag of Our Union and other papers owned by Gleason and Ballou such as Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing Room and Ballou’s Dollar Monthly Magazine, where the story was republished

26 Streeby, American Sensations 85.
in March 1857. In the story, the interception of secret letters by Walker’s men and the
death sentence that follows certainly draw on the real-life letters and execution of Corral.
However, “The Deserter” makes significant revisions to that story, replacing a native
Nicaraguan sending secret letters with a U.S. American filibuster receiving secret letters
as the one accused of treason. This revision of the recipient of secret letters, I suggest,
serves in part to mark the instability of national identity engendered by the filibuster
claims of “becoming Nicaraguan,” revealing the uncertainty of publically professed
affiliations and alliances. Furthermore, as Walker misinterprets the letter’s actual
meaning in Eaton’s story, it calls into question the frequent public assertions, in both
Nicaragua and the United States, of Walker’s authority. However, before addressing the
implication of these misinterpreted secret letters, it is necessary to consider how the story
allegorizes the link between economic insecurity and imperial adventure in the
antebellum United States.

The story opens during “one of those delightful evenings” in Nicaragua “which
have so often been described by letter-writers from the army of General Walker,”
emphasizing the filibuster public formed through the transnational circulation of print.27
Amidst this beautiful evening in Granada we are introduced to the fictional Anthony Dair
as he walks the streets reflecting unhappily and anxiously about “the State of his nativity,
from which three years before he had departed, resolv[ing] never to return.” Before
joining Walker in Nicaragua, Dair, the son of a wealthy merchant, had saved a tradesman
named Morton on the brink of financial ruin by “enlisting [his] father’s sympathies.”

January 1857, 12.
While freeing Morton “from pecuniary embarrassments,” romantic affections grew between Dair and the tradesman’s daughter, Helen. Though Helen “felt indebted to” Dair for the favor he did for her father, Morton did not acknowledge this debt and instead sought to have Helen marry a wealthier suitor. One evening Dair witnesses Helen professing her love and affections to “a clerk in her father’s employ” named Howland. Because of this perceived betrayal, Dair immediately sets out for California, where he meets Walker “and made one of the fifty-six with whom he first landed at Realejo.”

This frustrated romantic union is significant, and other characters in the story also join the filibuster as a consequence of a broken heart or betrayed romance, suggesting that dissatisfaction or unfulfilled expectations—romantic and otherwise—among men in the United States served as a motivation to join filibustering adventures. Walker himself lost his fiancé in a cholera epidemic in New Orleans, a loss that some speculate played a pivotal role in his reckless drive for adventure and conquest. However, I am less interested in the psychological dimensions of the relationship between frustrated romance and filibuster adventure than in its allegorical function in this story articulating the political and economic powerlessness among certain classes of men in the antebellum United States, an anxiety informing the sensational public sphere described by David Anthony mentioned above. That is, following Michael Denning’s allegorical readings of sensational dime novels, stories like “The Deserter” function as “microcosms” of the social world wherein “individual characters are less individuals than figures for social

---

28 See, for example, Frederic Rosengarten, Freebooters Must Die! The Life and Death of William Walker, the Most Notorious Filibuster of the Nineteenth Century (Wayne, PA: Haverford House, 1976), and the 1987 film Walker, directed by Alex Cox and starring Ed Harris as Walker.
While romantic betrayal functions as the ostensible reason for Dair’s enlistment in Walker’s imperial adventure, the fragile economic relations among men within the U.S. serves as an important subtext of the story. Dair’s efforts to rescue Helen’s father from “bankruptcy by ill-luck” makes the latter “indebted” to the former, a debt Morton can repay with his daughter. However, Morton refuses to make good on this payment despite the earlier kind turn done for him by Dair, seeking instead a greater profit for his daughter from the wealthier suitor. Morton betrays the “sympathies” among men structuring the capitalist marketplace in his unwillingness to compensate Dair for his earlier support. As Stephen Shapiro observes in his discussion of emergent notions of sensibility and sympathy among men, “friendship’s exchange of emotive affinity rehearses a normative model for the free-market ideal of a purchaser and seller satisfying each other’s needs through the surety of mutually accepted responsibilities and polite desire to do no harm or gain brutal advantage over those with whom you exchange commodities.”

Morton’s plan to marry his daughter to a wealthier suitor despite the friendly assistance of Dair that saved Morton from financial insolvency nicely illustrates the contradictions of this free-market ideal in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. While trust and sympathy serve to bind the homosocial relations of capital, the desire for profit can easily undermine those affective bonds.

This explicit connection between romantic success and financial security suggests a way of reading broken hearted filibusters in this story and elsewhere as embodying an

effort to seek out a secure masculine identity in Nicaragua unavailable to them in the United States. Similar to Dair, for example, another character in the story says he joined Walker after he “got shot in the heart,” and now “all I care for is enough glory to entitle me to a handsome estate here, then peace, and then I’ll marry the handsomest young Nicaraguan I can find, and settle down and grow richer, fatter, older and happier till I die.” In contrast to the insecurities facing men in the U.S., in this story filibustering in Nicaragua represents the possibility to fulfill the desire for “glory,” property and wealth, as well as domestic happiness and stability. Discussing a similar process at work in the narratives of the sensational public sphere, David Anthony writes, “antebellum sensationalism often seeks to compensate readers with narratives in which male characters heal the psychic wounds of fiscal crisis,” and thus “these narratives reflect…a longing for the kind of stable selfhood—and indeed the social cohesion—that have been ‘stolen’ by modern capitalism and the new economy.” In “The Deserter,” Dair describes his perceived betrayal as a loss of selfhood. He says, “From the hour when I thus became informed of the ingratitude and deceit of Helen, I have felt more like one in a dream than like my former self” (emphasis added). As Robert May observes while documenting the historical motivations of men to join filibusters, “When eastern mechanics, their apprentices, and other urban youths joined expeditions and risked their lives in battle, they not only sought escape from economic hardship but also reclaimed their threatened masculinity.” Filibustering served as a means of reasserting that threatened masculinity and loss of self, with its sensational promises of military

32 May, *Manifest Destiny’s Underworld* 100.
adventure, foreign conquest, and an opportunity to “grow richer, fatter, older and happier.” “Becoming Nicaraguan,” therefore, registers the unfulfilled securities, promises, and opportunities of “being American” for many U.S. men. Of course, as the story shows, joining the filibusters and becoming Nicaraguan entailed its own particular uncertainties, confusion, and sense of loss.

In the story, after the filibusters take control of the country, Dair, like Corral, is accused by Walker of “conspiring against the State” on behalf of the Central American resistance when he is caught with a letter from Juan Chamorro, a fictional relative of former Nicaraguan president Fruto Chamorro. The letter from the fictional Chamorro promises “an alliance” and encourages Dair to “[l]eave the cause in which you are engaged for one which promises the rapid attainment of happiness, peace, and honor.” When Dair is apprehended with the letter and Walker reads about the proposed alliance, he sentences Dair to be executed by firing squad made up of fellow filibusters. He narrowly avoids execution at the hands of a firing squad by conspiring with one of his prison guards to use blanks. Dair then escapes Granada, under control of Walker and his men, and flees to Masaya to meet up with Chamorro in order to discover the letter’s meaning. Once in Masaya, we learn that Dair had earlier saved Chamorro’s life when they were both living in San Francisco. After Dair left California with Walker for Nicaragua, Chamorro happened to meet Helen, who was in San Francisco looking for Dair. Chamorro then brings Helen with him to Nicaragua to meet with her betrothed, the “alliance” of the note that almost lead to Dair’s execution. Dair and Helen are reunited in the Central American country, but through “the faithful friendship of the grateful Chamorro, the two wandering lovers were not long in obtaining safe conduct through the
country, and embarked with joyous hearts for their native land,” where they happily marry.

“The Deserter,” then, clearly implies that joining Walker’s filibuster in Nicaragua did not ensure satisfactory compensation for the threatened sense of manhood facing many men in the United States. In several ways it produced a host of new insecurities and instabilities regarding gender and national selfhood. What is particularly striking about the story is the ways in which filibustering serves to complicate national identities and confound imperial alliances instead of promoting imperial adventure as the scene of aggrandizement for U.S. American men. The story itself is not overtly critical of Walker’s filibuster, but acknowledges it by no means fits conventional tropes of romanticized tales of adventure and conquest. Before reuniting with Helen, for example, Dair is said to “think more of stealing away from the camp and mixing with the natives here,” and Walker sentences Dair to be executed in part because of his “mingling with the natives.” This clearly presents an alternative perspective to the idea that filibusters were “becoming Nicaraguan.” To the contrary, it suggests that fraternizing with Nicaraguans represents a threat, not only to filibuster rule, but to the stability of clearly demarcated boundaries between filibuster and native, or “American” and “Nicaraguan.” In addition, the story depicts conflicts within the filibuster army, which suggest the fractures and tensions that trouble the fiction of the filibuster public sphere. For example, at the beginning of the story Dair intervenes in a fight between Stephen Gould and Richard Bray, two soldiers in Walker’s army. Gould stabs Bray and runs off before the latter can identify him, but Dair refuses to disclose the perpetrator’s identity to the victim because Dair doesn’t know the cause of the conflict and if Gould “were exposed, he would be
shot at once.” Bray accepts Dair’s diplomatic refusal to disclose the identity of the assailant, but complains that “quarrels are frequent among us,” and therefore “I don’t know who to be on my guard against.” This inability to distinguish between friend and enemy further registers the confusion and contradictions that define filibustering. Not only is there tension and suspicion between native Nicaraguans and the filibusters, but also among the filibusters themselves. Simply put, Bray’s inability to “know who to be on...guard against” underscores the precarious sense of selfhood for the filibusters as naturalized Nicaraguans.

While “The Deserter” represented the filibusters “mingling with the natives” as a threat to their power and the stability of racial, national, and gender identities, El Nicaragüense, in contrast, envisioned public “mingling” as central to justifying their control. Reports of public amusements in the newspaper such as blackface minstrel performances staged by the filibusters reveal another example of the sensational cultures of the filibuster public sphere that functioned to naturalize empire while simultaneously further confounding identities of race and nation. These reports in El Nicaragüense on the presence of minstrelsy in Nicaragua while under filibuster rule and the show’s positive reception by a nationally and racially diverse audience provides an important insight into the different registers through which U.S. Americans attempted to naturalize their presence in this country. The violence and dispossession of imperial conquest and military rule imposed by Walker are mediated through the public performance of blackness. That is, at least according to the reports in the paper, minstrel performances provided a social space of association wherein potentially antagonistic groups—U.S. filibusters and Nicaraguan families in Granada—could come together and laugh at the
racial spectacle. Discussing the role of blackface in negotiating class tensions in the urban spaces of the antebellum United States, Eric Lott has compellingly demonstrated how “one of minstrelsy’s functions was precisely to bring various class fractions into contact with one another, to mediate their relations, and finally to aid in the construction of class identities over the bodies of black people.”

The presence of minstrelsy in Nicaragua entertaining both native-born and naturalized Nicaraguan citizens presents a curious instance of blackface performance consolidating an imagined national community. Blackface minstrelsy itself can be seen as another example of naturalizing empire in that it entails the appropriation of racial difference in the interest of naturalizing racial subordination underscoring particular social and class configurations in the U.S. In this instance, however, the Nicaragua Minstrels embodied a manifestation of imperial citizenship not in an effort to establish and enforce a social order structured on racial difference, but rather as an attempt to reproduce that social order in a new setting outside of U.S. territorial boundaries.

John W. De Frewer, a professional musician who had worked with the Campbell Minstrels in New York and theSan Francisco Minstrels in California before joining Walker in Nicaragua, formed the group. In addition to organizing and directing the theatrical company, De Frewer frequently contributed poems and a regular column titled “Rough Sketches from my hammock and knapsack, or camp life in Nicaragua” to El Nicaraqueño under the pseudonym “Corporal Pipeclay.” One of his “Rough Sketches” noted the minstrel troop performing nightly in Granada to “crowded houses with great

---

success.” Minstrel shows, “a pioneer movement in the way of amusements” in Nicaragua, according to Pipeclay, drew large crowds because “nothing of this kind has ever been tried here before” (16 February 1856). While it is unclear from newspaper accounts how many performances the Nicaragua Metropolitan Minstrels actually staged, the few reviews in *El Nicaragüense* emphasize the public reception as much as the minstrel performance. Thus, these newspaper accounts represent what Lott calls a “whole genre of journalistic theater-crowd observation” at the minstrel show that functioned to both mark and bridge emergent class divisions in the United States.\(^3^4\) The genre serves a related function in the pages of *El Nicaragüense*, though it extends from the social divisions of class to publically differentiate and unify national and racial difference in the filibuster-controlled town of Granada. A short write-up in the newspaper published on 9 February 1856 reported, for example, that “[o]n Thursday night the Nicaraguan Minstrels gave a private rehearsal to the General and his staff with great credit to themselves, and last night the public was favored with their first exhibition in public.” The move from private entertainment to public amusement brought together U.S. Americans and Nicaraguans, as the article reported that the “audience was composed of Americans and natives with a fair sprinkling of ladies.”

The following week the paper gave a positive review of another performance and the public reception, noting that the minstrel show
gave infinite satisfaction, particularly to the native portion of the population. The ‘bones’ and ‘tambourine’ kind of get the Spanish folks, and ‘Vilkins’ smashes them into a general convulsion. They are lost in the contortions of the darkeys, and their satisfaction extends to all the

\(^{34}\) Lott, *Love and Theft* 157-158.
spectators, white as well as black. The most respectable Spanish families attend the Theatre, and appear to be highly satisfied. (16 February 1856)

This is a complex passage that simultaneously marks and transgresses boundaries of native/foreign, white/black, performer/spectator, and respectable/bawdy, among others. For one, the minstrel performers experience a sense of loss in performing the exaggerated physicality of black bodies, in “the contortions of the darkeys.” But what, exactly, is “lost” here? Inhibitions, certainly, but, in a manner that parallels the imperial disaffiliation of U.S. national identity to “become Nicaraguan,” or to “become Hawaiian,” there is also a loss of the racial subjectivity of whiteness. Of course, this abandonment of racial identity and undermining of racial boundaries on the stage served to reaffirm and consolidate racial configurations of power, which also parallels the effects of the naturalized imperial citizens I have considered throughout this dissertation.

But the passage goes further than describing the loss of racial identity of the individual performers. That loss “extends” from the performers to the audience in part through the ambiguous use of pronouns as well as through mutual “satisfaction” with the amusement of the racial spectacle. “They” who get “lost in the contortions of the darkeys” could refer to “the Minstrels” or “the Spanish folks,” or both. The public show seemingly facilitates the dissolution of difference between filibusters and Nicaraguans over against the humorous representation of blackness. Blackface, then, is represented here as uniting the U.S. American performers with the “highly satisfied” native Nicaraguans. Yet the passage also curiously marks that heterogeneous audience unified through the performance in binary racial terms, the spectators described as “white as well as black.” What part of “the native portion of the population” does El Nicaragüense
consider “black”? For example, are we to understand the “respectable Spanish families” as members of the white or black portion of the audience? Does black in this instance simply mean not white? Or does “white” here mean from the United States, thus characterizing all Nicaraguans as “black”? This racial representation of the audience clearly confounds simple conflations of racial and national identities.

The write-up of the performance by the Nicaraguan Metropolitan Minstrels mentioned above described the audience as “composed of Americans and natives with a fair sprinkling of ladies.” While it remains unclear whether these “ladies” at the minstrel show were “Americans” or “natives,” “white” or “black,” their presence marks another significant way in which El Nicaragüense envisioned the formation of a national community made up of naturalized and native Nicaraguans. El Nicaragüense and other filibuster writings frequently promoted and celebrated the arrival of U.S. American women in Nicaragua. Discussing the arrival of women from the U.S., for instance, De Frewer happily reported seeing “the elegant forms and smiling faces of many of our fair countrywomen, who have recently left homes and friends…to share our fates and fortunes…in the country of our adoption” (“Rough Sketches,” 16 February 1856).

Leslie’s Illustrated, as we will see, featured celebratory stories of women from the United States embarking for Nicaragua. Yet native Nicaraguan women also figured in the processes of naturalizing empire. Like the union between white men and Hawaiian women represented in Jarves’s historical romance and the English-language newspapers in Hawai‘i, the filibuster paper frequently suggested relationships between filibuster men and native Nicaraguan women were the key to bridging national and racial difference and consolidating imperial rule. Focusing on the sensational allure of foreign female bodies,
many of the contributions to *El Nicaragüense* indulged in the erotics of the imperial adventure tale to imagine unions in terms of sexual alliances between native Nicaraguan women and the filibusters. The newspaper, for example, warned of the “internal decay” threatening Granada should the “ladies of the city” continue to harbor suspicions and avoid the filibusters. To avoid this internal disunion, the paper’s editors proposed romantic and sexual unions between the native women and the filibuster men. Such unions, the paper proclaimed, would dissolve the boundaries of racial difference and the hostility they engender, insisting that “[m]ingling together, the difference of races would soon be forgotten, and we should have a pleasant society” (22 March 1856).

Nicaraguan women were represented throughout the newspaper as erotic spectacles, objects of filibuster desire. An anonymous letter from a filibuster published in the paper, for example, lingered on “the fair Senoritas, with long disheveled flowing hair…sweetly singing their native melodies.” “What gracious outlines,” the letter continues, “their luscious forms present in their undulating movements” (15 March 1856). De Frewer, on a break from his minstrel performances, writes in one of his “Rough Sketches” about leaving Granada for a small village to witness a local festival. Travelling the road alone, he says he “gazed on the beautiful prospects that continually opened before me,” and thus “felt with Selkirk, ‘Monarch of all I Surveyed’.” When he arrives in the village of “Diriomo” he turns his imperial gaze from the objects of nature to foreign female bodies when he finds beautiful women sitting on the porch of nearly every home. He pauses on his journey to describe these “fair Castilianos in whose hair, dark as night, the water lily [sic] and the rose bud were blended in most glorious contrast,” with “bright black eyes sparkeling in the light of the innumerable candles which lit up each
rustic porch” (“Rough Sketches,” 9 February 1856). The imperial gaze that surveys the foreign land shifts to the foreign female body, implying possession of both. Moreover, as the allegorical economy of Eaton’s sensational story from the *Flag of Our Union* makes clear, this objectification of foreign female bodies represents the desire of many U.S. American men to assert a sense of mastery, control, and successful selfhood amidst the shifting and uncertain political and economic subjectivity of U.S. citizenship and the antebellum capitalist marketplace. Imperial adventure and foreign women, in short, can be read as violent and sexual fantasies that objectify a foreign other to compensate for that multifaceted sense of loss.

Finally, the one fictional story published in *El Nicaragüense* set in Walker’s Nicaragua uses the form of gothic horror to express both the anxieties surrounding the loss of self entailed in filibusters “becoming Nicaraguan” and the fear among filibusters of Nicaraguan counterpublics forming in opposition to the filibuster presence. “Adventures of a Night” was published in the 6 September 1856 issue of the newspaper, its author identified simply by the initials “O. D.” Set in Granada, the story begins with the narrator, a U.S. filibuster, visiting his friend, another filibuster serving as an officer in the Nicaraguan army, for an evening of tea and conversation. Before the narrator leaves for home well after midnight, the friend invites his guest to share “some preserved meats he had received from the United States.” After the late night snack, the narrator begins to walk home but stumbles over something unseen in the darkness of the night. As lights in nearby houses come on, the protagonist realizes he has fallen upon the dead body of a native Nicaraguan, and “a crowd of about a dozen naked natives” grab him and accuse him of killing their fellow citizen.
From here the story turns into a sensational tale of horror and torture. He is brought into a nearby home, described in terms of perverse domesticity and maternity. The interior of the home is full of “several human skeletons bound in chains,” a “rude alter,” and figures of the “most grotesque shapes,” in particular one of “a mother thrusting a spear into the body of her own infant.” The narrator is then subjected to all forms of torture, including being placed in a furnace and then a pit of snakes. The native men orchestrating this horrific retribution for the falsely accused murderer proceed to take him outside and carry him to the top of a volcano. He is thrown into the pit and he describes in graphic detail the blows to his body as he is dashed upon the rocks while he falls, but when he hits the lava he suddenly awakes. Realizing it was all a nightmare, the story ends with the narrator vowing “never again to be induced to eat sardines, and pickled lobsters after twelve o’clock at night.”

The publication of “Adventures of a Night” in El Nicaragüense is significant as it addresses issues of the U.S. filibuster presence in Nicaragua, responsibility for local violence, and Nicaraguan resistance to that U.S. presence. As Teresa Goddu observes, “Instead of fleeing reality, the gothic registers its culture’s contradictions, presenting a distorted, not disengaged, version of reality.” Of particular interest in relation to the implications of “becoming Nicaraguan” is the characterization of the narrator’s friend at the beginning of the story. The officer is described as being such a powerful storyteller he has the ability transport the listener to another world, threatening them with the loss of self. Listening to his friend talk, the narrator says, is “akin to the pleasures described by

the opium-eaters of the East,” where “by some indescribable psychological power he can make his listeners, perhaps unconsciously, lose their personal identity” (emphasis added). This loss of subjectivity leaves the listener “susceptible of all the pleasures and exhilerations [sic] of his exquisitely organized nature.” This powerful storyteller implicitly invokes the mesmerist, a familiar character in antebellum sensation literature “who used his magnetic powers to facilitate seductions and commit crimes.”36 Additionally, the seductions of the storyteller that stimulate “pleasures and exhilerations” for the narrator gesture toward homoerotic desire as part of the homosocial fraternity of filibustering.

One possible way of reading this storyteller character is as a stand-in for Walker and others encouraging men to join filibuster expeditions, enchanting and seducing them to leave the U.S. and fight in his private army with tales of imperial adventure, causing them to lose their sense of self in the process. When the mesmerizing friend, for instance, begins talking about “a subject in which we were both deeply interested—the destiny of Nicaragua,” the narrator responds in terms of erotic stimulation, saying the words “Filled me; thrilled me with exstatic [sic] pleasure never felt before.” The satisfaction of desire, both sexual and imperial, stimulated through promising stories of Nicaragua’s future, registers both the allure and threat of transgressing boundaries of identity through imperial fantasies.

The (homo)erotic and imperial are also articulated through what Stephen Shapiro terms the “sensational consumption” of commodities such as tea and “potted meats” shipped to Nicaragua from New York. The formation of the modern circum-Atlantic

36 David S. Reynolds, Beneath the American Renaissance 170.
world-system, Shapiro observes, was structured around the production and consumption of “the lucrative Caribbean goods of sensation,” including, “digestible intoxicants” of sugar, coffee, tea, alcohol and tobacco.\(^\text{37}\) For as the narrator of “Adventures” temporarily loses or forgets himself while indulging in the bodily consumption of delicacies “with a gusto Epicurus himself would have envied” along with the mesmeric dreams of conquest that effect him as if smoking opium, the story proceeds to imagine a nightmare of consequences that horrifically remind the narrator of the impossibility of losing both his embodied and national self. That is, while the sensational consumption of both “digestible intoxicants” and the enchanting stories of his companion stimulate the narrator into an out-of-body experience (a delightful loss of selfhood), they result in a nightmare of inescapable corporeality that register the underside of that loss that sustains particular narratives of imperial fantasy.

The narrator is snapped out of his “extatic” pleasure and into his fleshly nightmare when he walks through the public streets “lost in a revery” and falls upon “a man—a native—lying drenched in his gore.”\(^\text{38}\) After he is taken into the neighboring house by the group of native men, the figure of the mother killing her infant began “by some mechanical arrangement” to throw the child’s flesh about the room and the narrator is struck by these fragments, which he describes as having “the texture, and general appearance of real human flesh.” These encounters with “gore” and “flesh” implicitly suggest that the loss of personal identity in flights of imperial fantasy has very real, violent consequences for the native populations where those fantasies are enacted. While

\(^{37}\) Shapiro, *Culture and Commerce* 72.  
the narrator was not directly responsible for the death of the man on the street, he
concedes that on some level the natives who apprehend him “certainly had some shadow
of justification on their side” in exacting their retribution upon him. Furthermore, this
retribution also forces the narrator to confront his own embodied self, as they subject him
to forms of torture that make him acutely aware of his own corporeality. While with his
friend telling stories of Nicaragua’s future he says, “it is not surprising that I should have
forgotten myself,” the acts of torture are particularly horrific to him precisely because he
is incapable of forgetting himself. When the pain becomes too much to bear and he
welcomes death because it represents a loss of self that will relieve him from this
excruciating experience, he is denied that desire because he is “not to be permitted then to
die.”

“Adventures of a Night” also points up the failure of the imagined publics of
unified native and naturalized Nicaraguans articulated elsewhere in the newspaper.
While they don’t speak at all, the native men are able to communicate to one another in a
way the narrator is unable to comprehend. “I was surrounded,” he says, “and it was a
matter of much surprise to me how they could have understood each other so well, or
how they could have anticipated the accident by which I was unfortunately placed in their
power.” As the narrator says, by contrast, “I could not make myself understood by
them.” The ability of the native men to understand each other without speech, on one
hand, and the inability of the narrator to be understood, on the other, registers the distance
between Nicaraguans and the filibusters. Rather than a shared understanding between
these two groups, the story expresses the paranoia of occupation that underscores the
difference between colonizer and the colonized. Speculating on his predicament, the
narrator asks himself, “is every American in this country watched, so that, when out late, or alone they can take him at a disadvantage, and thus heap injury, and indignity upon him?” Thus, while *El Nicaragüense* sought to legitimate filibuster rule in Nicaragua by imagining the formation of a new public of native and naturalized Nicaraguans that understood each other, “Adventures of a Night” gives expression to the anxieties and the fragility of that imperial fiction.

**Visualizing the Filibuster Public Sphere**

With the announcement of the completion of their first volume on 21 June 1856, *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* proclaimed its own significance as the first success in the new cultural medium of pictorial journalism. *Leslie’s Illustrated* asserted that an “American Illustrated Newspaper of a high order is no longer an experiment—it is a fact in the history of our American literature, and becomes hereafter, a necessity to the reading public.” The illustrated paper recognized the power of both image and text in representing and producing meaning for its readers within a specifically national literary culture. All the news of importance to the nation was supposedly “clearly explained by the united powers of the artist, the literary man, and the mighty press,” indicating a union of the aesthetic sensibilities of artists and writers with the newest technological innovations that allowed for the mass dissemination of those artistic endeavors, all in the interest of keeping people informed about current political events at home and abroad. The article went on to insist that the “great field of human interest” in the near future “will be Central America,” and *Leslie’s Illustrated* extensively covered and commented
on the geopolitical tensions among the United States, Great Britain, and different Central American nations to control the isthmus. Leslie’s Illustrated had already provided enthusiastic and extensive coverage of Walker’s movements in Nicaragua, and promised that these events would continue to provide “a vast field for illustration” throughout the second volume. Moreover, this emergent form of national mass culture published sensational stories and images of filibustering taking place beyond the nation’s borders, revealing the imperial context of this new visual genre of “American literature.”

After emigrating in 1848 to the United States from England, where he had worked as an illustrator at the London Illustrated Weekly, Frank Leslie took a job with P. T. Barnum printing programs and doing promotional work for Barnum’s show. Leslie toured the country with Barnum from 1850 to 1851 and later worked as the chief engraver for an illustrated newspaper Barnum established, though it lasted less than a year. He also worked briefly for Gleason and Ballou on Gleason’s Pictorial, the predecessor to Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion. Leslie went on to publish monthly magazines geared toward women and then began his own illustrated paper in 1855. Launched the same year Walker set out for Nicaragua, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper was the first successful illustrated weekly newspaper in the United States.39

The illustrations that accompanied the articles provided a new way for the mass public to understand the news. In contrast to Harper’s Weekly, an illustrated paper which

---

started two years later and was geared toward a more elite reading public, Leslie’s Illustrated sought a broad national appeal that cut across regional and class differences (and suppressed the antagonisms of those divisions). According to Joshua Brown, “Leslie designed his illustrated newspaper for a ‘middle’ readership, a vast and elastic range of readers that…stretched across the nation and into the territories, and extended from mechanics to merchants.”

Leslie’s Illustrated attempted to embrace this “middle readership” in part through sensational reporting—of train wrecks, political corruption, murder cases, as well as private armies fighting overseas—frequently couched in calls for moral reform. It reviewed theatrical productions staged at the Bowery Theater as well as at Astor Place Opera House and other theaters along Broadway, demonstrating its attempts to encompass the emergent divisions between high and low culture and their respective audiences. Moreover, selective inclusions and omissions in particular stories reveal another way in which the paper attempted to maintain an all-encompassing, cross-class national appeal. With its coverage of Walker’s filibuster, for instance, it only mentions Walker’s decision to reinstitute slavery in Nicaragua once in passing, a glaring omission that can be seen as an attempt to maintain support for an imperial venture falling out of favor among people in the northern states. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, Leslie utilized mass produced images in an attempt to not only sell newspapers, but to sell social movements and political causes such as filibustering to as wide an audience as possible.

Because the images figured so centrally in producing news stories in carefully constructed ways, it is important to address their production, both materially and

---

40 Brown, Beyond the Lines 44.
ideologically. The visual images found in *Leslie’s Illustrated* do not simply represent an event; they actively produce specific meanings that the reading public consumes as ostensibly accurate and truthful. As Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone observe in their discussion of Leslie’s newspaper, “What his illustrated paper proposed to do was to provide an authentic visual image that fixed in the public mind Leslie’s picture of the event.”

Yet even before the paper reached the public, representations of events went through a number of transformations. The artist-reporters working for *Leslie’s Illustrated* usually made quick sketches on the scene and developed those later into finished pictures by a team of artists in the New York office. These teams would divide up a single image into sections, and each artist would engrave their section on a block of wood that was later glued together and placed in the steam press that printed the paper, a division of labor Leslie developed while working at *Gleason’s Pictorial* and necessary for the mass production of images on a weekly basis. Teams of artists working in the New York offices relied not only on the sketches from artist-reporters in the field, but also narrative accounts from witnesses and participants. These multiple sources used to produce the images, along with the division of labor their production entailed, opened up a gap—both spatial and temporal—between the initial on-the-spot sketch and what was eventually published, creating a space in which artistic engagement and ideological influence shaped and reconstructed the memory of different events. “Illustrated journalism,” Barnhurst

---

42 On the artists reporters for Leslie’s, see Gambee, *Frank Leslie and His Illustrated Newspaper* and John Paul Carlson, “Picturing the Newsworkers: Representations and Front-Page By-Lines of Artists, Engravers, and Photographers in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 1851-1891” (M.A. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 2007).
and Nerone continue, “intended to intervene between readers and the world, and to
provide them with an artificial archive of memory images.”

The memory images of filibustering in Nicaragua in Leslie’s Illustrated certainly
make up part of the sensational archive of antebellum U.S. print culture. The newspaper
contained illustrations of firing squads, violent battles, and other action-filled scenes of
U.S. Americans throughout Central America (see Figures. 3.1 and 3.2). Moreover, the
stories and editorials of the filibuster deployed stock tropes of sensational literature, such
as quasi-pornographic descriptions of foreign female bodies and racist characterizations
of foreign villains. A biography Honduran president Santos Guardiola in Leslie’s
Illustrated, for example, describes him as a “mestizo, or halfbreed, uniting in his
character the stealthy cunning of the Indian and the treacherous cruelty of the Spaniard.”
Guardiola is known as “The Butcher,” according the paper, because “a hecatomb of
betrayed victims and a ghastly monument of human skulls commemorate [his] deeds” (1
November 1856). However, this sensational coverage of the filibuster in Nicaragua was
supplemented with sentimental tropes of domesticity, home, and restrained or chaste
comportment of the filibusters. Leslie’s Illustrated celebrated U.S. women emigrating to
Nicaragua as “mothers” of a newly imagined national community. Furthermore, Walker
in particular is frequently represented in Leslie’s Illustrated as a patriarchal figure,
subduing and “civilizing” the Nicaraguan nation through his firm but gentle control. This
combination of domestic metaphors of maternity and patriarchy on the one hand, and
scenes of adventure, violence, and exoticized foreign bodies on the other demonstrates
the imagined scope and appeal of the filibuster public sphere through the use of both

43 Barnhurst and Nerone, “Civic Picturing” 64.
sentimental and sensational conventions. In deploying the cultures of sentiment and sensation, the newspaper not only served to secure a wider readership, but also performed the cultural work of producing and speaking for U.S. “public opinion” on behalf of the filibusters and in opposition to the Pierce administration and other federal officials critical of Walker’s imperial venture. In short, the union of these cultural forms fictionally united different reading publics, signaling one way in which Leslie’s Illustrated presumed to represent the U.S. public as equivalent with the filibuster public sphere.
Figure 3.1. “Battle of Rivas. From a Sketch Made on the Spot by Our Artist Correspondent.” 17 May 1856. Reproduction from Banco de América 1976 anthology, ed. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer.
Leslie’s Illustrated and other papers in favor of Walker frequently criticized the Pierce administration for failing to support what the pro-filibuster press adamantly demanded was the will of the people, triggering a conflict between the press and the federal government over who represented the popular sovereignty of the United States. For example, an article in Littell’s Living Age entitled “Nicaragua and the Filibusters” proclaimed that the “sovereign people of the United States, and the United States Government, are two distinct bodies, influenced by different motives” (19 April 1856). It went on to claim that since Walker and his filibusters “had the good-will of the majority of the American people, they represented the nation as truly as General Pierce and his
cabinet.” Leslie’s Illustrated also posited the authority of “the people” in contrast to the government when promulgating its support of Walker. Challenging the U.S. government’s attempts to characterize Walker as a criminal, Leslie’s Illustrated responded with the assertion that “public opinion which is sole sovereign of the United States, is rapidly coming to his rescue” (5 January 1856). Elsewhere, this claim to represent public opinion on behalf of the filibusters is contrasted with personal prejudice and self-interest. “[P]ublic opinion in this country has universally arrived at the same conclusion” in support of Walker, according the newspaper, and it “is only a judgment warped by personal interests that can reject the force of settled principles, established precedents and the concurrent sanction of all sensible men” (23 February 1856). Thus, while the frequently nationalist, imperialist, and sensational rhetoric of filibustering would generally fail to meet the criteria of “rational-critical discourse” that defines the bourgeois public sphere described by Habermas, newspapers such as Leslie’s Illustrated claimed at times to represent a universal, disembodied national public in opposition to the self-interested, embodied power of the presidency and other federal representatives.

Even as Walker “became Nicaraguan,” a declaration of naturalization papers such as Littell’s and Leslie’s acknowledged and defended, “public opinion” also embraced him as a national hero struggling against the unjust oppression of state power.44

---

44 As Shelley Streeby has pointed out, there is a relation between the embodied identities of sensationalism and the disembodied abstractions of the economic and political identities of liberal capitalism. Sensational fictions “explore and exploit the problem of embodiment in the face of US liberal capitalism’s emphasis on disembodied abstraction. That is, if the ideal of a rational-critical public sphere and a liberal citizen-subject depends upon the transcendence of that subject’s body as well as the particularities of material and economic life, then sensational fiction dwells on the bodies and material particularities that are disallowed by such liberal ideals.” “Sensational Fiction,” in A Companion to American Fiction 1780-1865, Ed. Shirley Samuels (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004) 185.
Mass public rallies and marches supporting the filibusters were common in U.S. cities throughout the 1850s, and Leslie’s Illustrated represented these often-raucous gatherings as expressions of the public opinion of the nation in order to criticize the U.S. state for its reluctance to support Walker and other filibusters. The reports and images of these public meetings, then, articulate another component of the filibuster public sphere, as the spectacle of mass rallies serve as representations of U.S. popular sovereignty organized in opposition to public authorities. After receiving news of the execution by firing squad of fifty filibusters in the 1851 Lopez expedition in Cuba, for example, tens of thousands of people apparently took to the streets in both northern and southern U.S. cities in protest. These rallies not only expressed virulent anti-Spanish sentiment, but also criticism of President Fillmore, an opponent of filibustering who complained about “a mercenary and prostituted press” orchestrating the public opposition. After Walker was arrested in Nicaragua by U.S. naval commodore Hiram Paulding, the filibuster arrived in New Orleans where “[t]housands and tens of thousands of people were present to receive him,” according to Leslie’s Illustrated. The illustration accompanying the article shows Walker addressing a massive crowd outside the St. Charles Hotel (Figure 3.3). While it is difficult if not impossible to know how many people actually gathered to hear Walker speak, or indeed if they all supported his filibuster in Nicaragua, the illustration and article clearly represent a unified public gathered in support of Walker. The article, for instance, notes Walker’s “splendid reception” by the “enthusiastic multitude.” Leslie’s Illustrated, and the pro-filibuster public it represents in this

45 Quoted in May, Manifest Destiny’s Underworld 66.
illustration, “look upon Walker as a hero, and a man who has been betrayed by the pusillanimity of our Government” (6 June 1857).

Another massive gathering in support of the filibusters in New York further illustrates efforts by *Leslie’s Illustrated* to claim the U.S. public sphere in opposition to the state. In December of 1855 the U.S. District Attorney John McKeon temporarily prevented the *Northern Light*, a steamship operating on the Atlantic for the Nicaragua Transit Company, from leaving New York harbor in an effort to crack down on filibustering. Charles H. Brown describes the *Northern Light* incident as the “most
serious effort made by any of the district attorneys directed to ‘detect and defeat’ all filibuster enterprises,” though it was ultimately an ineffectual effort. Only a few men were arrested, though incidentally Joseph Malé, one of the editors of El Nicaragüense in New York to get printing supplies for the paper, was among those arrested. News of the plan to prevent the ship from leaving the harbor was published in the New York Herald, so thousands of people gathered at the pier to witness the event. Newspaper reports describe the crowd as rowdy as they taunted and harassed McKeon and the U.S. marshals. The ship was detained and held for a few days, creating something of a media event as pro-filibuster papers expressed outrage at what they described as the unjust detention of the ship and its peaceful passengers.

Reporting on “The Arrest, By The United States Authorities, Of The Northern Light,” Leslie’s Illustrated registers not only its sensational coverage in forging the filibuster public sphere, but also the role of gender and national identity that characterized the process of the filibusters “becoming Nicaraguan” (5 January 1856). In addition to the image of the ship being seized (Figure 3.4), Leslie’s Illustrated reported “large crowds” of “spectators” gathering at the pier and the “great commotion” that took place after the District Attorney seized the ship on behalf of the U.S. government. When the ship made an attempt to leave the harbor and avoid seizure, “[c]heer after cheer went up as she swept out into the river, handkerchief[s] were waved, and innumerable adieus were exchanged between parting friends.” The article reported the crowds on shore cheering for the “emigrants,” particularly for the women on board. These “future mothers of Nicaragua” were “treated with a perfect thunder-gust from the crowd,” a celebration of

---

46 Brown, Agents of Manifest Destiny 318.
the civilizing and regenerating influence they would have in Nicaragua. These U.S.
women would become Nicaraguan through both biological reproduction and their
symbolic role as mothers of a new nation. While native Nicaraguan women served as
erotic spectacles in *El Nicaragüense* and, as we shall see, a public audience for the
spectacle of martial manhood in *Leslie’s Illustrated*, they are depicted as unfit for the
responsibilities of domesticity. Only white U.S. women as Nicaragua’s “future mothers”
could fulfill the necessary duties of domestication, bringing civility and morality as a
means of naturalizing imperial expansion in Nicaragua.  

---

47 Filibusters in Nicaragua frequently used *Leslie’s* and other newspapers to encourage U.S.
American women to come to Nicaragua. A letter from a filibuster, for example, describes his fellow
filibuster Colonel Fischer as “one of the handsomest men we have yet seen on horseback,” and invites
female readers to come see him in person, writing: “Whether he remains unmarried, or how he will look in
the parlor, we would advise all such ladies to come and see for themselves. We assure them that we are
likely to have plenty more ‘of the same sort,’ indeed it would be difficult to find, in any country on earth,
so many fine looking men as we have collected here. Put that, if not in your pipes, at least in your
memoires, fair dames.” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 12 April 1856. On the relationship of
ideologies of domesticity and womanhood to nationalism and empire-building, see Amy Kaplan, “Manifest
Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70.3 (Sept. 1998): 581-606; Anne McClintock, “‘No Longer a Future in
Heaven’: Gender, Race and Nationalism,” *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial
Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota
Figure 3.4. “Arresting the Steamship ‘Northern Light.’” 5 January 1856. Reproduction from Banco de América 1976 anthology, ed. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer.

Another article on the Northern Light incident in the same issue expressed outrage at what it saw as a clear violation of the passengers’ right of expatriation (“Seizure of the Northern Light” 5 January 1856). Acknowledging that the U.S. neutrality laws prohibited filibustering and that the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, an agreement between the U.S. and Great Britain signed in 1850, prevented U.S. colonization in Central America, the article insisted that the Nicaragua-bound passengers were “emigrants,” and that “emigrants are neither filibusters within the meaning of the former, nor colonists in the sense of the latter,” but rather unassociated, private individuals intent on becoming Nicaraguan citizens. Because they had no intention of overthrowing Walker’s government—the de facto power in Nicaragua—Leslie’s Illustrated rejected the assertion that the Northern Light could be carrying filibusters, and it would not only be a violation
of international law but also an insult to Nicaraguan sovereignty for the U.S. federal authorities to claim Walker’s government did not have the right to invite colonists to the country. According to this article, “We are bound to look upon the present rulers in Nicaragua as if they were entire strangers to this country, and to accept them as we would any other independent fact, forced upon our recognition by circumstances over which we had no control.” Furthermore, since the United States embraces Europeans who “naturalize amongst us,” it “cannot pretend to deny the same privilege to the natives of our own soil which we claim for foreigners.” The process of naturalization rigorously defended by Leslie’s Illustrated exhibits a selective and flexible appropriation of citizenship that facilitated U.S. empire-building in the Americas. Walker’s filibusters and U.S. colonists naturalized as Nicaraguans in an attempt to wrest control of the country without interference from federal authorities. Yet even this insistence on the foreignness of Walker’s government and U.S. citizens’ right to naturalize into that nation betrays the attempt to naturalize the presence of white U.S. Americans—both men and women—in Nicaragua.

In addition to Leslie’s written reports of Walker as the true embodiment and expression the U.S. public opinion and the domesticating role of U.S. women becoming Nicaraguan mothers, illustrations in the newspaper representing domestic interiors also worked to naturalize the filibuster presence in Nicaragua. An illustration titled “Reception Room of General Walker in the President’s House, City of Granada” from 15 March 1856, for example, depicted the interior of Walker’s Granada residence, showing Walker in the center of the picture, sitting at his desk talking with three visitors (Figure
The home contains various accoutrements of domesticity, including shelves full of books above a writing table, a framed picture on the wall, and draped windows. The viewer also glimpses Walker’s bedroom, signified by the bedpost that is framed by the open door to the right of the three standing men. Furthermore, the fact that Walker is sitting and the others remain standing implies Walker rightfully belongs in the president’s home while the men are temporary visitors paying their respects. Indeed, the reception room is an ambiguous space that is both public and private simultaneously. In representing the interior of Walker’s home in Nicaragua, the illustration effectively naturalizes his presence as President of the Central American country, acknowledging his place as the legitimate ruler of a functional foreign government—a rule propped up by his assertion of being a naturalized Nicaraguan. With Walker seated at his desk, the image implicitly figures filibustering principally involving uneventful, routine activities of legal and administrative governance rather than a dramatic and spectacular exercise of imperial violence. According to Amy Kaplan, domestic metaphors played a significant role in incorporating “foreign” spaces into a national home, family, and identity. As she observes, “the discourse of domesticity was intimately intertwined with the discourse of Manifest Destiny in antebellum U.S. culture.” While Kaplan focuses on the feminine context of domesticity in extending U.S. empire, as we have seen with Leslie’s Illustrated celebrating Nicaraguan’s “future mothers,” this illustration demonstrates the patriarchal

---

48 The person sitting on the left could be the artist-reporter. Including the artist-reporter in their own illustrations was a common practice, as it presented them as active participants in historical events and conveyed a sense of authenticity. See Brown, *Beyond the Lines*, Chapter 1 and Painter, “Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper and Harper’s Weekly”.

aspect of the domestic as a significant component of imperialism. Women undoubtedly played a crucial role in domesticating the empire, though in some instances men were required to act in an appropriate, domestic-oriented, paternal way that would bring order to the imperial frontier.

![Figure 3.5](image)

**Figure 3.5.** “Reception Room of General Walker, in the President’s House, City of Granada. Sketched on the Spot by Our Own Artist.” 15 March 1856. Reproduction from Banco de América 1976 anthology, ed. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer.

Moreover, this and other illustrations, along with biographies of Walker describing his education and his sober, chaste demeanor perform cultural work of sentimental manhood that redefine filibustering as a civilized, benevolent, and just
activity to counter charges that filibusters were simply power-hungry individuals engaging in lawless brutality and violence. A portrait of Walker in Leslie’s standing next to a chair appearing nicely dressed and well-groomed further projected the filibuster as orderly and composed inside the domestic setting of the home (Figure 3.6).

Describing Walker’s personal appearance, Leslie’s Illustrated sought to disabuse critics that he was “a man with bloody hands, gigantic in proportions, and ‘sighing for destruction’.” Rather, he “possesses a delicate person, has a hand small and white enough for a lady, speaks in a low tone of voice,” and is timid around others (27 June 1857). Cast in gendered terms, this portrait and descriptions of Walker’s physical demeanor and morally upright behavior exemplify what Amy Greenberg has termed “restrained manhood.” Discussing the competing ideologies of manhood in antebellum U.S. society, Greenberg characterizes restrained manhood as one that repudiates vice and immorality, focusing on the home, family, and business concerns. This particular configuration of manhood contrasted with “martial manhood,” a gender identity defined by aggressive territorial expansion and rowdy, illicit behaviors characteristic of sensational tales of imperial adventure.

While Greenberg discusses filibustering, and Walker in particular, as the embodiment of martial manhood, Leslie’s Illustrated betrays the complications and entanglements of these two identities. Furthermore, the representation of Walker as a principled patriarch keeping a well-ordered domestic space demonstrates an attempt by the newspaper to encompass the broad, middle readership described by Joshua Brown. Readers could indulge in sensational narrative descriptions

51 Greenberg, Manifest Manhood 9-17.
and pictorial representations of battle scenes and the exoticism of tropical locales and peoples, but at the same time be assured that Walker’s movement in Nicaragua was not simply about plunder and domination. In fact, filibustering, according to *Leslie’s*, could strike the perfect balance between restrained and martial manhood, between sentimental ideals of domesticity and sensational spectacles of imperial adventure.

![Figure 3.6. “General William Walker, President of Nicaragua.” Ambrotyped by Fredricks. 27 June 1857. Reproduction from Banco de América 1976 anthology, ed. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer.](image-url)
Representations of martial manhood provided a spectacle of imperial adventure not only for U.S. readers, but for Nicaraguans as well, especially Nicaraguan women. Alongside images of temperate manhood and patriarchal control, an article from the 21 June 1856 issue of the newspaper, for instance, combines the sensational tropes of foreign female bodies and sentimental tears to represent Nicaraguan women as both alluring to and in sympathy with the filibusters. Similar to the depiction of Nicaraguan women in *El Nicaragüense*, the article describes women at the marketplace in Granada, claiming, “the principal attraction for strangers is the gay costume of the no less gay senoritas.” These women are depicted as “warm” and “easy,” displaying “their luscious fruits” at the market in the plaza, open to being the object of the gaze of U.S. American men. This description casts Nicaragua as a feminine space; the women stand as the symbol of the nation, open to the idea of U.S. colonization.

The illustration accompanying the article, however, shows native women standing around the periphery of the Grand Plaza in Granada watching General Walker surveying his troops (Figure 3.7). This image inverts the male gaze of the U.S. men enjoying the appearance of the inviting and attractive Nicaraguan women, showing the women watching the public spectacle of martial manhood. These women, the article continues, “gazed with intense interest upon the veteran columns as they deployed across the broad parade.” This configuration parallels what Kaplan describes as “the spectacle of masculinity” found in the historical romances of the 1890s: “On this…new frontier, renewal does not emerge from bloody contests with a native other,” but rather “offer[s]
regeneration through a spectacle before the female gaze.” By visually depicting the native female gaze, *Leslie’s Illustrated* figured Nicaragua as feminine, romantically intrigued by the military action of Walker’s men. There is no question that the women look upon the men with sympathy and support, as “tears filled the eyes of many as it became apparent that from them [Walker’s troops] so many favorite companions were missing.” While virtually the entire population of Nicaragua sided with Costa Rica in their opposition to Walker after he had Corral executed and later declared himself President, here they shed sentimental tears for filibuster “companions” lost in the most recent battle. With their gaze and their tears, Nicaraguan women serve as a justification for filibuster rule, imagining an intimate union between native-born and naturalized Nicaraguans joined in opposition to hostile neighboring states.

---

52 Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire* 111.

The newspaper also provided accounts of Ponciano Corral’s execution. In Leslie’s, Corral’s execution serves to dramatize the tensions and ambiguities of the relationship of the filibusters to the state in terms of race, nation, and gender. The second issue of Leslie’s Illustrated, published 22 December 1855, included both an article about and illustration of Corral’s execution. As in The War in Nicaragua, the article emphasizes the symbolic union of Walker and Corral and the subsequent “foul
“conspiracy” to breach that union attributed to Corral’s “Spanish treachery.” “The two generals,” the article observes before discussing the betrayal, “reviewed the two army corps, composed of the native troops and Gen. Walker’s American phalanx, now unified into one body, and a grand national salute was again fired” (emphasis added). The new national body composed of native Nicaraguans and U.S. filibusters described here captures another example of newspapers depicting the formation of a new unified public, a strategy that clearly resonates with the cultural work of *El Nicaragüense*. This newly “unified” national “body” represents the similar ways in which different pro-filibuster print cultures envisioned the filibusters “becoming Nicaraguan” through public association. However, Leslie’s casts Corral as a villain seeking to undermine that union through “conspiracy” and racialized “treachery.” After his secret letters conspiring against Walker and the filibusters were intercepted, according to the article, he “was immediately arrested, and the court, after a patient examination of the proofs and letters, found the prisoner guilty, and sentenced him to be shot.”

The article in goes on to describe the events of the execution—escorting Corral out, his brief conversation with a priest, a public reading of the charges and sentence, and the firing of the weapons that “announced he was no longer among the living.” Perhaps more interesting than this narrative, however, is the accompanying illustration depicting the execution scene (Figure 3.8). The illustration shows Corral standing alone in the center of the plaza. The firing squad is to the lower left foreground of the image, their backs turned to the viewer, with guns drawn ready for the order to fire. The edges of the plaza are filled with people, including what is presumably a priest in the background standing in front of the church. Conveniently, there is an open space in the crowd that
allows the viewer of the image to get an unobstructed view of the impending execution. In addition to this spatial organization of the image, it also contains a temporal logic, as the viewer witnesses the execution scene at the moment before the firing squad receives its order. Thus, while the image does not depict the actual act of execution, which would include smoke from the discharged rifles and Corral’s bloodied corpse, the moment preceding the execution here creates a sense of anticipation and excitement for the viewer. This image of the firing squad visually represents a crucial scene in the sensational culture of the imperial adventure tale. Unlike the similar execution scene in “The Deserter,” however, here in Leslie’s Illustrated the reader/viewer is left with no doubt about the guilt—the “conspiracy” and “Spanish treachery”—of the offender. Corral is condemned not only for his treasonous letters, but for his racial and national identity as well. In contrast to Dair, who makes a harrowing escape from the firing squad, Corral deserves no reprieve, at least in the opinion of the filibuster public sphere.
Figure 3.8. “Execution of Ponciano Corral, Minister of War, Nicaragua.” 22 December 1855. Reproduction from Banco de América 1976 anthology, ed. Alejandro Bolaños Geyer.

Similar to the Eaton story in the *Flag of Our Union, Leslie’s Illustrated* also dramatically revised aspects of the Corral execution in its own story of imperial adventure, “The Orange Blossoms of Granada,” written by Edward Hendibor. The fictional story, published in the 21 June 1856 issue of the newspaper, centers on a romance between a U.S. American filibuster and a Nicaraguan woman, highlighting the desires and anxieties about national and racial identities and alliances. As Shelley Streeby observes in her discussion of romantic melodramas in the sensational literature of
empire that she calls the “international race romance,” narratives of romantic unions across national, racial, and cultural difference dramatize the possibilities and pitfalls of U.S. empire-building. Furthermore, the firing squad scene in the story serves to mark the contradictions of the relationship of filibusters to the state, as I discussed earlier. While the filibuster public sphere functioned as a site of critique of the U.S. government, Walker’s decision to execute Corral in “Orange Blossoms”—like his similar decision to execute Anthony Dair in “The Deserter”—registers antipathy about filibusters assuming the power of the state in the process of becoming Nicaraguan.

In “Orange Blossoms,” Hendibor tells the story of a U.S. American filibuster in Nicaragua referred to by his Nicaraguan lover as Juan. Like Dair in “The Deserter,” the filibuster protagonist had helped Walker take control of Granada and continued to serve in the Nicaraguan army under Walker, patrolling the conquered city. Though he lives in a makeshift barracks in the “desolate chambers” of a “ruined convent” near the city’s plaza, Juan lyrically describes the natural landscape of Nicaragua, including sublime volcanoes and beautiful valleys, scenes “as picturesque as they were suggestive.” Invoking gothic tropes of physical decay, Granada itself is characterized as a city in ruins, a testament to the civil strife and imperial invasion that left the architecture from the Spanish colonial period “sad relics of a perished, shriveled past.” Amidst these ruins, Juan is especially curious about an old building, said to be the home a former official in the government prior to the filibusters’ invasion. “What interested me most in connection with this man,” says Juan, “was the description I had received of his daughter, Teresina, a charming girl whom I had never seen—a violet concealed beneath the orange blossoms

53 Streeby, American Sensations 25; 115-116.
of Granada.” Obsessed with desire to see Teresina, Juan intrudes “upon the privacy of this ruined mansion,” and he discovers the young woman singing and playing the guitar. Though initially shocked at the stranger in her home, Teresina is quickly reassured by “the soldier’s garb of an American,” and a romance begins to form between the U.S. filibuster and the young Nicaraguan woman.

Eventually Juan and his company are ordered to march out of Granada to Matagalpa, an order, he says, that would “destroy the sweet illusion which had bound me to Teresina!” Weeks pass in Matagalpa, and during that time Juan is put in charge of his military company. Finally, orders arrive from Walker for the men to return to Granada, specifically for the job of executing Corral. The responsibilities of organizing the firing squad and preparing for the execution prevent Juan from seeing Teresina upon his return to Granada. When the time of Corral’s execution arrives, “people flocked in crowds to the Plaza, as if to witness their favorite pastime.” The narrator turns away as Corral is brought out with his weeping family to face his sentence, “for,” he says, “my heart sickened at the details of a duty to which was nevertheless imperative.” After Corral’s execution, Juan hears a shriek from the crowd: “Dios mío! dios mío! it is he—it is himself!,” and Juan immediately realizes Corral is Teresina’s father. Teresina dies from distress within a week of her father’s execution, and while Juan is prohibited from visiting her grave, he “received by the old attendant a last message of love and forgiveness, and a few withered fragments of orange flowers.”

The story illustrates the contradictions of filibusters assuming power, on the one hand, and the promotion of a unified public of native and naturalized Nicaraguans, on the other. That is, Walker, as military commander of Nicaragua, represents state authority,
and his order for Juan to execute Corral obstructs the ideological work of an imagined unified public we have seen throughout the sensational print cultures, symbolically represented here in the romance of Juan and Teresina. While Teresina finds reassurance and comfort in Juan’s American uniform, suggesting the welcoming embrace Nicaraguan women held out for U.S. men imagined throughout Leslie’s Illustrated and El Nicaragüense, the uniform ultimately leads him to perform the “imperative” military duty of executing accused traitors. Furthermore, while the private space of Corral’s ruined mansion serves as a space of peace and budding romance between the U.S. filibuster and Nicaraguan woman, the public scene of the execution frustrates and ultimately undermines that union. This public duty on behalf of the state disrupts the domestic peace of the Nicaraguan family and thwarts any possibility for Juan to join that family. Though Teresina does forgive Juan because he was ignorant of the family relation, the unintended consequences of doing his duty leaves him no choice but to leave Nicaragua and Walker’s cause. Read as the embodiment of the Nicaraguan nation, the Corral family must inevitably be disrupted and destroyed (“uprooted” orange trees) if the filibusters intend to make their imperial conquest a success. Since that is too much for the narrator of “Orange Blossoms” to bear he abandons the project and returns to the United States.

Conclusion

After being forced out of Nicaragua in the spring of 1857, Walker returned to the United States and was greeted with massive rallies of support first in New Orleans and later in New York. Walker spoke to these supporters, whom he referred to as “fellow-
citizens,” blaming the British and Northern abolitionists for his downfall and promising he would return to resume his rightful place as President of Nicaragua. While he did endeavor to go back more than once over the next three years, enthusiasm in the press began to wane and William Walker began to disappear as a prominent name in the news. *El Nicaragüense* never resumed publication after the filibusters’ ouster, and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated* stopped its enthusiastic coverage of filibustering in Central America even though it continued to hope Walker’s “great idea of founding a free people and a free nation, where nothing now exists but anarchy and misrule, will be carried out” (6 June 1857). Of course Walker was ultimately killed attempting to realize his claim as leader of Nicaragua.

*Leslie’s Illustrated* believed Walker’s success was the key to securing Nicaragua and assuring that all future trans-isthmian trade would fall “in the hands of American enterprise,” but while he did not succeed, his filibuster did serve as an important moment in the history of “American enterprise” in Nicaragua (6 June 1857). Opposition to Walker’s invasion consolidated Nicaraguan nationalism and led to a long period of political stability. Divided Nicaraguan elites in Granada and León worked together, relocating the capital in the neutral city of Managua, the first major site of coffee production in the country. While these elites learned firsthand the potential dangers U.S. Americans posed to their political rule, Walker’s land appropriation decrees and vagrancy laws provided a model that facilitated Nicaragua’s position in the capitalist world economy as an exporting dependency. This new situation was largely beneficial to “American enterprise” as well, enough so that the federal government would send in
military forces to occupy the country fifty-seven years after Walker’s invasion in order to protect U.S. American lives and property in Nicaragua. These transformations in Nicaragua and its relationship with the U.S., the ostensible realization of “a free people and a free nation” within the modern capitalist system, took shape against the backdrop of Walker’s filibuster. Walker anticipated this neocolonial relationship in his continual insistence on a politically independent Nicaragua aligned with the U.S., but he simultaneously frustrated this emergent form of imperialism by endeavoring to combine it with the then-dominant U.S. imperial formation of national territorial expansion as well as the residual form of individual conquest and absolute sovereignty. “Becoming Nicaraguan” represents an attempt by Walker to straddle these imperial formations in an effort to legitimate his project as legal and just to widely divergent groups of constituencies and detractors in both the U.S. and Nicaragua. Yet the productive ambiguity of imperial citizenship that sought to encompass and assuage these different groups began to unravel as this juggling act proved too much to maintain. Despite publications such as El Nicaragüense and Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper that continually worked to configure filibustering as simply the current manifestation in the long history of the inevitable spread of progress and civilization, Walker’s filibuster provoked too many contradictions regarding national identity and imperial sovereignty to remain tenable. Walker maintained that he was a naturalized Nicaraguan for the remainder of his life while at the same time addressing U.S. Americans as “fellow-citizens,” a precarious assertion of imperial citizenship that led not only to his loss of

---

54 On this later history, see, among others, Karl Berman, Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States Since 1848 (Boston: South End Press, 1986) and Michel Gobat, Confronting the American Dream.
power and his execution, but arguably to his historical obscurity in the United States and historical infamy in Central American cultural memory.
CONCLUSION

The Imperial Palimpsests of Mark Twain

Toward the end of 1866, Mark Twain passed through Nicaragua to cross the Central American isthmus on his way from San Francisco to New York. A decade after Walker proclaimed himself Nicaraguan President, Twain makes only a few passing references to the filibuster in letters written for the *Alta California*, a San Francisco newspaper. One reference of Walker in Twain’s letters, however, is particularly relevant here and thus warrants quoting at length. Twain writes:

In this land of rank vegetation, no spot of soil can be cleared off and kept barren a week. Nature seizes upon every vagrant atom of dust and forces it to relieve her over-burdened store-houses. Weeds spring up in the cracks of floors, and clothe the roofs of huts in green; if a handful of dust settles in the crotch of a tree, ferns spring there and wave their graceful plumes in the tropic breeze. Filibustering Walker sunk a steamboat in the river; the sands washed down, filled in around her, built up a little oval island. The wind brought seeds thither, and they clothed every inch of it in luxuriant grass. Then trees grew and vines climbed up and hung them with bright garlands, and the steamer’s grave was finished. The wreck was invisible to us, save that the two great fore-and-aft braces still stood up out of the grass and fenced in the trees. It was a pretty picture.¹

Here Twain literalizes the process of naturalizing empire I have been outlining in this dissertation. One the one hand Twain acknowledges a history of U.S. imperial violence in Nicaragua, but on the other hand it is unrecognizable as such, “invisible to us,” as he says. “Nature” has cloaked the ruins of empire, transforming that history into “a pretty picture,” an object of aesthetic contemplation. Twain’s observations about the material

¹ Mark Twain, *Mark Twain’s Travels With Mr. Brown: Being Heretofore Uncollected Sketches Written by Mark Twain Written for the San Francisco Alta California in 1866 & 1867, Describing the Adventures of the Author and His Irrepressible Companion in Nicaragua, Hannibal, New York, And Other Spots on Their Way to Europe*. Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane, eds. (New York: Knopf, 1940) 48.
traces of filibustering in Nicaragua covered over by the natural growth of the environment, traces rendered beautiful for the white U.S. American traveler’s appreciation, provides an apt metaphor for the cultural work of alternately remembering and forgetting the histories of mid-nineteenth-century U.S. imperialism beginning shortly after the Civil War in the United States. I want to conclude, then, by briefly looking at this cultural memory and the legacies of the different imperial projects I have examined in “Naturalizing Empire.” Mark Twain’s early travel writing and later anti-imperial writing, I contend, represent a particularly germane set of texts to consider these legacies. While Twain’s critical engagement with empire is generally (and understandably) associated with U.S. and European empire-building of the late nineteenth century, some of his writings can be read as palimpsests, texts that bear the traces of an earlier moment of U.S. empire.

Twain had travelled to Hawai‘i earlier the same year he passed through Nicaragua, spending four months touring the islands and writing about his impressions in a series of articles published in *The Sacramento Union*. He was hired by the *Union* “with clearly defined goals to promote California’s economic interest in the growing sugar industry and to market the islands as accessible to American travel and business and equally available to popular knowledge and fantasy.” ² The letters encourage regular, faster steamship routes between California and Hawai‘i. Securing this economic relationship, according to Twain, would greatly increase the U.S. American presence and

---

consequently frustrate continued efforts by both England and France to seize the islands.\textsuperscript{3} Thus in making this argument, Twain reproduces the exceptional logic that configures U.S. capital and commerce as the antithesis of European colonialism, an assumption informing and underwriting assertions of empire in Hawai‘i, but also in Liberia and Nicaragua, over the previous two decades, as we have seen. He claims that the United States once exercised greater power over the Hawaiian Kingdom, but that now “her influence and her share in it have fallen gradually away until she is out in the cold for now, and does not even play third fiddle to this European element” of France and England (12). Yet this supposedly waning power of the U.S. may have more to do with Twain’s uncertainty over who counts as a “Hawaiian” or an “American,” rather than with any actual loss of influence and control. That is, the process of “becoming Hawaiian” that I discussed in Chapter Two blinded Twain from seeing how this represents a central strategy of U.S. empire-building.

Take, for example, his discussion of Charles Coffin Harris, then Hawaiian Minister of Finance and staunch advocate of sovereignty for the Hawaiian Kingdom. Harris, a lawyer from New Hampshire, became a naturalized citizen upon his arrival in Hawai‘i in 1850 and spent the next years discouraging U.S. annexation of the islands, a subject seriously considered and debated in the early 1850s. Harris instead promoted a free trade policy between the two sovereign states. Twain acknowledges that while Harris is a native of the United States, “he is unworthy of the name of American.” Rather, “from his manner and language today…he belongs, body and soul and boots, to

the King of the Sandwich Island” (117). Elsewhere he says Harris “was an American once…but he is no longer one” because he is “hoopilimeai”—obsequious or subservient—to the King (164). Thus while Twain, sent to promote U.S. business interests, heralds a new economic and political relationship between Hawai‘i and the United States, he documents how naturalization operated as an earlier technology of U.S. empire in the islands, though he is unable to recognize it as such. Harris, and by extension the other U.S. Americans such as John Ricord, Gerrit Judd, and James Jackson Jarves who “became Hawaiian,” ceased to represent “America” for Twain. Consequently, while he acknowledged their presence on the islands and in the government, he could no longer accept them as U.S. compatriots or agents of empire.

Twain may have been critical of U.S. Americans such as Jarves becoming naturalized Hawaiians, yet he relied on Jarves to guide his understanding and interpretation of what he saw in Hawai‘i. While he objected elsewhere to Cooper’s numerous literary offenses, Twain praises “Mr. Jarves’ excellent history,” his History of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands, published in 1843 (62). In a particularly vivid scene, for example, Twain and a number of traveling companions have ventured out of Honolulu into the countryside where they come across a field of human bones. “All around everywhere,” he writes, “not three feet apart, the bleached bones of men gleamed white in the moonlight,” and the travelers begin collecting them as “mementoes” (59). Twain recounts various legends about the field of bones, noting it extends deep into Native Hawaiian collective memory, but ultimately dismisses these stories because Jarves “makes no mention of our bone yard at all in his book,” privileging his history over native stories as authorized discourse about the Hawaiian past (62). Twain says the
human remains may come from “a terrible pestilence here in 1804,” seemingly acknowledging the devastating consequences of foreign diseases for the native population, but then says it may be from other epidemics “that swept the islands long before that,” thereby implicitly absolving the U.S. and European presence in Hawai‘i of any responsibility for the massive depopulation (62).

Twain makes light of the scene of his traveling companions picking up and collecting the bones to demonstrate his irreverent humor. But as they do so he notes the absence of skulls among the bones. “Skull hunters,” someone tells him, had stolen the skulls. Jarves was one of these skull hunters. As he traveled the islands gathering information to write his romantic histories and historical romances of Hawai‘i, Jarves also made it a common practice of “bribing some adventurous fellows” to “procur[e] several perfect crania,” which he would send to Boston. Jarves insisted the native Hawaiians “cared but little” about their ancestors’ remains, but they found his predilection for gathering the skulls odd and began calling him “po kanaka,’ or skull man, a name by which [he] was ever afterwards known” by the Hawaiians.4 Twain professes ignorance of the practice of “skull hunting,” but engages in virtually the same thing. Jarves, the “skull man,” and Twain, who “got quite a number of arm bones and leg bones” himself, thus articulate5 different moments of empire through their similar practice of amateur anthropology (59). The scene, then, acknowledges the various actions of the U.S. Americans who “became Hawaiian” before Twain’s arrival and

5 Articulate: “To unite or connect (bones) at a joint or by joints;…to reassemble (individual bones) to form a skeleton; to form (a skeleton) from individual bones” Oxford English Dictionary.
simultaneously disavows those actions. In writing that charts what Amy Kaplan call’s Twain’s “imperial routes,” these letters from Hawai‘i follow a well-worn path cut by Jarves and others; like Walker’s sunken ship, they have in effect been naturalized as part of the Hawaiian landscape.

Upon returning to San Francisco from Hawai‘i, Twain used this travel experience as the basis of his “Sandwich Islands Lecture.” This performance—in contrast to Melville’s failed “South Seas Lecture” the previous decade mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Two—helped solidify Twain’s national fame. In 1867, after attending Twain’s Sandwich Islands lecture in Saint Louis, Henry Morton Stanley published the full text of the lecture in the Daily Missouri Democrat. Twain and Stanley became acquaintances, and Twain introduced Stanley in Boston when the adventurer was beginning his own successful tour lecturing about his explorations of Africa and his work for King Leopold in the Congo. Yet Twain later became a vocal critic of this colonial project that Stanley played such a central role in establishing. In 1905 he penned King Leopold’s Soliloquy, a scathing critique of Leopold’s regime of terror and violence in the Congo. The text sardonically stages Leopold fretting over his increasingly tenuous grip on power as he reads newspaper and other accounts of atrocities perpetrated on natives of the Congo to harvest rubber. In King Leopold’s Soliloquy Twain cites a missionary’s account of finding “numbers of human skulls, bones, in some cases complete skeletons” in the Congo, victims, he is told, of the “rubber palaver” who were simply left after being shot

6 Kaplan, Anarchy of Empire 60-61.
by soldiers. This reference, along with a later sensational proposal for a monument to Leopold “out of my 15,000,000 skulls and skeletons,” represents an implicit intertextual connection with Twain’s account with the field of Hawaiian bones that linked him to Jarves (57). What was earlier a scene signifying the pleasures and irreverence of travel for Twain has transformed here into a document of barbarism revealing the violence of colonialism and capitalism. Simply put, these human remains articulate or join together across Twain’s writings, and thus articulate the different histories of imperial violence throughout the world during the nineteenth century.

Twain used King Leopold’s Soliloquy to express particular outrage at the decision of the United States to be the first government to diplomatically recognize the Belgian Congo. The Soliloquy includes a description of Leopold reading “with mocking smile, the President’s Order of Recognition of April 22, 1884”:

the government of the United States announces its sympathy with and approval of the humane and benevolent purposes of (my Congo scheme), and will order the officers of the United States, both on land and sea, to recognize its flag as the flag of a friendly government. (40)

Twain’s anger over the U.S. decision to diplomatically recognize the Belgian Congo in King Leopold’s Soliloquy represents his participation in a debate about sovereignty in the European colonial scramble for Africa at the end of the century. Significantly, this debate harkened back to the debate over recognition of Liberian sovereignty that occurred fifty years earlier that I addressed in Chapter One. That is, the recognition of Liberian sovereignty by England, France, and other nations following independence from the ACS

---

7 Mark Twain, King Leopold’s Soliloquy (New York: International Publishers, 1961) 45. Further citations are from this edition.
served as a legal precedent in justifying Leopold’s Congo. General Henry Shelton Sanford, a U.S. American lobbying on behalf of Leopold in the 1880s, explicitly drew a connection between the so-called philanthropy of the Belgian King’s Congo scheme and the American Colonization Society.  

Moreover, Sir Travers Twiss, a British scholar of international law and author of the Belgian Congo constitution, pointed to Liberia to legitimate this later colonial project. In his 1884 international law treatise The Law of Nations Considered as Independent Political Communities: On the Rights and Duties of Nations in Time of Peace, for example, Twiss raises the “question in connection with Africa” that “the capacity of private associations of a philanthropic character…warrant on the part of the nations of Christendom a recognition of such settlements as independent states.” According to Twiss, Liberia’s establishment by the ACS rather than the U.S. government did not preclude recognition of its sovereignty when it became independent in 1847, though he does not address the refusal of the U.S. government to recognize the black republic until after the Civil War. He writes of Liberia, “the Settlement…declared itself to be an Independent State under the title of the Commonwealth of Liberia, and subsequently, in the year 1847, assumed the title of the Republic of Liberia. Its independence has since been recognized by the leading States of Europe and America.” Just as the American Colonization Society founded Monrovia to suppress the slave trade and encourage emancipation in the U.S., Twiss holds, so too did the African International Association

---

found the settlement of Leopoldville “to combat the slave trade.” Thus, what Twiss demonstrates here—and what Twain implicitly expressed anger over in the *Soliloquy*—is the ways in which not only the United States, but also European powers looked to mid-nineteenth-century U.S. imperial projects as precedents and models of their own colonial ventures at a moment traditionally understood as the height of modern European colonialism. Simply put, the routes of European imperialism at the turn of the century run back through earlier unorthodox or atypical models of U.S. empire I have charted and examined throughout this dissertation. This genealogy, or rather its obfuscation, represents another register of naturalizing U.S. empire before the Civil War.

In this dissertation I have attempted to show how different cultural and political articulations of naturalization worked to construct and cloak various U.S. imperial formations in West Africa, the Pacific, and Central America prior to the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century, often taken to be the definitive historical moment of U.S. and European empire-building. “Becoming” Liberian, Hawaiian, or Nicaraguan through oaths of allegiance and “consensual” adoption, as well as through the cultural work of imagining and mediating these processes in literary and other narratives, each represent particular strategies in efforts to realize particular forms of imperial expansion, including black colonization in Liberia, privatization and appropriation of land in Hawai‘i, and filibustering in Nicaragua. While each is unique, however, I hope that I have demonstrated they are not unrelated and that “naturalization” represents a central keyword in the genealogy of U.S. empire. In addition, I have also sought to demonstrate

---

the ways in which critics of U.S. expansion at home and abroad identified and protested the work of naturalization as a central logic legitimating and obscuring the violence of empire. Martin Delany, David Malo and Samuel Kamakau, the makaʻāinana petitioners, and Mark Twain, especially later in his life, publically denounced different imperial projects by making use of different and divergent forms of print culture. These print cultures of anti-imperialism testify to the contested and unsettled conditions of U.S. empire-building at throughout the nineteenth century.

In his 1901 anti-imperial essay “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” Twain wryly observes that, when framed in a particularly distorted and unfocused way, the “Blessings of Civilization” include such liberal ideals as “law and order,” “justice,” “liberty,” and “equality” to the “Gentlemen who Sit in Darkness,” or those peoples throughout the world placed on the “dark” side of the global color line. Yet when looked at more carefully, when experienced more directly, these ostensibly universal ideals of “civilization” reveal their very particular, and markedly unequal, application. Contact with “civilization,” that is, exposes “the Actual Thing that the Customer Sitting in Darkness buys with his blood and tears and land and liberty.”

“Civilization” represents a discourse of empire, one among many addressed in the different chapters here that simultaneously justifies and disavows the violent appropriations imperial expansion entails, strategies and discourses I have defined as the process of “naturalizing empire.” Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to trace the connections between civilization’s so-called blessings—liberty and equality, but also citizenship and

\[\text{10} \text{ Mark Twain, “To The Person Sitting In Darkness,” Following the Equator and Anti-Imperial Essays (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 3.}\]
sovereignty—and the actual thing—losses of land, labor, and life—naturalized through the literary and print cultures of U.S. empire.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts and Archival Collections

Bancroft Collection of Western Americana and Latin Americana and Rare Book Collection. Berkeley: Bancroft Library, University of California.


Hawaiian Collection. Manoa: University of Hawaii at Manoa Library, University of Hawaii.

Hill Collection of Pacific Voyages. La Jolla: Mandeville Special Collections Library, University of California.

Newspapers

African Repository and Colonial Journal
El Nicaragüense
Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper
Sandwich Islands News
The Friend. Devoted to Temperance, Seamen, Marine and General Intelligence
The Polynesian

Published Primary Sources

“Annexion.” United States Magazine and Democratic Review. 17 July 1845: 5.


---. The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States. 1852. Levine, Reader. 189-216.


---. *Mark Twain’s Travels With Mr. Brown: Being Heretofore Uncollected Sketches Written by Mark Twain Written for the San Francisco Alta California in 1866 & 1867, Describing the Adventures of the Author and His Irrepressible Companion in Nicaragua, Hannibal, New York, And Other Spots on Their Way to Europe*. Ed. Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane. New York: Knopf, 1940.


**Secondary Sources**


Jones, Maude. *Naturalization in Hawaii, 1795-1900*. Hamilton Library, University of Hawaii, Manoa, 193-. Typescript.


